

**A case study into leaderism among curriculum managers in
further education**

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Abstract

This thesis draws on interviews with 10 further education (FE) curriculum managers. The subsequent analysis uses notions of Foucauldian discourse to critically evaluate the leadership and management practice described by the managers. The purpose of this was to analyse the discourse of leaderism in the college and argue for its existence as an embedded norm. Consequently, this research draws upon neoliberal policy ideals, the history of FE and the effect of this on education institutions, such as FE. Central to the argument in this thesis is that we are now in the era of leaderism in FE and have been so since the early 2000s. Furthermore, an argument is made that leaderism is a hybridised model of leadership that has strong links to managerialism and distributed leadership, through the prioritisation of task orientated managerial control driven by the fashionable lexicon associated with distributed leadership. Subsequently this provides the persuasive language and enables leaderism to dominate the practice of managers in FE. Several factors have influenced this research, the role of the gatekeeper being significant and the potential for a clash between conflicting identities, one concerned with being a management professional and one of a classroom practitioner. Methodologically complexities existed concerning access to the sample however, this is critiqued to argue that defining the role of a curriculum manager is a complex task and that a singular working definition of leadership also has embedded complexity. In considering all of these factors, a final argument is presented that identifies the discourse at play using a rhizomatic metaphor and argues for the validity of leaderism as a conceptual tool to understand the discourse of leaderism in FE.

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The Author

Martin Lea previously received a Master of Philosophy degree from the University of Manchester in 2012, where he undertook a research study into managerialism in the Further Education (FE) sector. Martin also has post graduate qualifications in strategic management from the Open University. He has previously been awarded a PGCE in secondary education with a Music specialism and his first degree is a BA(Hons) in Music awarded in 2000 from the University of Northumbria. Martin has extensive teaching and management experience both in FE and in Higher Education (HE) across a twenty-year career.

Introduction

This research focuses on the notion of leaderism¹ in further education (FE) through a series of semi-structured interviews with curriculum managers. In using the term curriculum managers I am referring to a group of professionals that occupy a role in college hierarchy that have management responsibility for vocational subject areas, for example creative arts, education and business, whilst also having responsibility for groups of teachers and, in some cases also undertaking a teaching role themselves. In all cases these curriculum managers performed their duties within a broadly accepted performative culture, one that required accountability to more senior managers, assistant and vice principals for example, and with the added responsibility to support and allocate key duties to front line teaching staff. From the outset defining the role of a curriculum manager endured complexities, these centred around how such managers perceived themselves as either teaching managers or more broadly as custodians of the curriculum. As a result of this a group of professionals from middle management selected themselves via the research gatekeeper to be interviewed. As a collective these professionals represented a group of curriculum managers that identified as all being in the middle, with some teaching and others not. In the initial phase this proved problematic, however, this provided a key narrative about the general complexities of the role of such professional groups and posed the possibility for a much broader definition of a curriculum manager. To position this as a viable route of enquiry, an analysis of the data demonstrated that despite some of the curriculum managers engaging in teaching and others not, the data supported that performance related tasks dominated the responses given to the interview questions. In the first instance to investigate the possible of existence of leaderism in FE I undertook a comprehensive literature review that explored the historical roots of leadership in schools and colleges from England and Wales. Through this I have argued that this has led to a development of a hybridised concept of leaderism existing as a valid framework to which modern day FE management practice can be understood. To critically analyse the existence of leaderism in FE I used a Foucauldian method of discourse analysis broken down into the following five key stages.

¹ Leaderism is composed, firstly, of an explicit use of the language of leadership, that is, such linguistic terms of 'leaders', 'leadership', being 'led', and 'leading' are used and discussed as phenomenological entities in a variety of different ways. Secondly, this language of leadership draws upon and is posited on the framing metaphor of 'leading' – an image, or symbol, of a relationship of guidance or direction-giving. Leaderism is thirdly composed of a belief in the importance of this relationship of guidance or direction giving. (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.963)

- a. the recognition of discourse as a corpus of statements whose organisation is systematic
- b. the identification of rules of the production of statements
- c. the identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)
- d. the identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made
- e. the identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

The five-step model proposed by Kendall & Wickham (1999) recognises that discourse has rules, and that it can appear as a cluster. Gillies (2013) argues that Foucauldian approaches lend themselves to education as discourse is a necessity in issues of knowledge and power. Furthermore, the five-step approach provides an ideal model to investigate leaderism as it allows for “analysing a discourse in isolation that is, considering the rules internal to it, or the operation of a cluster of discourses.” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.42)

The importance of leadership and leaderism in education

Leithwood & Riehl (2005) argue that, despite its importance in education, it is challenging to define leadership. Furthermore, it can also be argued that no singular recognised definition exists (Bush, 2008, Yukl, 2002). Gumus et al (2018) however, suggests that the role of leadership is to influence others. Kruse (2013) argues that this influence is designed to maximise effort from followers and push towards the achievement of organisational objectives. Gumus et al (2018) argue that most definitions of leadership are concerned with the influencing and instruction of others. To put this into an educational context, Leithwood & Riehl (2005) state that leadership is, “the work of mobilising and influencing others to articulate and achieve the shared intentions and goals” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, p.14). In the context of further education, this research assumes that instruction, buy in and influence are guiding factors for the common understanding of leadership by curriculum managers. Gumus et al (2018) argue that attention began to grow in the field of education leadership at the beginning of the 20th century. This coincided with the growth of scientific management theory in business and industry focused on improving efficiency and quality. Examples included the emergence of functional management theory (Fayol, 1949) and bureaucratic theory (Weber, 1947) which Lunenburg (2003) cited in Gumus et al (2018) argues influenced perceptions of school leadership. Bush (2003) also stated that despite the emergence of functional scientific models, scholars were aware of the need for the consideration of individual characteristics when considering educational leadership and that this ultimately helped the development of

democratic leadership models in the last thirty years. Gumus et al (2018) surmise that there have been a range of leadership models, either developed for education or other sectors, that have drawn analysis from a range of researchers over a sustained period.

The purpose of this research is to analyse the concept of leaderism. In the literature review I have argued that distributed leadership has played a prominent role in the theoretical framework of leaderism. This is a view supported by Gumus et al (2018) who state: “In terms of leadership models, our analyses showed that distributed leadership is the most studied leadership model in educational research” (Gumus et al., 2018, p.31). Gumus et al (2018) also support the notion that distributed leadership is used interchangeably in the literatures with other terms such as “shared leadership, collaborative leadership, delegated leadership and dispersed leadership.” (Gumus et al., 2018, p.41).

Wang (2018) furthered the understanding of the historical movement towards the concept of leaderism by arguing that in the wake of the theory movement educational leadership “entered into a prolonged stage of normal science” (Wang, 2018, p.331). Wang (2018) also asserts that the field of educational leadership has a well-established epistemological paradigm that enables us to guide intellectual inquiries. Gunter (2013) broadly supports this where she argues that educational leadership is a vital field in research and warrants further inquiry using critical and socially critical lenses. Wang (2018) and Kuhn (2012) further consider that educational theory is a key attribute to the epistemological paradigm of leadership. Moreover, the context of leadership is a “post-script disciplinary matrix” (Kuhn, 2012, p.181) that has multiple layers, and both functional ‘what works’ research and an opposing range of critiques of this functionality. Theories such as leaderism play a role in a complex entangled matrix of interwoven research strands (Wang, 2018). In this research leaderism is utilised to explain the conditions for middle managers and provide a theoretical framework to help the understanding of the case study FE college.

The research questions I am seeking to address are:

1. What practices do curriculum managers in further education identify with to enact leadership in a case study college in the North-West of England?

This question is to enable a critical analysis of how leadership and management practice is described and how they prioritise their duties. It will also include the terminology used and the strategies for daily management of their teams and organisational priorities.

2. How do curriculum managers recognise their position and identity in relation to teaching and managing and how is this shaped by the current context for further education?

This question is designed to critically analyse the balance between teaching and managing in their practice, either via direct contact with students or by placing them at the core of their outcomes. In addition, it seeks to identify the importance of teaching in their past or current experiences.

3. To what extent is leaderism a valuable lens to theorise current leadership practice in further education?

The final question is designed to enable a synthesis of the responses against the argued attributes of leaderism, thus facilitating a critical insight into the interlinked discourses that make up the existence of leaderism.

In order to carry out this research I undertook a series of interviews with curriculum managers in a general FE college in the northwest of England during 2017 & 2018. The proposed methodology was a case study, and I used a gatekeeper from within the organisation to access the sample. This resulted in 10 interviews with a sample of managers that identified themselves as being custodians of the curriculum and had responsibility in the middle management tier. Some of the managers also had current teaching practice as part of their duties. Prior to the sample being identified I scoped the college using freely available documentation, the OFSTED report and the strategic planning documents, I used this to identify the college as a large general FE college, with many common attributes of other colleges in the northwest. Once the interview data had been transcribed from the recordings, I used this to undertake a Foucauldian discourse analysis using a 5-step method described by Kendall & Wickham (1999). The purpose of this was to build a critical analysis of how the practices of management that were described by the sample and to relate these to themes analysed in the literature review. The presence of leaderism I have argued, appeared as a hybridisation of a distributed leadership and managerialism that can be used to understand the current discourse for leadership and management in FE. Furthermore, I have argued that both distributed leadership and managerialism have a history linked to FE sector policy reform. I used the interview data to highlight possible links, describe the context and to argue how leaderism enables a critical framework for the understanding of the discourse of leadership and management for curriculum managers in FE.

The contribution of this study seeks to address a gap in knowledge both with the generally under researched group of middle management professionals in FE and to critically evaluate the concept of leaderism in this setting in detail. In doing so I am acknowledging previous work spanning the last 30 years, post incorporation, and arguing how this has impacted the sector, and in particular curriculum management professionals. Furthermore, I have taken steps to map historical factors in the development of leadership theory, distributed leadership, and its ties to managerialist practice for example and argued that these have led to an era of leaderism in FE. Previous studies have considered middle management professionals in FE, notably by Page (2010, 2011) and by Fort (2015). Whilst their studies have sought to use Foucauldian analysis, their focus has been on relationships, identity, and a dominance of data-metrics. Whilst this did appear as a dominant discourse in this research, I have argued that managerialism and data driven management is widely accepted and contributes to a wider discourse understood through the lens of leaderism. In addition, I have also argued that interwoven themes in a discourse analysis are better understood as a network of rhizomes that are fluid, linked and appear interchangeably. With regard to the application of Foucault, the notion of discourse has been applied to understand the data and the description of material practices, the language used, and the priorities given to aspects of leadership and management roles by the group of curriculum managers. This highlighted that despite a range of titles and middle management duties existing across the middle tier, the themes generated had very little variance from data-metric driven practices and a general dominance of functional management perspectives in the interview data. Furthermore, a general narrative of leadership was clearly identifiable as being a preferred approach, despite the responses not actually correlating with popular understandings of the role of a leader and instead demonstrating notions of managerial control.

Rationale for the research

My interest in this research has arisen from my own experiences in FE for the last 20 years. I have worked in a variety of roles, both middle management, teaching and laterally as a teacher trainer. When I entered the FE sector just after the Millennium, I directly encountered the aftereffects of the relatively recent post-incorporation era. Many of my colleagues had recent direct experience of the changes in the wake of incorporation and many still had the old style 'silver book' contracts, these were agreed between the LEA's and the staff unions in 1973 and were generally seen as advantageous (Ainley & Bailey, 1997), with less teaching hours and more holidays than the new

terms on offer in the late 90s. In the first instance I wanted to know more about how this happened and why there were obvious tensions within staff teams, and in my case between new colleagues and those that had remained employed both before and after incorporation. Later I undertook a Masters degree in education, however, the focus of this was largely on the functional application of leadership models to varying strategic situations, the organisation of teams for example. This, whilst enabling me to progress in my career, ultimately did little to further my personal understanding and enable me to truly grasp the context of why the tensions existed. Subsequently, I began another research degree which largely formed the basis for this research. I began to read about critical approaches to leadership, guided by Professor Helen Gunter and this resulted in my discovery and subsequent understanding of managerialist perspectives, and how this had the capacity to critique fashionable approaches to leadership.

Following this, I wanted to embark upon a new research study that specifically explored critical perspectives and the emerging ideas of leaderism by O'Reilly & Reed (2010). Having experienced strong notions of leadership and the powerful rhetoric of leadership language both in my research and in practice, my intention has been to address this gap in knowledge by using critical understanding to evaluate the language and practice vis-à-vis the experiences of curriculum managers. Moreover, literature supports the notion that leaderism is a largely under researched area, especially from an FE perspective, with the focus tending to be on ideological leadership models, such as distributed leadership and institutional values (Tyler & Dymock, 2021). Furthermore, Tian et al (2015) found 720,000 distributed leadership articles between 2002 and 2013.

Further to these professional and prior research experiences I have been contributing to the FE sector for over twenty years. I regularly interact with curriculum managers and the broader middle management tier in colleges, and I provide valuable training opportunities for professionals that are wanting to teach in the FE sector. My belief is that by undertaking this work, I am better placed to undertake my professional duties, through the provision of informed guidance to trainee teachers and undergraduate researchers, whilst also ensuring my own continuous academic development as a researching professional (Fort, 2015).

Structure of the thesis

The first three chapters introduce the context of this research. The first being the introduction, the second covers the context and historical perspectives of FE and the third is a literature review of leadership and management in education.

Chapter two gives an historical account of FE and discusses the origins and its relationship to government policy. In doing this I argue that the current and historical policy context has influenced the core ideas of leaderism and neo-liberal policy ideals that have moulded FE, its development and that there has been a major fall-out post incorporation. Furthermore, I argue that it has an important place in the English & Welsh education system and draw comparisons to other sectors, primary, secondary and university education for example, as all these sectors feature in the literature on leadership. Chapter three considers leadership and management literature from the last twenty years. In doing this I chart a path towards the framework of leaderism and argue for a range of contributing factors in its discourse. I critique functional leadership models, distributed leadership for example, and argue that such literature lacks socially criticality (Gunter, 2012) to enable us to better understand leadership in education and in particular FE. Chapter four gives detail of the research methods employed in this research. I undertook a case study of a large multi-site FE college in the Northwest of England. The data gathered consists of 10 semi-structured interviews with a group of curriculum managers that self-selected via a gatekeeper. I used existing professional contacts to make contact whilst also taking note of publicly available information to identify the characteristics of the college. The process of contacting the sample via the gatekeeper played a role in the data and this is given detailed consideration in the final chapter. In addition, I argue the case for the research of leadership, and in particular a detailed study that utilises a critical approach. The aim of this to analyse leadership and management from the perspective of a generally under researched group of curriculum management professionals. Chapter five is a detailed analysis of the data collected in the interviews. Each response was analysed using a five-step Foucauldian discourse analysis as described by Kendal & Wickham (1999). This chapter provides detail of the responses given and how these link to the concepts of leaderism and Foucauldian discourse. Furthermore, this provides the description of the rhizomes of discourse that are interwoven into this PhD. The final chapter, six, discusses the contribution to knowledge made by this research and critiques the discourse of leadership argued by the existence of related rhizomatic themes that appeared in the analysis. Furthermore, I argue that the notion of leaderism has validity to enable us to understand the current context for curriculum managers in FE. In addition, I critique the methodologies used,

the use of the gatekeeper and their influence on this research. Additionally, I argue for a rhizomatic approach to the final stage of the five-step analysis to better understand the appearance of discursive themes and how they interplay organically in the process of analysis.

Chapter 2 – The context of Further of Education (FE)

The Eras of Leadership

In this chapter I have used the historical context of further education (FE) to argue that eras of leadership exist, and that we are now, since 2003 in the era of leaderism. To do this I have utilised previous work by Wang (2018) that maps dominant framing concepts in educational leadership into time periods. I have presented this analysis in a table below. This chapter recognises that much of the eras are linked to dominant events, the incorporation of FE for example, and the concepts of managerialism and distributed leadership. I am arguing that leaderism is a hybridised theory that draws upon managerialism and distributed leadership and this has happened as a result of the neoliberal context that has driven policy reform in the FE sector.

Wang (2018) argues that since the “inception of the educational leadership field, many scholars have strived to define the disciplinary matrix that shapes the field” (Wang, 2018, p.331). I would further argue that a sizable body of literature exists that covers the theoretical field of educational leadership, for example distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000, Harris, 2004, Leithwood, 2009). However, Oplatka (2009) argues that the intellectual efforts in the field of educational leadership, for example the narrative and knowledge production that seeks to analyse these concepts is lacking in criticality. This is a view shared by Gunter & Fitzgerald (2015) as Gunter (2005) argues that:

Knowledge work is about challenging sameness by confronting strangeness, where practice means a refusal to accept customs, rituals, and the familiar world unquestioningly. Consequently, educational leadership is exercised through understanding the broader forces shaping work and resisting domestication and not being dominated by outside authorities (Gunter, 2005, p.167)

Gunter (2005) further argues that for this level of critical knowledge production to be achieved a commitment from the scholarship field has to be reflexive and via “thoughtful research” (Gunter 2005, p.167). I have previously argued that much of the knowledge claims on educational leadership are functional in nature and therefore lacking in criticality for example see Leithwood et al (2006), Harris & Spillane (2008). Despite this however, Wang (2018) draws upon the work of Oplatka (2009, 2010) to map the dominant discourses in educational leadership up to the early 2000’s. I have included this table below:

Table 1. Dominant Framing Concepts in Educational Leadership (the 1950's to the early 2000's)
(Wang, 2018, p.332)

Time periods	Dominant Framing Concepts Identified in Prior Studies
1950s / 1960s	Griffiths (1959): social system and role theory, leadership theory, decision-making theory, organisational theory
1970s	Culbertson (1981), Hoy (1982), and Willower (1980): role theory, social system theory, open system theory, contingency theory, loosely coupled theory
1980s	Oplatka (2009, 2010): organisational culture, organisational climate, organisational theory, motivation, efficacy, loosely coupled theory, instructional leadership
1990s	Oplatka (2009, 2010): organisational theory, loosely coupled theory, organisational culture, organisational climate, bureaucracy, empowerment, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, moral leadership, democratic leadership, trust, school culture
2000s	Oplatka (2009, 2010): social justice leadership, distributed leadership, moral leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, trust, school culture

Whilst table 1 provides an overview of the historical focus of a range of the theoretical writings over a historical period, it does not fully acknowledge the plethora of commentators in this field, and in particular the dominance of distributed leadership from the early 2000s. It does however, provide an illuminative view of the historical focus and to some extent reinforces the domination of school-based research in the field of leadership. Wang (2018) goes some way to clarifying this by acknowledging the limitations of some of the concepts, especially the earlier ones from the 50s and 60s as “these theories primarily stated that a school and its people are in a closed system organisation, in which the absence of social, economic, and political impact was palpable” (Wang 2018, p.332). In addition, many of the theories from the early 50's and 60's had been borrowed from the social sciences and had a very simple theoretical structure (Wang, 2018).

Central to the theoretical framework of this research has been the argument that leadership (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) has evolved from a hybrid of distributed leadership and managerialism, that have become imbued in the discourse of leadership practice and the language used to describe leadership in FE. By considering Table 1 above I am arguing that we are now in the era of leadership and this fits

broadly into the mapping of the field as previously considered by Oplatka (2009). To illustrate this point **Table 2** has been produced.

Table 2. Dominant Framing Concepts in FE Educational Leadership (the 1950's to the early 2000's) (Wang, 2018, p.332) edited by Lea (2022)

Time periods	Dominant Framing Concepts Identified in Prior Studies (Wang 2022)	Eras of Leadership in FE considered by Lea (2022)
1950s & 60s	Griffiths (1959): social system and role theory, leadership theory, decision-making theory, organisational theory	Era 1, Pre-history – 1944, development of the Mechanics institutes and vocational education, functional
1970s	Culbertson (1981), Hoy (1982), and Willower (1980): role theory, social system theory, open system theory, contingency theory, loosely coupled theory	Era 2, Post 1944 – FE under LEA control, bureaucratic control, inefficiency
1980s	Oplatka (2009, 2010): organisational culture, organisational climate, organisational theory, motivation, efficacy, loosely coupled theory, instructional leadership	Era 3, Lead up to incorporation in FE, passing of 1988 education act, neoliberalism
1990s	Oplatka (2009, 2010): organisational theory, loosely coupled theory, organisational culture, organisational climate, bureaucracy, empowerment, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, moral leadership, democratic leadership, trust, school culture	Era 4, The Era of incorporation (1992) and Managerialism (1993 – 2003)
2000s	Oplatka (2009, 2010): social justice leadership, distributed leadership, moral leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, trust, school culture	Era 5, The beginning of the era of Leaderism, (2003 – present)

Historical perspectives – overview of era's 1,2 &3

Further Education (FE) plays a major role in providing vocational education in the current education system, despite being somewhat undervalued (Bailey & Unwin, 2014). Hodgson (2015) argues that FE offers an alternative to the traditional views of a 'proper education', where students stay in school and take A-levels and then go on to university. Secondly, it has genuine complexity and covers a wide range of levels of study, subjects, and diverse access, in principle for all members of society, however, those who have completed with higher GCSE grades generally go to sixth form colleges. Many types of provision are associated with the sector ranging from entry level courses, apprenticeships, and higher education degrees. Teacher training for FE is also widely available. Traditionally, FE has been described as a provider of 'second chance education' (Fenge, 2011) or the 'Cinderella sector' (Randle & Brady, 1997). Whilst these descriptions are disparaging and suggest neglect and underdevelopment in comparison to schools and Higher Education (HE). The need for sectors such as FE to provide opportunities is of paramount importance, although the associated ideology that FE supports a commodification of education through 'skills for work' is highly contestable in its validity (Daley et al., 2015) and has been reinforced with the recent FE white paper 'Skills for Jobs' (DfEE, 2021). FE does have a huge role to play in upskilling and in providing a skilled workforce for trades and customer facing private sector jobs, as it can cater for those who are not served by school and universities (Hodgson, 2015). In addition, despite a clear need for FE provision, there have been many confused government initiatives associated with FE, the 14-19 diploma for example. Furthermore, FE, Hodgson (2015), Bailey & Unwin (2014) all argue occupies a lower political profile than other education sectors. This has resulted in an ever changing, untidy history that has provided FE with a complex context. Arguably, the most significant change in FE following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act led to the incorporation of colleges in 1992. This meant that colleges became free standing institutions for the first time since 1902, as some were voluntarily run by the LEA prior to 1944, when the Education Act of the time had placed statutory requirements for local authorities to provide substantive FE (Simmons, 2009). In 1992 colleges became self-managed and free from overall Local Education Authority (LEA) control. The responsibility for FE colleges shifted to boards of governors and to their appointed Principal or Chief Executive. Prior to 1992, local management of colleges was included in the 1988 Education Act, meaning that governing bodies assumed financial control (Simmons, 2009), as was the removal of polytechnics from LEA control, which then led to the passing of the Further and Higher education act in 1992. Ultimately the removal of polytechnics as part of this from LEA control led the way for the Incorporation of colleges four years later.

From April 1, 1993, FE colleges became responsible for their own affairs, and direct employers of their staff. Funding ceased to pass through local education authorities (LEAs) and new arrangements created a centralised system of resource allocation whereby colleges received funding directly from a national funding council (Simmons, 2009, p.287)

Simmons (2009) states that the “early years of incorporation were particularly fraught” (Simmons, 2009, p.287). Many staff left FE and redundancies and restructuring became commonplace (Burchill, 1998). FE colleges became increasingly demanding places to work, particularly for teachers. Workloads increased, and general working conditions deteriorated. Furthermore, increased managerialist approaches eroded professional autonomy (Ainley & Bailey, 1997, Randle & Brady, 1997, Avis, 2003, Avis & Bathmaker, 2004). Simmons (2009) describes this as “macho-management in many colleges: strike action and industrial unrest became commonplace; and there were a number of well-publicised cases of financial imbroglio” (Simmons, 2009, p.288). This resulted in a rise of neoliberalism and an augmented role for calculative practices based on costs, benefits and financial returns in education (Mennicken & Miller, 2012). In addition, Dennis (2016) argues that a triumvirate of efficiency, effectiveness and economy began to dominate the discourse of the FE sector and has affected the ontology and ethical well-being of FE professionals as they became conflicted to focus on costs and targets. Initially, following incorporation Principals were cast as Chief Executives and a quasi-market was created that encouraged engineered competition whilst being maintained by the state (Simmons, 2009).

Voluntarily founded Mechanics Institutes of the early 19th century became technical colleges when LEAs came onto the scene at end of 19th century. This was largely due to the intention of the Mechanics institutes to bring skilled education to the masses and provide much needed skills for industry. This subsequently led to the formation of the post war general FE colleges (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Despite this however, Ainley & Bailey (1997) argued that few people understood the nature of the work of FE and that the growth in their services, away from the general upskilling of male tradespeople, was a new trend in the 90s. Ainley & Bailey (1997) also argued at the time that policy makers had little understanding of FE as it was unlikely that they had ever studied at a technical college. I would argue that this has continued to modern day. In the lead up to incorporation LEAs were seen as ideologically flawed, wasteful and restrictive of market conditions by conservative governments. Furthermore, they believed them to be pedestrian and overly bureaucratic (Simmons, 2009). This ultimately led to incorporation following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. Currently, we are in what could be described as the post-incorporation era and Lucas (2004) states that “haphazard development, has left FE in an ambiguous position” (Lucas, 2004, p.39). Lucas

(2004) argues that FE has a largely problematised identity incumbent of multiple segments with a disparate relationship, characterised by a diverse range of skills offered and a group of professionals from varying backgrounds working in the sector. Bailey and Unwin (2015) also argue that this diverse legacy and an overall lack of continuous strategic clarity has led to the sector being clearly distinguishable from its other education sector counterparts like primary, secondary and universities. Ainley and Bailey (1997) further emphasise that within FE there are upwards of a hundred mini-sectors. The existence of mini-sectors alludes to the concept of disparity in the sector and is further accentuated when considered against the constant change to policy initiatives and curricula frameworks. In 2012, the *Times Educational Supplement (TES)* reported that FE colleges were to have their funding entitlements reduced, in the face of much criticism from the Association of Colleges (AOC). The TES (2012) explained that as a result of this colleges would be become bidding machines and would avidly pursue pockets of money to stay afloat. According to the Education Policy Institute (www.epi.org.uk) the funding per student in real terms from 2010 to 2019 has shrunk by £1000. This circumstance has indeed been a reality for colleges up to the current day as historically colleges have always had to compete against schools and universities for business. Ainley and Bailey (1997) further argued:

Colleges have always had to attract business in the form of students to their courses and programmes... they have always to some extent had to operate in a competitive market. (Ainley & Bailey, 1997, p.11)

Notions of commerce and entrepreneurship have provided the context for FE since the incorporation and have arguably intensified of late, especially when faced with real term cuts to funding. The significant event of incorporation for colleges was construed as an attempt to undermine the power and influence of the LEAs (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). This aim was justified by the principle that quasi-marketisation would lead to improvements in the sector by raising participation, improving results and the overall quality of teaching (Corbett, 2020, Relly, 2020). Corbett (2020) argues that whilst valid discussions about teaching have taken place, and a general move to modernise practice has occurred, the main issue has been one of consistency with a constant change of regulatory bodies, most of which have only lasted 5 years. This situation has led to the belief that there are examples of institutions in the sector that have become entrepreneurially sophisticated, as they forge systems to maximise funding opportunities and ruthlessly target subject areas for potential increased returns (Fort, 2015). Subsequently employment contracts began to change, with fewer holidays available and a large increase in non-academic roles in the colleges for example estates, finance and personnel, as these were no longer provided by the LEA. In 2002 when I entered FE it became apparent that different employment contracts were in existence with some colleagues

on 'silver book' contracts. This situation occurred as the existing FE teachers resisted the changes to their terms and conditions. Ainley & Bailey (1997) describe the silver book contracts in the context of the transition from the LEAs to college corporations:

The shift from college staff being the employees of the local education authorities to the college corporations meant a change in arrangements for determining staff pay, conditions of service and other issues. These had been embodied on quite advantageous terms for staff in the 1973 Silver Book agreement between the LEAs and staff unions. For the first time this represented a codified set of national conditions for all lecturers in colleges, described by the Daily Mail as a 'skivers charter' (Ainley & Bailey, 1997, p.24).

Ainley & Bailey (1997) highlight the complexities of the phasing out of the Silver Book era as new arrangements for negotiating pay were introduced alongside more flexible yet less favourable terms of contemporary contracts. This largely resulted in longer working weeks, more teaching hours, and less holidays. The rights of the silver book were protected under European law, however, many employees were either reappointed to new positions on new contracts or had their pay frozen. This situation continued for many years post incorporation. During post incorporation the complexity of roles and job titles also began to diversify with new titles appearing such as, Advanced Practitioner (AP), Learning Coach and Curriculum Co-ordinator, Gleeson (2005) termed this as "the proliferation of para-professionals, casualisation and an array of different job titles" (Gleeson, 2005, p.240). FE entered a new era, I have called this era 4, almost exclusively characterised by neoliberal ideals and an increased focus on markets, competition and management. This neoliberalism can be traced back to Thatcherism (Gleeson & Husbands, 2003) and has been argued to be ideological, and incumbent of a conformist approach to quasi-markets and performativity (Ball, 2003). Ball (2003) further argues that this period, post incorporation, formed the basis of the education reform package and was applied vigorously across schools, colleges, and universities. Ball (2003) further asserts that these values were embedded in three related "policy technologies" (Ball, 2003, p.215). These three technologies outlined by Ball (2003) happened in FE and embodied market creation, managerialism, and performativity. They have, I have argued, underpinned the notion of leaderism in FE (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010).

Issues in FE & the move to era's 4 & 5

Corbett (2020) states that since incorporation of FE colleges, the sector has undergone multiple changes that have affected those who work or study in the sector. This has led to participation in initiatives, for example the introduction of the study programme, a failed diploma scheme in the middle of the noughties and multiple changes to vocational programmes. There have also been

changes to Higher Education (HE) in FE, with colleges looking to offer an increased array of localised HE courses, despite their overall market share decreasing. Furthermore, in recent times the development of wider ranging apprenticeship standards at both above and below level 3 (Keep, 2018, Relly, 2020) has enhanced the focus on higher level employment skills. Continued turbulence has affected management approaches negatively due to the increased focus on numbers (Laing, 2018). Spours (2007) describes this as being driven by policy levers and this has resulted in a complex climate for further education. Corbett (2020) also argues that change is not only limited to policy reforms:

Change within the FE sector is not limited to policy reforms alone. The bodies which were established to support the FE sector have risen and fallen through the years. In 2006, FENTO was replaced by LLUK which was then closed in 2011. Some of LLUK's remit moved to the Institute for Learning (IfL) and the Learning Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), both of which became defunct, and in 2014 the Education & Training Foundation (ETF) was founded, later being joined by the Society for Education and Training (SET) (Corbett, 2020, p.3).

In the last eight years the FE sector has been restructured on a national scale via the area reviews, this process was managed by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS). These reviews had mixed success, with not all recommendations being carried out, but did seek to ensure that FE providers had the structural and financial capacity, despite cuts to funding, to deliver on the England and Wales wide industrial strategy (Corbett, 2020). Currently the FE sector services a variety of students categorised according to age with a varying and complex range of funding streams, much as it always has.

According to... the Department for Education (DfE, 2018), in 2017/18 the FE sector delivered qualification-based education and training to 1.13 million students aged 16–18 years old and 2.23 million adults aged over 19. In addition to these figures, there were 814,800 apprentices and 504,500 adults on community courses as well as students with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) who also undertook study in FE providers. (Corbett 2020, p.4)

The Association of Colleges stated that in 2017/18 there were 120,000 full-time equivalent employed staff, and this reduced to 105,000 in 2021/22, of which 50,000 are teaching staff. (AoC 2018 & 2021/22). The Department of Business and Innovation Skills, post 16 education and training institutions review (BIS, 2015) also highlights the likelihood of strong economic returns in England to be gained from government funded qualifications (BIS, 2015), therefore a contradiction has occurred. Despite the economic benefits of funding the FE sector to support economic growth, the overall financial support has been reduced. The AOC (2018) further reported that “collectively students aged over 19 years will boost the economy by £70b over their lifetime” (Corbett, 2020, p.4). Corbett (2020) argues that this demonstrates the FE sector's important role, not just as a tool

to upskill, but as a major factor in the fiscal wellbeing of the United Kingdom. This importance, however, has fuelled the rise in student commodification (Boocock, 2019) and further problematised the long-standing context of de-professionalisation and depoliticising of the teaching profession (Dennis, 2016, Elliott, 1996, Randle & Brady, 1997, Stoten, 2015).

Despite the significant contribution of FE both economically and educationally the sector has been subject to deep financial cuts. 2013 saw a change in how FE funding was calculated. A House of Commons impact document outlined that these funding changes would mean a cut in overall funding per student (Hubble, 2014). Recently the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned the area reviews of the FE sector, as stated previously not all recommendations were undertaken and this was comparable to academisation in the schools (Corbett, 2020). In bringing colleges together to improve efficiencies of their operating costs the overall outcome would have seen a 26% reduction in the number of FE providers (DfE, 2019). I would argue that this strategy was an embellished cost cutting exercise.

Boocock (2015) argues that the period of 1992 – 2014, I have argued coincides with era's 4 and 5, resulted in a policy agenda that enabled "agent self-interest" where institutional financial gain, the meeting of targets and self-improvement agendas override the principal goals of education, where the education on offer is simply what is viable, rather than array of choice (Boocock, 2015, p.174). Boocock (2015) acknowledges that defining this concept of self-interest is complex as there is limited agreement between economists, psychologists, sociologists, and other scholars regarding the nature of human motivation, and what constitutes an overriding focus on self. Boocock (2015) also argues that self-interest incorporates altruism and the need to commit to a task via shared professional values. The 1992 Higher and Further Education act enabled the Conservative government to replace state provision with partially independent FE provision, operating in a competitive marketplace (Leader, 2004). This resulted in the creation of the FE quasi-market and decisions about what was to be funded was managed via the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The overall aim was to increase student numbers at a lower overall average cost (Lucas, 2004). In the original period post incorporation colleges only received 90% of their previous years funding. This was intended to force colleges to grow year on year (FEFC, 2001). Boocock (2015) argues that this type of incentive led to self-interest of college agents, focused on economics through the pressure to constantly increase recruitment. Lucas (2004) states that this led to pressure on colleges to focus on recruitment, retention and achievement to generate funds and thus guarantee survival. To manage this de-centralised management environments were created that assumed a private sector approach resulting in managerialist policies that would result in improvements in efficiency and accountability.

Furthermore Boocock (2015) argues that this has not been successful as this over reliance on self-interest has had an overall detrimental effect on lecturer motivation and professional values.

Following the election victory of the Labour Party in 1997, the White Paper *Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Post-16 Learning* (DFEE, 1999) posited a need for further change at all levels of governance, regional, local and national. This was followed by *Success for All* paper (DfES, 2002) which also criticised the lack of consistent standards in the FE sector and sought to improve governance of teaching and learning and increased use of data driven metrics. Boocock (2015) argues that this created an even more regulated and centralised sector still dependent on the notion of agent self-interest.

More specifically, the office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) replaced the FEFC in 2001 as the institution responsible for incentivising 'self-interested' college agents (managers and lecturers) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in line with New Labour's economic and social objectives (Boocock, 2015, p.176).

This resulted in the creation of inspection grades that required a minimum grade of performance to be met. Failure to do so would include penalties such as re-inspection or special measures being used to force change. In the last 20 years there have been multiple updates to the Ofsted inspection framework, including changes in focus, alterations to grading criteria and the ultimate removal of graded individual lessons. However, the accountability framework remains and in the case of schools can result in forced academisation (Ofsted 2000 – 2021). Historically, further success based financial incentives, based on outcomes for students, have been introduced to the FE sector to address government priorities and target key agendas, including improvements in the number of students gaining level 2 equivalent qualifications in English and Mathematics. Boocock (2015) argues that this also furthered the notion of economically driven self-interest. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was introduced by the Labour Party administration and a series of reviews were planned that would transfer the running of smaller underperforming or inefficient providers to larger ones. Performance indicators such as growth, retention and achievement would be used and these then had to meet larger strategic priorities, to improve success rates and improve colleges not meeting targets. Demographics were also used to assess whether recruitment targets for widening participation were being met. Whilst this did not go ahead in full until much later, it incentivised colleges to improve their performance against key performance indicators including success and retention and an emphasis on the meeting of funding formulae. Boocock (2015) termed this "gaming behaviours" (Boocock, 2015, p.177). Coffield (2008) argued that full reviews did not happen at the time as the LSC lacked the political power to reorganise complex provision such as the 16-19 sector. Alton et al

(2007) did however argue that the introduction of the LSC resulted in a price effect, aimed at commodifying the provision offered by FE colleges and resulting in a rise in colleges being graded as outstanding. Area reviews did eventually take place in the period between 2015 – 2019 resulting in further rationalisation and funding cuts in the sector. Post-2010 under the coalition government (2010 – 2014) a desired shift from New Labour's micromanagement was sought in favour of more enterprising and flexible business structures to ensure colleges were responsive to job market conditions, this ultimately meant further efficiencies. However, Boocock (2015) writes that this new enterprising approach is still underpinned by agents of self-interest, and reinforced difficulties for a needs led equity approach and increasingly efficient access to courses for disadvantaged groups in the 14-19 sector.

New funding and inspection incentives have been introduced to increase... competition between providers of education and training for 14-19 year old and adult learners. The objective is that these funding and inspection incentives should shift the focus of the sector from supply to meeting demand and, in doing so, provide the human capital requirements of businesses at lower average cost (Boocock, 2015, p.176)

Relly (2020) argues that the system for development for vocational skills is, in the UK, generally seen as an inferior route and is a "poor cousin" (Relly, 2020, p.1) to schools and higher education. Relly (2020) also states that the age of marketisation has become largely untenable due to a lack of funding and the reduction of teaching strategies to a set of quantifiable tasks. This has been further underlined by more stringent Ofsted inspection frameworks (O'Leary, 2014). Relly (2020) states that "a consequence is that the freedom to develop and deliver curriculum in a way that is meaningful to students becomes particularly difficult" (Relly, 2020, p.1). Gleeson et al (2015) suggest that:

While welcoming the recent focus on vocational pedagogy in FE, we are concerned that the emphasis on 'how to teach', learning styles and skills remains more closely tied to surface knowledge and inspection criteria than engaging critically with building capability that supports the needs and expertise of learners and teachers on the ground (Gleeson et al., 2015, p.92).

I would argue that the examples given support the agent of self-interest neoliberal driven policy approach and have exemplified the rise of risk averse institutions, that focus on procedures to monitor performance and recommendations for homogenous teaching practice. (Daley et al., 2015). These risk-averse institutions in FE have created challenging conditions due to the domination of consumerism and accountability culture, thus minimising the exploration of a "pedagogy of air, that open up spaces and calls for a will to learn" (Daley et al., 2015 p.50). This has affected all FE stakeholders including employees and students. Boocock (2015) draws upon the work of Le Grand

(2001, 2003) to give a narrow definition of self-interest termed “homo economicus” (Boocock, 2015, p.176). In short this refers to a man that is motivated by money and that this metaphor extols the virtues of quasi-marketisation. Gunter & Fitzgerald (2015) infer that an attempt has been made in education to economise what it means to be human. The external incentives and agent of self-interests are serviced by funding formulae and league tables, which has resulted in limited professional autonomy and decentralised, disparate management structures (Le Grand, 2001). Whilst FE is far less researched than secondary education, there is evidence to support reductive, economic based effects on the FE sector, up to present day post-incorporation (Boocock, 2015).

Bailey and Unwin (2015) broadly support the views of Boocock, Relly and Gleeson. They acknowledge that FE colleges have been an important part of the British education system for over 100 years but also argue that they “still lack the visibility enjoyed by schools and universities in public life and in the research literature” (Bailey & Unwin, 2015, p.449). Gleeson and James (2007) term FE as a typical case in the new public management era that emphasises performativity (Ball, 2003) and managerialist policy approaches (Randle & Brady, 1997). Despite this, ongoing waves of government experimentation (Keep, 2006) and general castigation by inspectors (Goddard-Patel & Whitehead, 2001, Ofsted, 2012), Bailey and Unwin (2015) argue that English FE colleges have largely retained many characteristics of their predecessors from 100 years ago. They argue that:

The FE story is important because the work of colleges is a continuing manifestation of the voluntarist nature of education and training for both young people and adults beyond that which is deemed necessary for entry to most professions (Bailey & Unwin, 2015, p.450)

During the early 20th century the term ‘technical education’ generally was used to describe FE colleges (Bailey & Unwin, 2015). From the 1960s the term ‘further education’ began to appear and, in 2001, following the replacement of the FEFC with the LSC, FE was referred to as the learning and skills sector, and FE colleges were placed as private and voluntary sector organisations, that operated a business-like management model. This was a deliberate approach as there was a shift in the seemingly more fluid notion of the learning process as opposed to the receiving of an education (Biesta, 2006, Bailey & Unwin, 2015). This emphasis on learning allowed a new focus on learning experiences being constructed in differing ways via a system of skills acquisition and the gathering of formatively assessed evidence. Following the formation of the coalition government in 2010, the term ‘further education and skills system’ appeared and then abbreviated to FE in policy documents (Bailey & Unwin, 2015). The Augar Review (DfE, 2019) recommended increasing funding to FE colleges to improve their ability to recruit and retain a suitably high-skilled workforce. The report did

not, however, give specific detail about how this would be achieved (Relly, 2020). The argument about the skills of the FE workforce is nothing new, as the requirement to require a formal teaching qualification was introduced in 2001. This was subsequently rescinded in 2012 following the Lingfield (BIS, 2012) Review with the coalition formally ending the statutory requirement to hold a recognised teacher training award for FE in 2013 (Avis, Fisher & Thompson, 2019). The general belief initially, was that attainment of a teaching qualification would raise standards of teaching in the sector (Lawy & Tedder, 2011), however, given the changes after the Lingfield Review, I would argue the overall effect is hard to ascertain. Despite the removal of this requirement, possession of a substantive teaching qualification remains preferred by the FE sector with the route allowing for autonomy and a progressive and structured transition from industry into a vocational teaching career (Avis, Fisher & Thompson, 2019, Smithers, 2018). Relly (2020) argues that these policy changes have created disparity and highlighted the differences for FE teachers accessing the profession:

This qualifying process is in stark contrast, though, to teachers in primary and secondary school who are required to undertake ITT qualifications at university before entering the profession. Ultimately though, this difference perpetuates a sense of disparity among the workforces of the different institution, and creates a sense of tension in professionalism (Best, Ade-Ojo & McKelvey cited in Relly, 2020, p.2)

Despite recent changes in the schools sector to include a wider range of school based training, In highlighting this disparity Relly (2020) is further adding to the context of FE described by Unwin & Bailey, Boocock, Gleeson, and Simmons as being disparate and undervalued. The ambiguities surrounding the qualifications required to access the FE teaching profession are another example of agent self-interest policy, as it allows for manipulation to support wider economic needs. Teaching qualifications in FE have a history of being specific competence-based qualifications, despite earlier iterations of the certificate in education, other City & Guilds and 'D' numbers reinforced the idea that the role of a teacher in FE as being concerned with being a trainer or assessor. These were ultimately altered to become Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and thus resulted in a lower uptake of teaching qualifications in FE (Best, Ade-Ojo & McKelvey, 2019). I would argue that the current suite of teaching qualifications contains complexities due to the existence of both University awarded teaching programmes and awarding body courses, and this dates as far back as the 1940's, that have variance in their academic focus. In addition, the introduction of Apprenticeship standards for FE teaching (DfE, 2021) has also contributed to the dilution of a dominant recognised route into the profession, which had previously been the certificate in education, or a lifelong learning PGCE. This has meant consistency in FE has been a continuous challenge with a consistent recognised route into the profession ceasing to ever exist (Corbett,

2020). The complexity of the FE sector, and the varied backgrounds of staff (Clow, 2001) generally is to be expected, given the range of skills required in a college, and I would argue goes someway to partially vindicating the varied routes into the sector, however this also contributes to the underlying tension of disparity. One attempt to abate this has been the formation of the Society for Education and Training (SET), now part of the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA). SET has been tasked since 2015 with maintaining a code of practice and promoting professional development that leads to the award of QTLS in FE (Avis, Fisher & Thompson, 2019). These standards are currently under review and overall, the effect has been minimal.

New Challenges, New Chances paper (BIS, 2011) was the coalition government's plan to reform the FE sector. The impact of this is still relevant as the SET still exists as part of the TRA and QTLS is widely recognised, albeit with a generally mixed overall critique of its effectiveness and only some overall vaguely represented improvement (Corbett, 2020). Following this in 2013 the *Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning* (CAVTL, 2013) made a compelling case for the robust training of teaching in FE, with a focus on the promotion of dual professionalism (Shain & Gleeson, 1999, Orr & Simmons, 2010). In the CAVTL report dual professionals are broadly defined as "teachers and trainers with occupational experience, who can combine this with excellent teaching and learning practice" (CAVTL, 2013, p.8). Shain & Gleeson (1999) assert that utilising dual identities can be problematic whilst Orr and Simmons (2010) state that, "although most trainees manage the dual roles well and appreciate being able to earn while training, the tensions between being an educator and a trainee can lead to expediency and conservative teaching approaches" (Orr & Simmons, 2010, p.76). I would argue that this duality is simplistic when considered against the modern-day sector, and the added complexities of the embedding of English and Mathematics into core subject teaching. Colley (2007) describes this as a static "shuttling" (Colley, 2007, p.177) between the constraints of conservative teaching practice that restrict the essence of being a professional. In addition, the neoliberal decentralised forms of governance remain (Keep, 2016), and has resulted in duties of FE staff having increased complexity against the context of the example reforms, like the 16-19 Study Programme and the focus on apprenticeships. This in turn results in a triumvirate of issues for middle leaders in FE, as they combine their industry backgrounds, their teaching identities and then progress to middle leadership roles and the associated pressures (Page, 2013). Overall, there is much less consistency with regards to standards and expectations in management roles for FE (Corbett, 2020). In 1999 FENTO introduced standards for managers, that were not widely adopted, furthermore, none of the relevant sector bodies sought to promote them or develop them (Briggs, 2005). Corbett (2017) also criticised the range of existing management programmes as these

often lack context and standards to relate to the role of a curriculum manager. Gunter (2009) is also critical of such prescriptive leadership courses, as they lack criticality to adequately deal with the demands of the management role. Beresford & Michels (2014), Briggs (2005) and Leader (2004) discuss curriculum management duties and suggest that there are areas of commonality, for example the requirement to implement top-down priorities, however, their studies indicate that the perceptions of the management role and their agreed duties are generally institutionally specific as “in its most basic form, the curriculum management role is one that implements strategy set by senior management” (Corbett, 2020, p.5). Curriculum management is complex, and multi-dimensional and is difficult to support with generic training. Corbett (2020) argues that FE middle managers are often underprepared for the role, and this is exacerbated by diverse career trajectories and ineffectual specific training (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2015).

Impact of the FE context: Managerialist positivism & Normalisation, era 5, leaderism

Smith (2015) describes FE as “FE-incorporated” (Smith cited in Daley et al., 2015, p.91). He also argues that in the years post-incorporation corporate identities via logos, glossy marketing materials and in some cases attempts to introduce uniforms for staff have been introduced (Daley et al., 2015). I would also argue that a hegemonic discourse of management and teaching practice, for example a focus on what works, has largely resulted through normalisation of these practices and accepted notions of power, control, trust and freedom (O’Leary, 2015). Daley et al (2015) also argues that FE-incorporated has a visible architectural language and that despite new freedoms for senior FE leaders to organise and plan their institutions as they wish, many of the modern FE buildings look like shopping malls. This “architectural model” (Daley et al., 2015, p.92) emerged in the post-incorporation era and reflects, quasi-marketisation, a reductive economic model and the culture of corporate education. The wide acceptance of such reductive and marketised ideals in FE has resulted in the dominance of managerialist positivism (Smith & O’leary, 2013). Managerialist positivism Daley et al (2015) argues is the result of increased accountability, and the “objectification of FE students as funding fodder” (Daley et al., 2015, p.92). Dennis (2016) concurs with Daley et al (2015) that FE has been ideologically reduced to a simplified and commodified mantra of education for employment. In addition, much of the history of FE is reflected in the buildings, which were originally adapted from post-war urban expansion of Victorian buildings (Daley et al., 2015). This resulted in many disparate examples of accommodation, that were based on need and localism, many of these have now been demolished however, this happened over an extended period.

In the run up to incorporation, there was a localism, and a pragmatism in that the courses being delivered and the needs met were perceived to be more important than the branded

experience. But an increasing focus on FE as the vanguard sector in a competitive and marketized global skills race has meant a big change in the FE estate (Daley et al., 2015, p.93)

Daley et al (2015) uses the work of Woolner et al (2007) to assert that the simple equation of new, increasingly corporate-looking buildings does not lead to better results, a more skilled workforce, and a more competitive economy. I would argue this only provides colleges with a business style brand set against continued funding issues.

In addition to the appearance of the buildings the surveillance of teachers emerged as a priority and links to the idiom of managerialist positivism (Smith & O’leary, 2013). The hegemony of lesson observation systems and the development of data-led surveillance models have been firmly evidenced as an emerging culture in FE (O’Leary, 2013, 2014, Ball, 2003, 2012). O’Leary & Brooks (2014) describe this as the introduction of “high-stakes assessment” (O’ Leary & Brooks, 2014, p.531) and that the tool of observation practice can lead to consequences for the observed and thus erode trust between managers and teachers. In recent times however, O’Leary (2019) has described numerous alternatives to formal high-stakes lesson observation, peer-to-peer collaborations, and the unobserved lesson. Variations of these have been implemented as Ofsted (2021) has moved away from individual graded lessons however, institutions still embark upon regular ungraded surveillance that has been increasingly creatively named, learning walks for example (Baker & King, 2013). Despite this Boocock (2019) maintains that FE retains its surveillance and marketisation approaches, and models of leadership, distributed leadership (Harris, 2004) for example and continued managerialism, have done little to change this. Indeed, I would argue this has magnified such approaches in the current era and given space for leaderism (O’Reilly & Reed, 2010) to be embedded and accepted.

30 years post incorporation this research explores the FE context whilst accepting that a degree of normalisation (Foucault, 1977) has been experienced by the sector because of policy turbulence and the acceptance of current FE leaderist culture. To reinforce this, Avis (2002), Daley et al (2015) and O’leary (2013) have commented on the resistance of FE employees to this normalisation of marketised conditions and made a case that these pockets of resistance have created spaces for practitioners to work creatively and autonomously. Daley et al (2015) use the metaphor of the princesses leaving the tower at night.

It introduces evidence of an emerging culture of counter-hegemony in some institutions. It argues that in these counter- hegemonic spaces practitioners are most likely to experience the kind of freedom enjoyed by the princesses who escape the confines of the king’s castle

each night. Furthermore, in such spaces the greatest gains are likely to be made in improving teaching and the student experience (O’leary cited in Daley et al., 2015 p.74-75).

In the case of FE, this is an inference of strategic compliance from teachers and managers bred by oppressive, performative culture (Page, 2010). In the early stages of post-incorporation FE the workforce was a hybrid of new employees and pre-incorporation employees, both with differing perspectives. On the one hand new practitioners in FE hadn’t witnessed the shift in emphasis experienced by existing staff (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Resistance, however, was much stronger than it is today, due to gaming behaviours (Boocock, 2015) whereby policies of self-interest adopted by FE colleges ensure targets are met. In addition, most of the current workforce being post 1993, have been subject to the normalisation of hegemonic management practice, through entrepreneurial solutions (Corbett, 2020) that has taken a grip on the FE sector. Taylor (2009) states that for Foucault, “the norm is the norm” (Taylor, 2009, p.46). In the case of FE, these norms, I have argued, are underpinned by self-interested organisations (Boocock, 2015), hegemonic approaches to the surveillance of teachers (O’leary, 2014), problematic issues of dual identity (Shain & Gleeson, 99) and the general lack of understanding around the complexities of middle FE management (Corbett, 2020). From a Foucauldian perspective, Taylor (2009) would contend that none of these attributes that appear to be fundamental to the discourse of working in FE should be accepted, “and that such refusal creates possibilities for developing alternative modes of thought and existence which increase persons’ capacities and expand their possibilities without simultaneously increasing and expanding proliferation of power within society” (Taylor, 2009, p.46). Essentially by questioning these norms, FE stakeholders and curriculum managers could have a larger capacity to develop autonomy and implement improvements to resources and teaching for students. Taylor (2009) calls this the “practice of freedom” (Taylor, 2009, p.46). O’Leary (2014) exemplifies the view of what he terms the “normalising gaze” (O’Leary, 2014, p.79) by using the Ofsted inspection framework and the performative mechanisms that are served by internal quality functions. O’Leary (2014) uses the work of Foucault to asserts that “surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action” (Foucault, 1977, p.201). O’Leary (2014) also argues that the premise in FE and overarching need for surveillance is built on a context of mistrust, which in turn effects conditions for curriculum managers. Foucault also asserts that the power of normalisation leads to the imposition of homogeneity, whereby colleges lose their identity and implement broad managerial practices. (Foucault, 1977). Kopecky (2011) argues that this further emphasises the significance of his work and demonstrates “how farsighted Foucault’s theses and conclusions were” (Kopecky, 2011, p.248). In addition, the FE sector is not determinant of social changes, its disposition is one of reaction to its current policy and social context. In the case of Foucault and normalisation, this is not a diagnosis or

a solution to bring about reform, it forms a lens through which the complex conditions for managers in FE can be understood. Kopecky (2011) highlights that “what a philosopher or social scientist diagnoses as an important new finding is not usually the most obvious in the field of education. In a sense, education as a system is conservative in nature” (Kopecky, 2010, p248). What this means is that changes in education can be gradual or delayed and may not manifest themselves with the immediacy as in politics and the economy, as adjustment in practice is not always immediate or desirable for those involved (Kopecky, 2011).

It can be argued that normalisation, leads to stigmatisation and this in turn leads to “codified norms” (Krzyzanowski, 2020, p.431). I am arguing that these norms are characterised by the acceptance of leaderism in colleges. The acceptance of norms is a relevant view of contemporary public discourse, as the forming of norms can be gradual, context specific and result in radical descriptions of social, political and economic reality (Krzyzanowski, 2020). This in the case of discourse can be legitimised by the use of language however, in FE material practices can be much more entrenched and require increased ambiguity to decipher their meaning as norms are often difficult to accept. The example of neoliberalism is used to accentuate this as Krzyzanowski (2020) argues that populist assumptions have led to inequality driven “neoliberal violence” (Krzyzanowski, 2020, p.433) that has assumed modern neoliberalism is primarily concerned with the politics of exclusion (Wodak, 2019, cited in Krzyzanowski, 2020, p.433). Given the complex nature of the FE context, limitations in its philosophical grounding are to be expected, I have argued that whilst normalisations exist, and that Foucault had the foresight to provide a critical lens for them, this is not without its own limitations as, in FE notions of power often become intertwined with, policy, state and social power (Paternek, 1987). The context of FE is a result of reactionary behaviours and processes governed by the existence of codified norms. Each individual institution has its own complex power networks between stakeholders, thus exemplifying the complexities of explaining a homogenous normalised environment for FE curriculum managers.

Summary

In this chapter I have used the literatures to highlight several contributing factors to the context for FE middle managers. Policy, identity and practice-based elements have contributed to the historical ascension to a dominant discourse of leaderism, that I have argued has become normalised in the modern era. I have described this modern era as the era of leaderism and has been in existence since 2003. This has happened alongside the obvious complexities in FE through often oppressive management control, neoliberal values, and a constant policy turbulence in the sector especially in

the era of leaderism. Furthermore, I have also argued that much of the previous writings in the previous eras lack criticality and an overall committed view of the reality of the leadership context. In addition, FE has arguably been under researched and been given less priority in existing theorised research, this despite the role of FE in providing skilled workers for economic priorities and providing second chance education to many 16-19 students and returning adults (Fenge, 2011).

Chapter 3 – literature review

Introduction

Central to the arguments presented in this chapter are the notions of leaderism, managerialism and distributed leadership. I am arguing that leaderism exists because of a hybridised discourse that contains managerialism and distributed leadership. The reasons for this are the long-term neoliberal reforms that have taken place in the further education (FE) sector over many years, that have been implemented largely using managerial, market driven controlling managerialism. Furthermore, an additional argument is made that given the persuasiveness of leadership thinking and bountiful literatures that have been produced, distributed leadership has influenced this and become a fashionable label to enable managerialist practice to take place. Distributed leadership has persuasive ideas and language that democratise task orientated management. Subsequently, I have argued that the prominence of these two approaches has manifested itself in the modern era of FE management and resulted in a new era of leaderism. Leaderism incorporates managerialist discourse of control and consumerism using the ideological ideas of distributed leadership, that aims to motivate groups of curriculum or middle management professionals, to perform tasks pursuant of a collective organisational goal. To summarise table (i) has been placed below:

Table (i) Themes identified from the literatures:

Factors	Leadership	Management	Managerialism	Leaderism
Purposes	Perceived as necessary to drive vision and goals	Necessary to run an organisation and ensure key functions are performed	A set of ideals to exert control and performance management	Language based discourse that uses the language of leadership to sell managerialist discourse
Rationales	Has many forms and is key in the governments agenda to bring about improvement	Is more focussed on operation than leadership	Permeates government policy and is used to set targets and control the functions of an organisation	Is a hybrid of managerialism and focuses on developing leadership ideals that have imbued factors of managerialism
Narratives	There are many and leadership has a clear history. Distributed leadership is modern in its thinking and is a derivative of transformational leadership before it. Leaders have followers and the ability to gain buy-in.	Management is the activity of being a leader or manager. It is defined by the organising and control of tasks.	Has embedded neoliberal policy ideals and is facilitated by performance management and audit.	A development of managerialist discourse. Control and audit of an organisation are governed by fashionable leadership language.

The notion of leadership, historically, has been discussed across each sector of education, most notably in secondary schooling, but also in relation to further (FE) and higher education (HE). The notion of leadership is complex and is intertwined with multifarious concepts including management. It is with this in mind that a structured review of the literature has been undertaken. This was done using a snowball method based on the reference lists of key texts broadly related to leadership from both a functional improvement and critical perspective. This enabled the production of the themes of leadership, managerialism, professional identity and leaderism. Furthermore, the central argument made by this research is that we are currently in an era of leadership closely defined by notions of leaderism and that this has been the case since shortly after the millennium. In addition, it is also argued that leaderism is a hybridised discourse that has embedded notions of distributed leadership with retained managerialist, neoliberal and consumerist ideologies.

Arguably, the most significant event in modern FE history has been the incorporation of FE colleges in response to the further and higher education act in 1992, this provided a key point from which the literature review could find its starting point. In exploring this, the literatures pointed to a managerialist discourse, characterised by neoliberal policies and processes designed to maximise control in public services via entrepreneurship and an overall business-like approach (Chomsky, 1999). This dominant economic paradigm enables a lens for which leadership and management practice could be theorised, especially in FE that has been subject to wide neoliberal reforms since 1992. This review also considers the relational effects of such discourses on the identity and practice of curriculum managers. The literature broadly acknowledges curriculum managers as relatively under researched in the UK education system (Briggs, 2001a), and the teaching manager is also an important role when considered historically against the education sector in general, as Coffield (2012) argues that middle management layers act as a buffer to protect tutors and students from “the torrents of policy pouring over colleges” (Coffield, 2012, p.2). The literatures also classify this group of professionals via a range of titles that broadly define them as FE middle managers, or for the purposes of this research curriculum managers, who are middle managers with teaching commitments however, this is also fraught with complexities. Increased management in the public sector highlighted in the literatures also illuminates the tensions of this role as management and teaching identities often clash and create an environment for which relatively little is known. The intention of this review and subsequent research will be to explore this further and assess the validity of current thinking around leadership and management as a plausible lens for which curriculum management practice can be operationalised. Whilst the presence of leaderism is central to my argument in the literature review and argued to be related to other key ideas such as

distributed leadership and managerialism, it is not a limiting factor in this PhD, as discourse is recognised and constructed by many contributing factors, of which Foucault (2002) argues that discourse does not intend to delimit the sayable. However, an overall argument will be presented that will provide a tool to enable further enquiry and facilitate an original contribution to the field of FE leadership. Furthermore, an approach has been adopted that acknowledges socially critical (Courtney et al., 2021) contributions, and whilst these have not been considered exclusively, emphasis has been placed on the role such literature plays in the understanding of leadership and management. It also argues that for the role of leaderism to be fully understood in this research, it is a necessity. As Courtney et al (2021) state:

Socially critical approaches enables meaning and an explanation for the fundamental issues that are always being debated. These approaches are not formalised categories where, leader, leading and leadership are boxed into one way of thinking, but are lenses through which to view what is happening. (Courtney et al., 2021, p.152)

Formation of framework – Why Leaderism?

O'Reilly and Reed first wrote about leaderism in 2010 and argue that leaderism is a “complementary set of discourses, metaphors and practices to those of managerialism” (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.960). They suggest that leaderism is a key part in the evolution since mid 1980 of New Public Management (NPM), designed to make public services more business-like and has enabled the shift towards the public services being centred around the “consumer citizen” (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.960). Having previously considered leaderism during research into managerialism (Lea, 2012) I would now argue that leaderism has retained managerialist discourse and has further become hybridised by dominant leadership theories like distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000). Gronn (2000) argues that leadership is likely to be more effective when tasks are divided via distribution to collections of professionals, and that this challenges traditional leader-follower relations. Furthermore Gronn (2000) argues that this division of labour provides a validity to leadership at the heart of organisational work. Distributed leadership gained much traction in the education sector, (Harris, 2006), however this drew much criticism for being ideological and lacking criticality (Gunter, 2012). In addition, Lumby (2016) critiqued distributed leadership as being largely unworkable in the FE sector. Despite this, however, I would argue that elements of leaderism, supported by persuasive distributed leadership ideologies now exist across a range of public sector providers, both in the NHS and in education and is the dominant discourse of leadership and management in public institutions. The aim of this study is to explore this further using the case of FE.

The foundations of leaderism are deeply rooted in contemporary thinking regarding the leadership and management systems currently in place in the England and Wales education system (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). The most significant foundation of leaderism is managerialism (Gleeson & Shain, 1999), O'Reilly & Reed (2011) recognise managerialism as a key metaphor in the characteristics of leaderism and describe managerialism as the prioritisation of managerial control. I am arguing that this control exists in the era of leaderism and within its current characteristics that have further evolved through hybridisation with distributed leadership into what this research discusses as leaderism. This has happened as the focus has moved away from the practice of management to the leaders and the led, and general era of post-heroic leadership (Lumby, 2017).

Leaderism is composed, firstly, of an explicit use of the language of leadership, that is, such linguistic terms of 'leaders', 'leadership', being 'led', and 'leading' are used and discussed as phenomenological entities in a variety of different ways. Secondly, this language of leadership draws upon and is posited on the framing metaphor of 'leading' – an image, or symbol, of a relationship of guidance or direction-giving. Leaderism is thirdly composed of a belief in the importance of this relationship of guidance or direction Giving. (O'Reilly & Reid, 2010, p.963)

The field of leadership is acknowledged by O'Reilly & Reed (2010) as having a significant effect on leaderism, as leadership language and the nuances of being a leader and being led have become fashionable. Examples of this fashionable and persuasive leadership approach and in particular the championing of distributed leadership to promote best leadership practice are discussed by (Harris, (2004), Bennett at al, (2003) & Gronn, (2000), who all agree that leadership is a task-based ideology best conceptualised as a distributed activity. However, Hartley (2007), Gunter & Rayner (2007), Lumby (2003, 2016) argue against the functionality of such linear ideas and believe that this view lacks criticality and that distributed leadership largely dismisses notions of power. The form that these models of leadership take is also much debated and consists of hybridised models that promote democracy and dispersed power (Harris, 2004, Gronn, 2000, Harris & Spillane, 2008, Woods, 2004, 2007). Most of this literature is school based as FE is under researched and undervalued in comparison to higher education (HE) and compulsory schooling.

Yet, in spite of its significant size and vital contribution to local economies, FE is often referred to as the "Cinderella" sector (Randle and Brady, 1997) because, in comparison to compulsory schooling and Higher Education (HE), it is under-resourced, under-valued and under-researched. Government funding is lower (Mercer & Whitehead, 2015, p.1)

Leadership and management theory has a history of varying models, Wang (2018) has summarised these from the middle of the twentieth century and these consist of organisational theories, behavioural theories to modern iterations such as distributed leadership. Wang (2018) argues that much of the theories of leadership have gaps and fail to deal with politics or economics for example. I would argue that despite this, notions of leadership have been privileged to bring about sustained improvement across a range of education sectors. Furthermore, this view is shared by Gunter (2012) & Lumby (2016) as they question the effectiveness of the leadership models and the validity of the ideological practice that leadership literature promotes. However, despite the widely available literatures on distributed leadership, Leithwood et al (2006) for example, broadly support the practice of distributed leadership by making strong claims about best leadership practice to facilitate quality improvement for student outcomes and teacher performance in the education sector. O'Reilly & Reed (2010) acknowledge the discourse of leadership as being an essential part in the understanding of governance and leaderism:

the core component of the discourse of leadership, namely leaders, is represented as an essential ingredient of the new governance of public service organizations, including not only public service managers, but also, variously, frontline professional staff, members of the public, and private and voluntary organizational members. (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.961)

My argument for the presence of leaderism in FE stems from previous research into leadership and its effect on the practice of FE middle managers (Lea, 2012). I have worked in education for over 20 years in various capacities in both FE and HE, and over time, I have become interested in critiquing the FE sector. Furthermore Boocock (2019) believes distributed leadership (and subsequent notions of leaderism and managerialism) in colleges is still prominent in colleges via devolved localised governance and is a preferred management strategy by both the government and the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). This PhD focuses specifically on curriculum managers and the effect of leaderism on their thinking and roles. Education is a policy-rich environment, that holds political currency that in various ways reflect social and economic trends. Education also carries a central importance in the manifesto of any current or future governing administration, despite FE often featuring less prominently in overall funding priorities and policy reform (Bailey & Unwin, 2014). In addition, the ideology of globalisation and imposition of marketisation, evident in public sector reform is indeed a critiqued concept (Hirst & Thompson, 1996), as in many cases, this is presented as an accepted norm for the environment of managerialist ideals and leads to notions of leaderism.

The absence of a commonly held model of the new global economy and how it differs from previous states of the international economy; second, in the absence of a clear model against which to measure trends, the tendency casually to cite examples of internationalisation of sectors and processes as if they were evidence of the growth of an economy dominated by autonomous market forces; and third, the lack of historical depth (Hirst & Thompson, 1996, p.2)

Set against this background, Ball (2009) argues that re-engineering of schools, colleges and universities with market orientated reform is the result of a new social context of high modernity and globalisation. Ball (2009) further argues that this resulted in the recontextualization of public services through business and management language. This has impacted curriculum management professionals responsible for the implementation of key policy objectives and have contact with teachers, learners and other more senior managers (Page, 2010, 2013). Yet, there is little detailed understanding of the role of middle managers in further education colleges, although they occupy a pivotal role within a complex setting (Briggs, 2005). Curriculum managers have been the subject of few previous studies (see Briggs, 2005 & Page, 2010 for example) and this also highlights the complexities of defining such roles. This can be argued as largely due to the pressures of the FE sector and tensions created within leadership and management hierarchies, Page (2010) argues, "that the role of the first-tier manager is heterogeneous, elastic, contested and poorly understood and often badly defined (Page, 2010, p.129)." Furthermore, Alexiadou (2001) outlines that college managers often mediate change and have to be responsive to organisational pressures. The complexities of this are that much of this responsiveness is largely restricted and is stifled by hierarchical structure and reductive data driven practice, for example the expanded use of statistics to assess success, subject viability and staff utilisation. Gillett-Karam (1999) states that middle managers are "the buffer between faculty and administration" (Gillett-Karam, 1999, p.6). This results in an environment in which the difficult task of leading from the middle tier is created. Leader (2004) also acknowledges these tensions as she describes the shift in focus in FE following incorporation in 1992 to a more functional and accountability driven discourse. "The prime focus is on curriculum innovation and learner provision. Yet the balance of their managerial functions appears to create critical tensions, reflecting a sectoral shift towards a new market-led framework for teaching, learning and accountability" (Leader, 2004, p68). For example, an increased focus on income generation and the increased audit of teacher effectiveness.

Managerialism

Embedded in the functionalist perspective has been the development of neoliberal politics that began to gain traction during the 1970s (Bockman, 2013). Managerialism came to the fore in the UK under the Thatcher administrations of the 1980s (Gleeson & Husbands, 2003) and has continued to dominate thereafter and in recent times, since the early 2000s as a key component of leadership. This managerialist focus gave rise to the notion of enterprise in the public sector and facilitated a creation of management models borrowed from business. Neoliberalism in education has been discussed in the work of various authors for example, Mather & Seifert (2011), Page (2010), Ball (2003), Simkins (2000), Fergusson (1999), Gleeson (2001) and Gunter (2002). All agree that managerialism has its roots in neoliberalism and has been used to bring about large-scale public-sector reforms in the case of FE since the incorporation of colleges in 1993. Mather and Seifert (2011) argue that "the overarching theoretical and policy position with regard to the UK public services continue to be rooted in a form of neoliberalism" (Mather & Seifert, 2011, p.26). Whilst Fergusson (1999) asks "Is managerialism only capable of delivering neo-liberal objectives, or is it an adaptable and value-neutral cluster of practice and instruments"? (Fergusson cited in Clarke, 1999, p.204). In recent times, it can be argued that managerialism has become normalised as accepted management practice (Lea, 2012). As Mather and Seifert (2011) state: "education management has increasingly been dominated by the norms and requirements of general management" (Mather & Seifert, 2011, p.26).

Neoliberalism is the defining economic paradigm of our time – it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit. Associated initially with Reagan and Thatcher, for the past two decades neoliberalism has been the dominant global political economic trend adopted by political parties of the centre and much of the traditional left as well as right. (Chomsky, 1999, p.7)

Central to debates on managerialism are claims about its influence on large-scale reform (Alexiadou, 2001). In the case of FE, it has been used to redefine management practice and enhance the control over organisational functions (Clarke et al., 1997). This enhanced control carries with it certain characteristics including an enhanced accountability culture, a constant drive for improvement, measurement and a focus on updating and developing new or existing professional knowledge. Avis (2002) states "What is significant about the English experience is the attempt to construct a settlement organised around managerialism located in a value framework that marginalises social antagonism and thereby silences dissent (Avis, 2002, p.76)." I would further argue there has been a notable impact on professionals in the education sector, with a market driven focus on teaching and

curriculum and in particular a rise of consumerist culture (Leader, 2004). Whilst a culture of improvement is seemingly reasonable, and high quality of provision, with regard to outcomes and teaching in FE is a fair expectation, the literature suggests that this has been carried out in a manner detrimental to curriculum managers with unreasonable demands placed upon them (Leader, 2004, Briggs, 2001b). A result of this has been an overall shortage of lecturers for core subjects such as Mathematics and English (TES, 2014), an increase in professionals leaving their posts, with a 3% decline in staffing per year recorded between 2011 and 2017 as reported by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF, 2017), and higher levels of sickness and absence. Page (2010) discusses these attributes as such tensions often give rise to resistance, which can display itself in many guises. "Further education (FE) is a prime context for a study of routine organisational resistance, having experienced New Public Management reforms more acutely than other areas of the public sector" (Page, 2010, p.126). The fact that industrial action has generally decreased in FE is a valid observation, however, I would argue that resistance has become more complex over time. FE staff have found new ways to hide non-compliant behaviour or have found ways to enhance agency through strategic compliance. Further to this, the capacity for allowable periods of absence from work has also become more accessible, as a more rounded approach to worker welfare and rights have become an increasing part of employer legislation. Foucault (1979) reminds us that "where there is power, there is resistance' and against the backdrop of policy technologies (Ball, 2003), performativity, surveillance, individualisation and managerialism, lecturers will inevitably resist. Yet resistance is an elastic concept." (Page, 2010, p.128). Arguably resistance formed in reaction to managerialist discourse is indeed being carried out in FE institutions in increasingly varied ways. I would also argue that high levels of leaderism also results in this culture, as I have argued that managerialist discourse is a strong factor in leaderism, furthermore, performativity (Ball, 2003) largely remains in the education sector. Broadly speaking education reform packages have continually permeated government agendas. It could also be said that this has been with an equal vigour to those of the NHS (Ball, 2003). Generally, public service reform, the NHS for example, can be traced over a longer period of time than education, and, whilst they are similar in nature, the relative reform in education has been intense, challenging and market orientated (Leader, 2004). This has a wider impact as such a sustained set of changes can result in a sense of policy fatigue. Ball (2003) discusses managerialism as an interrelated concept that has contributed to the rise in performance culture and what Levin (1998) calls a "Policy epidemic" (Levin, 1998, cited in Ball, 2003, p.215)

The key elements of the education reform 'package' - and it is applied with equal vigour to schools, colleges and universities – are embedded in three interrelated policy technologies; the market, managerialism and performativity. These elements have different degrees of emphasis in different national and local settings but they are closely inter-dependent in the process of reform. When employed together, these technologies offer a politically attractive alternative to the state centred, public welfare tradition of educational provision. (Ball, 2003, p.215)

This interrelated nature is useful in the understanding of managerialism and subsequently notions of leaderism. Performativity is about the culture created in an institution. It implies an understanding of complex management situations and simplifies them into a supposedly rational set of measurable judgements, Ball (2003) describes these as including, “incentive, control, attrition and change” (Ball, 2003, p.216) . This brings about functionality that enables a simplification of working practices and provides a framework to offer incentives and bring about change and improvement. Managerialism plays a pivotal role by legitimising the role of the manager and the form of management practice to bring about the necessary level of control (Alexiadou, 2001). In education audit via attendance, achievement and teacher observation are omnipresent in modern day surveillance culture (Gleeson cited in O’Leary, 2014). This, I would argue, has also caused an overall erosion of professional autonomy. Managerialism also offers a way of centralising power and enabling reform to be centrally controlled. It achieves this by using the power of marketisation to legitimise overall approaches. In essence, the power of choice and the voice of the consumer, a parent or student for example, has greater emphasis (Simkins, 2000). Fundamentally, under managerialism, student attainment and league table performance are paramount. This is largely undisputed, as O’Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that managerial action aligns itself with values of consumerism however, the main area of concern is the ever-decreasing autonomy of professional educators. It could, however, also be argued that before 1993 change was needed in the FE sector, "lecturers are now much more likely to be qualified to degree level and have a teaching qualification" (Whitehead, 2005, p.18). However, "The lecturer is not required to exercise professional judgement but to follow procedures" (Whitehead, 2005, p.17), thus further evidencing the erosion of professional autonomy. It can be argued that this has happened because of an overpowering sense of the need for management and non-academic roles in the FE sector to satisfy state driven demands for performative systems, "the emergence of new non-academic posts to manage new and diverse contingencies contributed to a blurring of perceived managerial roles and a sense of polarisation" (Leader, 2004, p.68). The justification for this was presented against the government’s desire "in which accountability became more explicit and was promoted in terms of efficiency and consumer choice" (Leader, 2004, p.68).

Performance management has been popularised in recent years as a key feature of labour management practice across the UK public services. Much of the language and the techniques reflect particular managerial preferences about how best to secure control over labour performance (Mather & Seifert, 2011, p.26).

O'Reilly & Reed (2010) argue leaderism reflects managerial preferences and is evolved from a complimentary discourse to the practice of managerialism. It has done so by privileging the needs of the consumer and idealising the concept of leadership through its perceived flexibility and persuasive ability to build collective agency, (Bresnan et al., 2015). I have argued these attributes exist through the language of leadership. In essence, the purpose, rationale and narratives of leaderism are, it can be argued, imbued with elements of managerialism and have evolved. Leaderism however, places more emphasis on the discourse of leadership and post heroic rhetoric (Courtney et al., 2021). Leaderism attempts to be more all-encompassing than managerialism as it relies on subordination whilst retaining democratic ideals. This is done by the utilisation of the powerful language of leadership. This is also a key feature of distributed leadership (Harris, 2004, Gronn, 2000, Spilane, 2006), and features heavily in the era of leaderism. I am arguing this has been happening since the turn of the millennium. The difference between leaderism and distributed leadership, is that distributed leadership is triumphalist and based on a persuasive ideology that attempts to dismisses the notion of management for the preferred approach of leadership, empowered by democratic ideals.

In conclusion, the focus on discourses of organizational agency, and in particular on the emergent policy discourse of leaderism, indicates three important aspects in the evolution of public sector organization during the period of analysis. Firstly, the euphemistic use of the language of leadership to bolster and extend managerialist trends in public service co-ordination. Secondly, the movement beyond some of the paradigmatic elements of NPM to embrace new imaginaries of organizational practice and co-ordination – networks, systems, co-production, participation and social outcomes. Thirdly, it points to the re-negotiations of legitimacy, and the exercise of leadership authority – through the development of leadership affectivity, processes and technologies; and the attendant spaces for potential resistance – the disruption or withholding of communal assent. (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.1095)

Leaderism draws on managerialist perspectives by using leadership language, facilitated by distributed leadership to promote voluntary collaboration to ensure control and performance. Critically, Gleeson & Knights (2008), challenge the effectiveness of modern control agendas to bring about increased performance, "this is because these formal controls fail to engage professionals in ways that enrol their commitment and goodwill and mobilise their willing expertise" (Gleeson & Knights, 2008, p.65). Target or standards-driven models of leadership further support this by providing a framework to regulate expertise and ensure consumer citizen (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010)

discourse that has arisen in the education sector. Biesta (2005) argues that the rise in consumerism in the notion of learning has resulted in traditional views of a received education becoming reformed as a transaction, whereby the learner purchases a course of learning to which they are now entitled. Thus, creating a new marketised climate to which modern colleges have become accustomed since 1997 (Ainley & Bailey, 1997).

Leadership

Historically notions of leadership have been recognised as a framework to stimulate discussion about how change and improvement agendas are facilitated by government in the UK education sector (Grint, 2005). Notions of transformational leadership first appeared in the work of Burns (1978). The focus of this work was largely on political leaders (Berkovich, 2016), however, this evolved in time to include business leaders, and then as an ideal model for school leadership, (Hallinger, 1992, Leithwood, 1994). Ball (2009) argues that this happened as representatives of the private sector became integral to the community of policy creation. The UK government has since supported numerous examples of best practice research via the school improvement literature, (Ainscow et al., 2012 & Leithwood et al., 2006) to develop leadership practice and have provided various recommendations for managers and senior leaders in educational settings. This best practice includes claims about the benefits of distributed leadership, the dispersal of duties and the motivation of teams to achieve collective endeavours. Generally, the recommendations are to move away from traditional authoritarian approaches to leadership. National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) also produced such reports, Leithwood et al (2006) for example that published strong claims about successful leadership practice. The NCTL was replaced by the Teaching Regulation Agency in 2018. Furthermore, Boocock (2019) argues that notions of distributed leadership are still on the agenda for successful college leadership, however he argues that this should not take place due to functional ideologies associated with the distributed leadership approach.

Over time, key theorists have achieved higher status to support so-called best practice regarding leadership and these have been widely circulated across the education sector (Harris, 2004, 2008 Leithwood et al., 2007, Spillane, 2006). Historically, transactional leadership (Vera & Crossan, 2004), transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000) have been extensively written about along with other psychologically based strategies on team roles (Belbin, 81). The linearity of such approaches has been widely criticised as being functional and purporting to provide off the shelf leadership (Gunter & Rayner, 2007). Furthermore, the off the shelf approach is

hard to justify in such a diverse sector (Gunter & Ribbins, 2002, Lumby, 2016). In essence, the social and economic complexities of education are hard to govern using specific and prescribed approaches to leadership. To understand the true nature of leadership I am arguing that leadership and the functionality of contemporary leadership models has exacerbated the neoliberal culture in FE. In addition, it can also be argued that the performance management ideals of managerialism have been retained as a hybrid of functional leadership and performativity (Ball, 2003). Despite the desire for participatory leadership models as a deliberate approach, distributed leadership for example, the market orientated drive for data driven rationality has continued in education. I am arguing that this underpins the current era of leaderism.

The notion of leadership in the field of education and its growth under successive 'New Labour' governments from the end of the 1990s onwards is notable, as Apple (2006) argued that education had increasingly become modelled on technical and managerial approaches so it could be sorted, measured and labelled. The idea of the 'transformational leader' in education was first discussed by Hallinger (1992) and Pielstick (1998). For a transformational leader to be effective they would need to be seen as being dynamic and heroic. This heroic leader would, it was argued, be revolutionary and move away from previous perceptions surrounding any transactional approaches to leadership, that were seen as dated and authoritarian. Pielstick (1998) wrote, "Extraordinary leading means engaging others to collectively achieve a shared vision of high moral purpose for the common good." (Pielstick, 1998, p.34) The basis for the transformational leader, it was argued, had the ability to gain staff 'buy in' and create a positive culture to facilitate change. In order to do this, key initiatives would be devised to take the organisation forward or survive challenging times. In many cases so-called transformational leaders were brought into to support 'failing colleges', that had poor student success and were financially mismanaged, although what constitutes failure and who is exactly failing is contestable (Whitehead, 2001). This led to critiques of the nature of leadership practice and forced an increased focus on 'what makes an exceptional leader'. Central to this debate is the validity of functional heroic leadership, of which transformational leadership and subsequent distributed leadership were examples, to enable measurable improvement in a neoliberal policy framework. Despite this, Crowther (1997) further supported the identification of outstanding teachers to facilitate the depiction of outstanding leadership models. This kind of approach gave rise to heroic leadership ideologies:

We find that a growing number of highly respected scholars, including Lieberman, Saxl and Miles (1988), Berry and Ginsberg (1990), Smylie and Denny (1990) and Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992), have used research into the work of outstanding teachers to generate

functional categories of what they usually describe as teacher leadership. (Crowther, 1997, p.8)

Subsequently, following this attribute driven approach to identifying leaders, the notion of the transformational leader drew critique, as Gunter (2001) argued that the ultimate legitimacy of such a heroic figure and the reliance on charismatic leaders to transform the education system became unrealistic. "Transformational leadership isn't really transformational at all but is a 'top-dog theory' that meets the needs of management control (Gunter, 2001, p.98)". I would further argue that transformational leadership set the foundations for ideas about dispersed or distributed leadership, as the core idea of distributed duties lessened the need for a heroic figure, and subsequently, distributed leadership began to gain a degree of popularity (see, for example, Harris, 2004, Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001 and Gronn, 2000). Distributed leadership was then the subject of government commissioned research and the NCSL (later the NCTL) was set up to produce effective research to provide a 'tool kit' for best practice around leadership and to promote its implementation (see Leithwood, 2006). There is, however, a lack of empirical research on leadership and middle management in the FE sector (Mercer & Whitehead 2015, Thompson & Wolstencroft 2015). The notion of distributed leadership is discussed in a variety of ways and has core elements of dispersed accountability systems. The model suggests that leadership is most effective when accountability is distributed or dispersed across a range of professionals from varying hierarchical tiers within a particular setting. The literatures broadly agree on the elements of participation and the desire to spread key roles across an organisation however, fluidity in approach can also be evident and the model can be described as being either 'top down' Harris (2004) or 'bottom up' Gronn (2000). Distributed leadership also implies shared power relations across the hierarchical tiers of an institution, where leaders imbue followers with a sense of shared responsibility to achieve institutional goals. As Spillane et al (2001) state, "our central argument is that school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice over the school's social and situational contexts"(Spillane et al., 2001, p.23). Central to the debate on distributed leadership is its stated effect on capacity building, structure and agency. These are all usurped or consumed and catered for by the triumphalism of distributed leadership as it is described as being all encompassing (Gronn, 2000). The table below summarises Gunter's (2013) assessment of the knowledge claims around distributed leadership and supports the premise that school effectiveness literature is functional and lacks critical notions of social justice.

Table 1. Mapping distributed leadership.

	Functional – descriptive	Functional – normative	Critical	Socially critical
What is known?	The principal cannot lead the school alone, and the division of labour means that others do leading and leadership. There are descriptions of professional work, communication and organizational routines.	The principal cannot lead the school alone, and the division of labour means that others should do leading and leadership. There are recommendations for how professionals and organizations should efficiently and effectively deliver outcomes.	The principal does not run the school alone and so there is realistic approach to recognizing, describing and theorizing how work gets done in school. At the same time the high accountability context means that the principal has to keep control.	Professional identity and practice as leadership is externally determined in order to enable markets to enter public education. Other forms of educational leadership with democratic structures and cultures are presented as alternatives.
How is it known?	Fieldwork using multiple methods has described activity, and close to practice theorizing (for example, socio-cultural activity theory) has been used to illuminate.	Drawing on functionally descriptive and some critical work the case is made for distributed leadership as a necessary and vital way to bring about school improvement.	Intellectual analyses of organizations, power and policy together with fieldwork has produced descriptions and theorizations of professional practice within context.	Intellectual analyses of functional and critical approaches have critiqued knowledge claims. Claims based on fieldwork and theorizing are used to support socially just forms of leadership.
Who knows?	School Effectiveness School Improvement	School Effectiveness School Improvement	Educational/School Leadership	Critical Policy Studies
Why is it known?	Research projects are designed and sponsored by governments (in the UK) and by private funders.	International (for example, OECD) and national (for example, National College in England) commission projects and promote good practice.	Research projects and researcher interest raises questions about how professionals go about their work within a high accountability context.	Research projects and researcher interest raises questions about knowledge claims and promotes alternative claims and approaches to social justice.

(Gunter et al., 2013, p.557)

Capacity building is broadly defined as an institution's ability to identify and carry out challenging tasks to facilitate improvement (Harris & Lambert, 2003). The notion that distributed leadership can do this is based on notions of the empowerment of leaders and managers through their integration into key strategic tasks (Harris & Spillane, 2008). This subsequently enables a fluid structure to be formed that is seemingly democratic and moves away from 'top down' leadership approaches (Leithwood et al., 2006). The distributed leadership literature implies a sense of enhanced agency as professionals gain a higher level of motivation by playing a pivotal role in institutional improvement, via the delegation of key tasks and responsibility. I have argued previously that this supports managerialist discourse, as tasks are delegated but power is retained through control, and that this is facilitated through fashionable leadership language, embodied by distributed leadership and leads to notions of leaderism (Lea, 2012). In addition, constant improvement and the formation of an ever-changing vision are argued to be key components of managerialism and performance management,

again when hybridised with persuasive leadership language this supports leaderism. Alexiadou, (2001) describes managerialism as having two distinct attributes. The first is concerned with achieving efficiency through policy implementation and the second is concerned with organisational reform and the development of a people-centred culture of enterprise. Intertwined with these attributes is the need for vision and collective commonality through a shared sense of purpose. This focus on performance is then used to create a clear structure against targets. In creating this environment, Alexiadou (2001) argues that agency has then been eroded as the culture of an organisation becomes more about performance than actual wider social and cultural development. By utilising the case of FE, the changes over the last 30 years have been numerous. The abandonment of the 'Silver Book' contracts and the introduction of increasingly performance-driven working conditions have been significant, and this has in turn, created a new set of ideals in the sector that are far removed from the 'old way' and has resulted in intensification of FE professionals work and an overall reduction in their power (Alexiadou, 2001, Whitehead, 2001). Alexiadou (2001) states "the old arrangement of working conditions for lecturers, known as the 'Silver Book' agreement was replaced by a 'flexible' contract arrangement" (Alexiadou, 2001, p.415). This resulted in deployment being more measured, disciplined, monitored and holiday periods being subject to greater control. Whilst idealistic, the traditional sense of students attending college to gain a trade and become employed, became much more focused under the guise of global and national skills shortages, and the prioritisation of key economic drivers (Whitehead, 2005). Further to this the literature on distributed leadership and latterly leaderism (O'Reilly & Reid, 2010) has a persuasive discourse that suggests an embedded attribute of enhanced agency, which can provide managers with a powerful discourse to ensure follower loyalty. I am arguing that leaderism emerged on the back of managerialism, increasingly facilitated by fashionable distributed leadership approaches that have become embedded norms in the FE sector.

Leaderism plays a strategic ideological role in redefining the problem of UK public services as one of 'missing agency'; that is, as a condition of organizational stasis generated by the paucity of appropriate modes of collective agency that will radically transform the cultural norms. (O'Reilly & Reid, 2011, p.1094)

This increased sense of purpose I would argue enables control to be increased and ultimately strengthens the hierarchical management structure. This subsequently plays a role in the erosion of agency subversively, with power retained at the top without the knowledge of front-line staff. The literature on distributed leadership is also plentiful and uses a broad range of politically motivated economic language. Harris (2008) suggests that in the modern context of school organisation

leadership is required to harness an institutions capacity and maximise all forms of intellectual and human capital. This, Harris (2008) argues, enables schools to meet the challenges of the brave new economic world, that is market driven and reflective of a competitive and global economy. Such a discourse promotes notions of distributed leadership as a response to the demands of the perceived realities of contemporary social and economic circumstances. These responses are firmly rooted in neoliberal discourses of managerialism and a focus in the early 2000's on 'what works', rather than what can be debated. I would argue for a more tempered approach using a more socially critical perspective (Gunter, 2013), which widens the boundaries for debate and locates knowledge so that it can be critiqued, debated and ultimately furthered. The functionality of theory 'what works', school improvement literature on distributed leadership for example, does not fit into the sphere of criticality.

While functional researchers are concerned with organizational unity, socially critical researchers not only show 'how the language of leadership has been translated into the needs of bureaucracy' (Foster, 1989: 45) and capital accumulation through the privatization of education, but also seek to reclaim the term as communal: 'leadership...does not reside in an individual but in the relationship between individuals, and it is oriented toward social vision and change, not simply, or only, organizational goals' (Foster, 1989, p.46, cited in Gunter et al., 2013, p.568).

Functional leadership theory, distributed leadership for example is designed as a tool to bring about so-called improvement and not to open a debate in the field of leadership. I am arguing that central to the discourse of leadership is the prevalence of such persuasive ideas. The perceived ability of functional approaches to enable improvement is generally favoured by policy makers. Gunter (2013) has likened this to the role of medical research and its ability to provide finite results and tangible outcomes. Gunter (2013) also argues that education has had an unfair comparison, as much of the research is functional and lacks criticality to other areas of research. This Gunter (2013) argues has given rise to a focus on what works rather what can be understood. The fact that the distributed model has been championed as fit for education in England and Wales (Harris, 2008) suggests an overtly functional approach. This is due to the dominant notion that the creation of markets is a universal strategy to maximise efficiency in public services (Clarke et al., 2000 p.27). The distributed model implies a 'one size fits all' ethos and attempts to form a strong link between effective leadership and success. It does this by looking at leadership as a transaction between the leader and the followers. If the leader is effective the followers will carry out their duties successfully. A socially-critical stance requires a much more analytical approach which incorporates cultural and social needs in the understanding of leadership (Gunter, 2013) by focusing on the needs of the context, it also rejects that there is absolutism and a universally applicable meaning. In contrast, Harris (2008)

openly acknowledges the functionality of distributed leadership: "This book deliberately moves away from analysis and chooses to take a functional or practical perspective on distributed leadership" (Harris, 2008, p.12). Harris (2008) goes on to outline a blueprint for the future where administrators are encouraged to be involved in actively "dismantling the hierarchical models of leadership" (Harris, 2008, p.140) and creating a leadership model that resembles "interlinked sub-units" (Harris, 2008, p.140). Harris suggests a list of key characteristics for institutions using distributed leadership:

- Collective rather than individualistic
- Inclusive, flexible and self-renewing
- Responsive to internal demands
- Driven by learning before results
- Multi layered and networked
- Leadership capabilities rather than roles
- Seeks out new leadership spaces
- Best fit rather than will fit
- Puts innovation at the centre
- Is outward facing, forward looking and distributed

(Harris, 2008, p.152-153)

Here a functional correlation is made between notions of distributed leadership and its effect on outcomes. The vehicle for this is intertwined with a series of aerosol leadership terms (Gunter, 2005) that are sprayed around to validate the distributed approach and have little empirical substance. In critiquing the types of claims made by Harris (2008) Gunter et al (2013) voice concerns about the specific development of knowledge claims around leadership. They argue that empirical evidence is lacking and that the necessity to validate leadership concepts at times outweighs the desire for a critically informed approach. In effect Gunter (2013) is arguing against the notion that distributed leadership and heroic transformational leadership models are imperative to support the rhetoric of continuous improvement. Gunter (2013) uses the work of Leithwood (1999, 2009) to make the point that:

In the early analysis the heroic transformational leadership model there is acknowledgement of participatory approaches, but no mention is made of distributed leadership, but a decade later functional knowledge production is very busy developing an evidence base (Gunter et al., 2013, p.559).

Central to my argument is that leaderism retains elements of distributed leadership hybridised with notions of managerialism, this is despite Gunter (2013) arguing that there is little evidence to suggest that distributed leadership has a positive impact upon organisational improvement. From 2000 onwards, see Leithwood et al (2006) it is evident that an attempt has been made at implementing a distributed leadership ethos. This has resulted in arguably a largely compliant culture that accepts democratic models of leadership (Macfarlane, 2014), and this will continue to permeate the immediate policy initiatives and the shape of our developing institutions. In the FE sector, continued rationalisation has been taking place and many colleges are being forced to merge and devise an efficient more collaborative way of working (Spours et al., 2020). I would argue that this is indeed a further reduction of support for an already under funded sector. My argument is that distributed leadership and managerialist discourse have been implemented to enable these changes, and have contributed to the formation of ideas such as leaderism and that this manifests itself in FE management, to which distributed leadership still plays a prominent role in the thinking of leadership approaches. As Lumby (2016) states:

Despite frequently expressed reservations concerning its fundamental theoretical weakness, distributed leadership (DL) has grown to become the preferred leadership concept and has acquired taken-for-granted status. This article suggests that the dominance of DL can best be understood as a fashion or fad rather than as a rational choice (Lumby, 2016, p.161).

Professional Identity

Laing (2018) urges us to consider the tensions between the academic in the classroom and the dean in the office. Whilst this uses metaphors of higher education it is symbolic of the wider education landscape. The academic, lecturer or teacher, understands their students, their commitment to the course and their overall development needs. The dean, or senior manager by contrast are more conscious of economic factors, institutional rankings and the linearity of value-based outcomes (Laing, 2018). Laing (2018) argues that, whilst both are in the same location, and the overarching concern is one of student success, their perspectives have large differences. The dean or senior manager has an overriding spreadsheet driven view, whilst the teacher is concerned with reflecting on classroom practice and the learning experience for their students. The middle ground between senior management and teaching staff is where curriculum managers are located. Gillies (2011) states that this requires “agile workers” (Gillies, 2011, p.213). This agility is reflected in their increasing accountability for results whilst also having important connotations, by creating tensions between increasingly competing manager and teacher professional identities (Fort, 2015).

Middle leaders in further education undertake a wide variety of roles, including curriculum management, but quality management, data management and IT management and various other roles also exist. This lends itself to a “lack of unified professional identity” (Briggs, 2007, p.476). This is imbued by complexities as the nature of being a working professional in contemporary further education requires individualisation, a location of the self, and this is hard to predict or rationalise functionally via prescriptive leadership. Leadership theory alone is unable to articulate the complexities of identity as “the term identity has been variously defined and there is continuing debate about whether an individual has one identity with many aspects, or whether they have multiple identities” (Ballantyne, 2012, p.369). Furthermore, education policy is often left to be implemented by middle management and, in many cases, it is their responsibility, despite their being a distance between practitioners and policy formation (Gunter, 2012), and the methods of policy making often marginalise dialogue (Fairclough, 2000). Colley (2007) argues that middle management tasks and idioms dominate the identity of curriculum management professionals even though they are often required to carry out substantial teaching commitments. Colley (2007) terms this the process of “unbecoming” (Colley, 2007, p.971) whereby staying in the profession as a teacher is problematised by the move into management roles or results in leaving the FE sector altogether. Page (2010) further argues that first-tier managers, or middle managers, occupy a precarious position. This is partly because teachers can be resistant to management, much in the way that middle managers might have been before moving into management. This resistance to managers from teachers, Page (2010) argues, is due to managerialism, surveillance and performance management creating a controlled performative environment. In addition, middle managers, “distrusted senior managers perhaps even more than lecturers” (Page, 2010, p.135). This tension is created due to middle managers being subject to surveillance whilst also performing surveillance on their teams. So, on one hand, they are resisting performativity (Ball, 2003) whilst on the other being complicit in the mechanisms through which performativity exists (Page, 2010).

Tyler & Dymock (2021) suggest there is little overall consensus with regard to professionalism and professional identity in FE. Most of the discussions they argue, are focused on ideologies and values, for example, Evetts (2013), Clow (2001) and Tummons (2014). The fulcrum of the debate in England and Wales has been the question of developing a distinct professional identity for FE professionals, as many have dual identities (Orr & Simmons, 2010). The notion of dual identity in FE has existed for a considerable amount of time, as Robson (1998) argued that to encapsulate the context of further education, consideration of the varying entrance routes into FE from a wide range of professionals,

with varied backgrounds has to be considered. Robson (1998) also argued that FE teachers were “struggling to develop any sense of its collective status or identity” (Robson, 1998, p.602). Furthermore, Tyler & Dymock (2021) argue that this struggle has continued into the 21st century, and this was further complicated by the deregulation of the FE teaching profession in the sector in 2010, and a jump back to a traditional view that FE teachers did not require a recognised teaching qualification. This abolished compulsory teacher registration (Atkins & Tummons, 2017). In addition, this also removed the need for a standardised university teaching qualification to teach in the sector, which in primary and secondary teaching is a standard expectation (Tyler & Dymock, 2018). Lingfield (2012) published a major government led report on professionalism in FE and claimed that even without compulsory entry qualifications and registration, a distinct professional identity existed across a broad range of FE providers, and this drew upon a diverse range of expertise. This resulted in the production of a range of standards, most of which related to teaching and learning and only two to subject knowledge (Tyler & Dymock, 2021). Despite recognised standards for teaching, none currently exist for the practice of FE managers. A range of management training programmes do exist but none of these are linked to recognised standards (Corbett, 2017). Corbett (2020) suggests that there is some agreement regarding the duties of FE managers, (Beresford & Michels, 2014), Briggs (2005) and Leader (2004) all agree, in their most basic form that the role is to enact the instructions of senior managers. This goes some way to highlighting the middle manager role as being all encompassing and that it plays a key role however, most of which is defined as being a conduit for senior management diktat (Briggs, 2005, Spours et al., 2007). I would argue that this further supports the curriculum management as being hard to define and of being of an overall complex identity. Corbett (2020) states that “their role is multi-faceted and complex; as such, generic management training is not sufficient” (Corbett, 2020, p.5). Corbett (2020) also argues that this point is supported by research, with FE middle managers often lacking in overall preparation and the access to any sort of relevant development (Briggs, 2005, Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2015). I would also argue that devising standards for this role is largely unrealistic, and that increased on the job training and mentoring is required. Corbett (2020) infers that the working life of an FE manager is metaphorically described as survival of the fittest or “sink or swim” (Corbett 2020, p.5). Page (2013) argues that this survival of the fittest context contributes to the 13% annual turnover of staff in FE middle management.

Given the complexities outlined by Corbett (2020), Page (2013) and Briggs (2005), the identity of a curriculum manager is fraught with ambiguities. Multiple middle level roles exist, organisations have multifaceted contexts and former teachers that have moved into management have embedded

subject identities. Separation of this into a singular entity of curriculum manager is challenging as broadly speaking these people are situated between managers and teaching staff (Busher et al., 2007). Gleeson & Shain (1999) argued that curriculum managers have a specific area of delegated responsibility and have now moved beyond the ideological role of the buffer between management and frontline staff. Wolstencroft & Lloyd (2019) argue that the role has evolved from the simplicity of a buffer, into a multitude of tasks that encompass accountability culture and competitive inter departmentalisation. I would argue the most useful definition of identity for curriculum managers is not born in the consideration of attributes, but in one of the conditions for which their professional role takes place. Incorporation and the prominence of neoliberalism and managerialism and the numerous policy changes have created a profession that epitomises “managing under pressure” (Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019, p.119). In addition, the general perception regarding the declining financial health of FE and programme of Government-led area reviews (Spours et al., 2020), that has resulted in college mergers to promote cost savings, the context for curriculum managers to operate in continues to evolve. Hill et al (2016) argue in their literature on college governance these challenges continue to be “significant, simultaneous and synergistic” (Hill et al., 2016, p.79). I have argued that these conditions go some way to highlighting the conditions of the work of curriculum managers and that these play a significant role in their identity, as this turbulence defines their existence and dominates over subject and management characteristics. Wolstencroft & Lloyd (2019) support this by arguing that the need to secure consistent improvement for learner outcomes, regarding course success and employability, and the costs of resources to enable this place pressure on the FE sector. Whilst employer led reforms, to influence curriculum and address the needs of industry, also requires networking skills and the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders.

Summary

Significance in this chapter has been placed upon distributed leadership and its relationship to both leaderism and managerialism, Furthermore, the impact of neoliberalism on professional identity and the dominance of these conditions on the work of a curriculum management has also been discussed. It has been argued that subject and managerial identities are limited by the contemporary factors affecting FE, neoliberalism and a rise in managerialist discourse for example, and that this has a clear historical basis dating back to incorporation in FE. Courtney et al (2021) posit that distributed leadership is stationed within a plethora of post-heroic leadership concepts, stemming from the mid 1990s that are largely a reaction to leader-centric models such as transformational

leadership. Post-heroic models are team-centric, these are known as collaborative leadership, dispersed leadership and democratic leadership and I am arguing that these ideals permeate contemporary leadership and management, and, alongside managerialism have led to the discourse of leaderism. Significantly, this move from behavioural and personal traits of leaders, post-heroic leadership models, seeks not to personify leadership, but to an evolution that acknowledges that leaders may not always be in a senior position.

Post-heroic concepts partially remove restrictions on who may be considered a leader, and they also open up the possibility of understanding leadership as a process emerging in between people and non-human elements (Courtney et al., 2021, p.205)

Leaderism it has been argued exists as a hybridised discourse used to describe leadership practices that are designed to exert managerialist control using idealistic notions of distributed leadership. Therefore, it aligns itself with a process thinking approach to leadership whereby, “leadership is a temporal organising and direction-forming process” (Courtney et al., 2021, p.205). Post heroic approaches to leadership, such as distributed leadership, generally move away from traditional entitative thinking where leadership is assumed to reside in an individual (Courtney et al., 2021); however, complexities exist when considering how curriculum managers understand concepts of leadership and the fluidity of day-to-day duties and interactions. It can be argued that leadership simultaneously exists both in an individual’s approach and through the process of doing and enacting duties. Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2001) argued for distributed leadership as valid leadership approach for education and subsequently there have been bountiful amounts of commentary and subsequent research into distributed leadership (Courtney et al., 2021). Gunter cited in Courtney et al (2021) argues that this has been largely due to four factors. The first factor has been the move away from unrealistic heroic leadership models such as distributed leadership and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) for example. The second factor is the persuasive narrative of distributed leadership that implies inclusiveness and addresses unjust power relationships, (Woods & Roberts 2018, Woods, 2004, Lumby 2016, 2017). Courtney et al (2021) further state that “distributed leadership can then, albeit uncritically at times, be positioned as an antidote to the exclusion of organisational members in the decision-making process” (Courtney et al., 2021, p.209). The third factor, Courtney et al (2021) argue, is the degree of inevitability that a form of post heroic leadership should dominate the landscape of education given the rise of managerialism in the context of New Public Management (NPM) in the 80’s and 90’s. The greater emphasis on performance and efficiency required governments to devise increasingly performative measures (Ball, 2002) and promoted marketisation. This process of work intensification forced

managers to review the flow of their responsibilities and workload, and subsequently delegate this to others further down the organisational structure, (Youngs, 2009). This trend happened alongside persuasive functionalist leadership, that characterises models of best practice in leadership, resulting in strong recommendations that support democratic task orientated distributed leadership. This leadership practice validates itself by producing a tangible set of attributes and a shareable set of ideas. Courtney et al (2021) argues that this shareable aspect is the fourth factor that contributed to the rise of distributed leadership. A growing emphasis on collaborative working sector communities, and the general perception that democratic ideals enable an institution to perform to a greater level than the sum of its parts.

This literature review has widely acknowledged the presence of distributed leadership and argued its influence on leaderism. This is due to the spread of distributed leadership (Lumby, 2016) and its pervasiveness in the education sector. Courtney et al (2021) argue that many job interviews include questions in interviews such as “what is your leadership style?” (Courtney et al., 2021, p.188). This question is embedded in an accepted context that such a range of styles exist and have a discernible empirical base. Courtney et al (2021) question any such research into styles and their historic roots, Lewin (1890 – 1947), and further argue that leadership styles have questionable credence due to their divisive and self-perpetuating empirical base. Lumby (2016) further discusses that the wide spread of literature on distributed leadership is underestimated and misunderstood. Tian et al (2016) found 720,000 distributed leadership articles between 2002 and 2013, 800 of which were in educational leadership and sociology of education journals. Much of this writing is functional in its nature, thus appearing as descriptive and normative, as opposed to being socially critical (Gunter et al., 2013, p.155). Lumby (2016) argues that the authors contributing to the research around distributed leadership, “frequently reflect a teleological orientation to the research” (Lumby, 2016, p.161), whereby as the mass of research and discussion increases, the empirical base and status becomes accepted and defined. However, Hairon & Goh (2014) argue that this belief is in stark contrast to a parallel agreement from a critical approach that distributed leadership in action is ambiguous and complex to define. Hairon & Goh (2014) further argue that such is the persuasive lexicon around distributed leadership, that it has become synonymous with a wide range of contexts and industries globally.

Weber (1947) argued, in its most simplistic form, that bureaucracy enabled groups of workers to achieve their greatest capacity through collective effort. He also argued that it was precise and efficient. In educational leadership this position has been widely criticised, as Lumby (2017) notes

that these criticisms are multiple and far too numerous to fully explore in one review for example, Wenger (2011) states that “the formality of bureaucracy can impede knowledge sharing” (Wenger, 2011, p.4). Apple (2013) supports this by suggesting that bureaucracy focuses on marketisation and profitability. I would argue that this has been supported as a concurrent theme throughout the literatures and underpins the context for leadership in FE. Lumby (2017) states that “Foucault (1979) proposed a notion of ongoing fluid negotiation of power relations where power is a changing, ever-present shaper of social relations and organisations” (Lumby, 2017, p.7). Lumby (2017) argues that this perspective emerges in the understanding of distributed leadership and that a theoretical leadership framework so fluid and able to distribute power evenly is largely unrealistic.

Lumby (2017) and Gunter et al (2021) use notions of power as their pivotal argument in their critiquing of the literature and research on distributed leadership, their belief that it is inadequately addressed and insufficiently accounted for by the simple notion of distribution. Hatcher (2005) comments that theories of educational leadership have generally detached themselves from other disciplines meaning that they do not have an adequate theory of power. By considering the literatures on distributed leadership, (Harris 2004, Woods & Gronn, 2009, Spillane, 2006), it can be broadly recognised that credence is given to ideological concepts pertaining to democracy and empowerment, where leadership is championed as being more effective when approached democratically. This is imbued by the implied notion that this explains power relations in education institutions, with Murphy et al (2009) even suggesting that by promoting distributed leadership, power relations are being remodelled and rethought. The argument for the presence of leaderism is borne in the literatures as, O'Reilly & Reed (2010) tell us that leaderism is a complimentary set of discourses to managerialism, as it brings together associated values and language. I would argue that given the dominance of distributed leadership in the research and practice in the sector, its occurrence is a major factor in leaderism, along with the ongoing neoliberal context, gives credence to leaderism as a lens to which the FE sector can be critiqued. Further to this, the discourse around leadership is highly complex and allows this research to explore leadership from a critical perspective.

The literature guiding this research has encouraged a critical perspective on research, and on the understandings of leadership. Fundamentally, populist leadership literature, of which distributed leadership is an example, relies on a functionalist perspective and does not deal with the complexities required to adequately describe the context for leadership in FE (Lumby, 2016, 2017). Socially critical approaches, (Gunter, 2013, 2015) encourage us to deal with fundamental issues of

power and how this might be described. From a critical perspective, the presence of leadership as a factor in leaderism forces us to consider the perspective of work, power relations and the role of a leader (Courtney et al., 2021). This critical focus on power, as Courtney et al (2021) argue, comes from a fundamental belief that human beings, including those involved in education, are unable to operate carefree, but are subjected to the power relations directed from senior leaders and hierarchical structures contained within the workplace. I would argue that this usurps notions of distributed power and democracy (Woods, 2004) and supports the presence of accepted power imbued interrelationship norms, and broad individualised and institutionally specific discourses. Heffernan (2018) further purports that enhanced agency (Woodhouse, 2016, Beach, 2011) is designated through the acceptance of a leadership role and this generally signifies that they are more likely to have more authority within a hierarchical structure. Eacott (2015) argues that this gives good ground to critique how such terms as leadership are used and how they contribute to organisational culture. Importantly, the term leadership is pivotal in creating hierarchy so that followers are convinced of their subordinated position (Courtney et al., 2021) and that this is normal. This enables Eacott (2015) to question the existence of leadership as an ontological reality as its ability to exist in an ideological form separated from management is questionable. The limitations of functional perspectives in leadership research are summarised by Courtney et al (2021):

Functionalist research does not have the tools to do this work of fundamental, productive disruption and, indeed, has been charged with maintaining and reinforcing a harmful status quo, or enabling new forms of harm in education provision and practice (Gunter, 204, 2018). Its sustained focus on effective and efficient forms of professional practice certainly did nothing to prevent the rise of first, managerialism, devoid of educational values (see Gunter, 2008; Trujillo, 2014), and second, of totalitarianism masquerading as leadership (Courtney et al., 2021, p.6).

Whilst the literature available in the field of educational leadership can provide historical and rationalised perspectives that appear logical care must be taken to consider the underpinning mapping of the field. The context is informed by both functional and socially critical research, that is not acceptant of functional perspectives but argues for a more rounded context driven approach, so one has to acknowledge the existence of both, however, the relative influence of these concepts is complex in practice and allows for an intricate paradigm to which we can assess leadership. Despite the relative inadequacies of distributed leadership, especially when considered against the arguments of its inability to fully acknowledge notions of power, its inflated presence in literatures and in practice make it a factor in understanding the formation of leaderism. Distributed leadership attempts to legitimise functional approaches to leadership through persuasive lexicon and privileged

status. Distributed leadership has played a large role in the era of leaderism as its status has had a pervasive effect on approaches to leadership in the sector, despite limited deviation from managerialist, data driven approaches to leadership underpinning the sector following incorporation.

Following the introduction of leaderism by O'Reilly & Reed (2010) as a plausible critique in leadership, Macfarlane (2014) suggests that distributed leadership does indeed represent a significant part of the broader challenge of what constitutes leaderism and qualifies this by stating that we are too easily seduced by the "democratising ideal that everyone is a leader" (Macfarlane, 2014, p.3). This process of seduction, Macfarlane (2014) argues, has resulted in leadership becoming the dominant discourse in the public sector, and most importantly in England and Wales where there is a strong belief that charismatic individuals can reform institutions quickly and then move on to achieve this elsewhere (Macfarlane, 2014). Bresnen et al (2015) argue that across the public sector a general decline in the confidence of management has led to a large amount of scepticism around management practice, self-profile and negative perceptions, and a resultant reductive, managerial approach (Clarke et al., 2009). Given that this managerialist context has been mirrored in FE (Gleeson & Shain, 1999), and subsequently encountered little challenge due to the dominance of leadership-based discourse, a degradation of the term management has resulted (Bresnen, 2015). This is likely because the term manager has become connected with the historical, dated concept of being a bureaucrat (Brocklehurst, 2009). This, Bresnen et al (2015) argue, has led to the introduction of more aspirational and persuasive language to term those in management roles as consultants, leaders, change agents or directors. Learmonth & Morrell (2016) further contextualise this by stating that "this slippage between manager/leader and worker/follower is more than merely rebranding with a more fashionable label" (Learmonth & Morrell, 2016, p.258), as it represents a significant discursive shift that attempts to redress managerial control with persuasive leadership. Using the NHS as an example, Bresnen et al (2015) argue that given the context "it is perhaps not surprising then, that the discourse of leaderism has taken much more of a hold in policy and practitioner thinking" (Bresnen et al., 2015, p.454). Bresnen et al (2015) also outline that to understand leaderism a critical perspective is required, as this enables a departure from mainstream thinking and allows for a narrative that depicts how the current context came to be. In addition, Ekman et al (2018) argue that in current research the presence of NPM relating to governance has become a norm in public sector reform. Furthermore, they describe leaderism as:

Based on the shared promotion of individual leaders as radical change agents with the ability to define organisational agendas and solutions, unify diverging interests, attend to needs of

consumers and citizens, and create, enthusiasm and shared values in the organisation. More specifically, leaderist discourse projects hope onto a constructed ideal liberated leader, a rational and omnipotent actor, to which the fates of complex organisations can be trusted (Ekman et al., 2018, p.300).

Almost ten years on from the introduction of the perspective of leaderism by O'Reilly and Reed (2010) as being a complimentary set of discourses to managerialism, the definition by Ekman (2018) is more defined and alludes to post-heroic notions of leadership however, it must be acknowledged that leaderism or managerialism is neither a homogenous or harmonious discourse (Ekman et al., 2018). O'Reilly & Reed (2010) characterise this by referring to the ambiguities and flexibility of leaderist discourse and argue, as has been stated in this review, that leaderism contains market driven, neoliberal discourses and notions of leadership, many of which are entrenched in collective, dispersed ideology that are misleading and ultimately despotic (Allix, 2000).

Contributing to the use of Foucault in educational research

Further to the mapping of the field of leadership undertaken in this literature review, I have also considered the contribution this research makes to the use of Foucault. Naz (2021) argues that Foucault has much to offer the explanation of policies and practices in FE, as fundamentally there are a multitude of non-linear and historical interactions between professionals at multiple levels. Furthermore Naz (2021) argues that professional practices, in this case the practice of leadership and management, are imbued by dominant political discourse that affects notions of power served by neoliberalism and compliance, both of which featured in the literature and interview data in this research.

My contribution to the application of Foucauldian discourse analysis has been the recognition of the Kendall & Wickham (1999) five step model to enable in-depth analysis of interview data. This has never been used before in relation to FE management. The model also resulted in the detailed consideration of the rules, statements, and the subsequent identification of new knowledge. To understand the significance of identifying statements, Gillies (2013) argues that statements have an enunciative function, that provide reference, a subject, an associated field and a materiality. In this research the concept of statements was used to uncover "what might be called a discursive formation, which is the general enunciative system that governs a group of verbal performances" (Gillies, 2013, p.33). In addition, the interview data was considered as a corpus of statements produced within the rules of the resultant discourse. This allowed the data to present itself in an understandable way.

The application Foucault's thinking is far from simplistic, as generally "Foucault's methods are not easy to follow" (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.3). In order to navigate the application of Foucault in this research there has been an acceptance of the importance of history in Foucauldian scholarship, as Kendall & Wickham (1999) argue that Foucauldian discourse involves the appraisal of histories that never stop, and that historical perspectives in discourse analysis allow the diagnosis of the present. In this research, I have mapped the field, to argue that key events in the history of FE, the incorporation of colleges and the neoliberal marketisation of FE over the last thirty years have enabled leaderism to emerge.

Application of the rules of discourse

Pivotal to the contribution made by this research has been the application of the rules of discourse associated with case study undertaken. Kendall & Wickham (1999) urge us to consider that statements are made within a set of rules, and that this can often be a subjectless process, and is not limited by human intervention or action. In order to navigate this, a set of assumptions about the college were ascertained during the scoping process. In the first instance it was identified that the college is subject to the FE policy reform in England and Wales. Furthermore, it was established that the interview participants would share common experiences from their curriculum management roles with other participants in the research. An example being their roles in the recent Ofsted inspection undertaken at the college. These shared experiences will reflect the variety of mechanisms in place that govern the college and the interpretation of messages on an individual basis that have been conveyed from senior college managers to the middle management tier. Care was taken in this process to acknowledge the Foucauldian perspective that these rules did not offer a form of closure but enabled the process for new statements to be made. Kendall & Wickham (1999) argue that this enables attention to be drawn to how discourse is produced. In this case I used this to construct how the discourse of leaderism can emerge in the present whilst acknowledging that discursive knowledge production never stops.

The contribution to the understanding of FE management by this research differs from other studies on this topic, Briggs (2005), Page (2010), Fort (2015) and Naz (2021) are concerned with how power, control and the resultant impact on professionals and are understood by using the ideas of Foucault. Governmentality for example. My research uses Foucault to not only understand and justify the existence of power in hierarchy, but to explain the conditions for curriculum managers historically and relate this to understandings of leadership in FE today.

Chapter 4 - Research methods & methodology

Aims

To investigate perceptions of leadership among FE curriculum managers

To critically review the enactment of leadership in a particular FE college

To locate contemporary leadership practices within a critically informed social and historical context

Research Questions

1. What practices do curriculum managers in further education identify with to enact leadership in a case study college in the North-West of England?
2. How do curriculum managers recognise their position and identity in relation to teaching and managing and how is this shaped by the current context for further education?
3. To what extent is leaderism a valuable lens to theorise current leadership practice in further education?

Introduction

This chapter outlines the overall research strategy and provides a discussion of how the adopted approach will generate knowledge based on the research questions. In doing this I will cover the interpretivist stance and locate this within a discussion of validity, reliability, ethics and data analysis. I will make an argument for the unit of study (Hamel, 1993) and the context for the case study college. Briggs & Coleman (2007) argue that case studies are conducted in a localised boundary of time, are related to educational aspects of an institution and can inform the work of theoreticians. In this case a specific set of interviews was undertaken to investigate the theoretical framework of leaderism to better understand the working context and conditions for further education curriculum managers. In addition, the wider consideration of this being my researcher role and the degree to which the data typifies the conditions for a Further Education (FE) college. The desired approach

being to consider how contemporary leadership and management ideas are operationalised and articulated through the responses to sets of interview questions. The validity of such an approach is also considered whilst the data is analysed through a critical discourse analysis of the responses into key themes arising from the literature review.

Location

The site used for this study is a large further education college in the north of England. There are over 500 teachers, seven campuses and 5000 students. The provision located on these sites is split into subject areas and offers a range of programmes from entry level to higher education. Within these levels, multiple examples of vocational subject disciplines can be found. There are full-time vocational learners following courses with a compulsory work element, part-time adult provision and there is also an extensive portfolio of apprenticeships. This diverse offer is also supported by a huge cohort of students resitting Maths and English as part of the holistic study programme. Whilst this is a much larger than average institution it does offer an insight into the typical and assumed factors of the nature of a modern FE college. I would argue that this is a typical instance case study (Denscombe, 2014). It is subject to all the recent policy agendas and has a typically hierarchical management structure found in such an organisation. One of the challenges faced in organising the access to the college was gaining the necessary authority from the correct person of responsibility, due to the size and complexity of the site. I successfully gained access via the use of a gatekeeper. Once consent was gained, however, the college did have many middle managers to target for this research. By factoring in the location and the nature of the college it was anticipated that a sense of identity and the nature of the institution would play a part in the outcomes of the case. My own experiences suggest that FE subject disciplines and working practices often have their own distinctive attributes and subcultures, quite often associated with resources or outcomes. For example, in Performing Arts a theatre is often used and a use of black clothing in rehearsal is the norm. In Construction, a large workshop is often used, and a particular emphasis is placed on health and safety equipment and clothing. This awareness of difference will enable this location to produce an enriched and diverse set of data, as professionals with varied experiences of industry will contribute. This will provide a challenge when analysing the data as the assimilation of themes to understand the discourse will be complex, and in contrast to the generally dominant and uniform discourses of current research that is largely functional. FE colleges usually have a dominant focus on the provision of vocational learning (Ainley & Bailey, 1997) however, this can vary according to several factors, for example site, location, size, and subject discipline.

Ethics

The British Educational Research Association's *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2018), have informed the ethical decisions taken during the research for this PhD. Each participant was informed about the project and its aims before they signed consent forms. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. This was ascertained using an intermediary based at the college in the first instance and then again in writing prior to the interview. Participants responded only after this had been established and an interview at a private location convenient for themselves was then carried out. None of the interviewees expressed a desire at any time to drop out or have their data excluded from the research. In all cases and on the recordings the participant's identity and location are anonymised. No incentive was offered for people to take part in the research. In total 10 interviews were conducted between March 2017 and June 2018.

There were, however, specific ethical issues associated with this project. The participants knew each other through their work and mutual relationship with the gatekeeper. I knew the gatekeeper via my own work in the sector and asked them to assist with access to the sample. I had once been a middle manager in FE and have worked in the Northwest region for seventeen years. It was therefore likely that I would be known through indirect or direct association by at least some participants. I also have a current role in teacher training that would mean that it's possible I could have had previous contact with teachers, recently promoted colleagues, former colleagues or with mentors with whom I had previously placed trainees. I took time to explain that my research was not associated with these roles. Ethically, however, my previous experiences would not compromise the anonymity or any potential future working relationships as the data collected would remain anonymous. Finally, the interview process could have the potential for a particularly sensitive disclosure, this could be concerning organisational culture or a specific allegation. It was my responsibility to identify this and stop recording as appropriate. It wasn't the intention of this work to deal with potential cases of bullying for example but, had this arisen then I would need to remove this sort of data and be supportive. During the interviews there were no such instances.

Theoretical framework

In the literature review I have outlined the major contributing factors to the notion of leadership. In addition I produced a table to differentiate the understandings of leadership, management,

managerialism and leaderism. The purpose of this will be to inform the overall analysis and enable emerging themes to be contextualised. In the case of leaderism O'Reilly & Reid (2010) argue that a strong discourse exists and the leaderism framework contains identifiable practice that is imbued within the language of leadership. I will seek to explore how the practice of leadership is described by the interviewees and how this is identified in the language they use. The literature describes a powerful and persuasive language to leadership, that implies democracy and that imperative to its existence is the usage of a range of fashionable terms. Gunter (2005) questions the use of terms like 'vision' and other 'aerosol' leadership terms, and the validity of distribution or dispersion of duties. Woods (2004) also argues that multi-layered or dispersed approaches to leadership do not necessarily result in the dispersal of power, as power is rarely dispersed outside the tiers of the senior hierarchy. Gunter (2005) argues that the most important issue with distributed leadership focuses on the location of the interface between control and autonomy. In my research I will be analysing the extent to which middle leaders identify with teaching and leading practice, Ball (2012) describes this as "dividing practices" (Ball, 2012, p.153) in which teaching, and leadership rarely have a unified existence and often create tension for middle managers. Semi-structured interviews will be undertaken focusing on key issues such as participation in leadership and the dissemination of duties. A key criticism of leadership is that much of the practice, approaches to strategy, articulation of duties and team organisation happen in an intellectual vacuum (Gunter, 2005) and that limited links to context and critical thinking are formed. Through the careful consideration of the responses to the questions the critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be undertaken (Foucault, 1977). This will allow the language used to be considered against the themes identified in the literature as this approach argues that understanding and language can be used to construct relationships between the subject and surrounding social context (Newby, 2014). CDA can also be used to analyse equality and power relationships. Gillies (2013) argues that the framing of educational leadership as a discourse enables the analysis of its working practices in significant detail. It also allows for leadership to have terms, understandings and a relationship with education and makes concepts of leadership relevant. Further to this using CDA approach in the FE college context will generate knowledge that helps us to understand so-called leadership styles and provide a commentary on their role and purpose in further education. The text from the transcripts will be linked to key understandings and discourses of leadership and management factors. This will also enable a discussion to take place as to the attributes of leaderism.

It is anticipated that interviews will allow participants to articulate their thoughts about their roles, identities, and practice. Their semi-structured nature will also allow for a degree of personalisation

and encourage new perspectives on leadership practice to inform the study. Foucault (1972) argues that “symbolic links” (Foucault, 1972, p.22) can be found when considering discourse. This would inform the rationale behind the overall CDA approach to see if the linguistic themes from the responses on leadership practice, identity and context are evident in the interviews.

Methodology

The intended methodology will be a case study which employs critical discourse analysis (CDA). The case study approach will enable the research to generate focused knowledge, as Denscombe (2014) posits this also allows a focus on one thing that is to be investigated. I would also argue that the college in question is a typical case (Denscombe, 2014), as the generic attributes in terms of demographics, subjects and types of courses are found across many other colleges across England. The contribution to knowledge will entail a rich and vivid description of events in a chronological order that enables a critical and analytical narrative. It will also seek to understand the perceptions of a variety of agents involved in the case (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Yin (2003) argues that case studies have the capacity to enable researchers to explore ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. He also suggests that case studies can incorporate the relevant contextual conditions and provide increased clarity where potential boundaries could appear to be unclear (Yin, 2003). In relation to this research, limited existing work has been undertaken although the literature suggests a complex culture of identity and relationships are in existence for curriculum managers in modern FE colleges. The methodology will also acknowledge the role of the researcher in the findings and illuminate the topic of leadership and management. Semi-structured interviewing is a much-used data collection method that allows for enriched data particular to the case. In this instance, the role of the interviewer and the interviewee will be of paramount importance. I am mindful that my involvement may influence the study as I naturally possess an interest in the topic and bring a history within the sector to the research. I will also not be fully aware of how I am perceived by participants and in certain cases their responses could be influenced by what they perceive this research to be or what they believe the possible outcomes are. The CDA approach and ultimate analysis will need to embrace this and will be essential to frame the context of the responses and the knowledge generated by this research. I am also mindful that the case study will not allow wholesale generalisations, although it will contribute to existing knowledge and be based on the case itself and be supported by the evidence. In this case study the parameters will be clearly defined as I will be confining the findings to the one college under investigation. This will allow for particularisation. Stake (1995) discusses this:

The real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself (Stake, 1995, p.8).

The positionality of the researcher can be deemed as an embedded weakness in the production of case study analysis. To argue positionality and validity the work of Fort (2015) has been considered where “I aspire at best, for my research outcomes to evince the realisation of a persuasive fiction” (Strathern et al., 1987, cited in Fort, 2015, p.61). Fort (2015) further argues by using Foucault to corroborate the overall position of case study research; “I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. For all that, I would not want to say that they were outside the truth” (Foucault, 1979, cited in Fort, 2015, p.61). I would argue that this research will provide a fictive history, produced by the case, (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983) and that narrative as Fort (2015) notes will provide an analysis that respects historical problems and concepts. This also allows for the recognition that the researcher is concerned with something important (Fort, 2015). I also concur with Fort’s (2015) assertion that the intention of this research is to provide an insight into the unit of study (Hamel, 1993), “without claiming to capture what the past really was (or the present really is) as some form of ultimate reality” (Fort, 2015, p.61). The question of ontology is embedded within the social nature of qualitative research. Bryman (2012) discusses the relationship of social ontology and argues that issues of positionality cannot be divorced from the conduct of social based research. Furthermore, the researcher is likely to form research questions based on their relationship with the subject and often forms narratives linking the ontology to their social reality. I will endeavour to detach myself from my own truths so that I can allow for alternative viewpoints as Tamboukou (1999) terms to “seek alternative ways of existence” (Tamboukou, 1999, p.210). In this case, the literature has guided the inquiry, and the social reality is based on my history as a researcher and a strong base of interlinked experiences in the FE sector. The case and results of this study will not float freely of this overarching culture, my experiences of the “objective social entity” of my associations (Bryman, 2012, p.30). Willig (2001) makes a clear case for the actual embodiment of a case study as an approach rather than a method. Case study research constitutes a study of singular entities, and in this case that entity is the college. This entity is also well suited to qualitative methods of data collection and discourse analysis. This PhD will utilise semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis (CDA). It can therefore be argued that this case study is not characterised by the methods used, but by the diversity of the data produced by the case itself (Willig, 2001). I also acknowledge that I am inductive in my overall approach (Bryman, 2012) to research the field of leadership and management. The use of an inductive approach is a nonlinear process, as it allows for conjecture (Newby, 2014). In an inductive approach

the findings are then fed back in line within the context of the larger pre-existing phenomena. Induction, however, is a tendency for qualitative research and is further complicated by considerations of epistemology. Bedrettin (2015) argues that empiricism requires researchers to formulate their studies on their observations in the field which means that researchers rely upon their “intuition and see research basically as a researcher-subject interaction” (Bedrettin, 2015, p.139). This, Bedrettin (2015) states is largely compatible with a constructivist epistemology and that this further enables an empathic approach that involves the reflection on research and the “vicarious experiences of the subjects in an emic perspective” (Bedrettin, 2015, p.139). Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) support this constructivist approach to case study and recognise that truth is relevant to individual perspective. I am mindful that this case study does not float freely of such theoretical paradigms, as case studies can facilitate an amount of theory generation. This level of detailed exploration can produce insights into varied social situations and has the potential to form the basis of theoretical formulations (Willig, 2001). The case study approach will be useful when devising an investigative plan and a range of sources can be used to supplement the interview data, for example, college statistics and strategic documents. Yin (2003) supports the case study approach when the focus is to answer how and why questions and when the researcher is unable to influence the behaviour of those involved. In addition, Yin (2003) also believes that case study can include the context and that this is relevant to the phenomenon that is being explored by the research (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this research it would be impossible to understand the discourse of leadership without allowing for the context of the case, the college and the current FE policy context. According to O’Connell (2005) college strategic plans are significant when considering the culture and context of FE colleges and it is further argued that these plans are rigorous and enable the desired strategic focus to be ascertained. Senior leaders spend a large amount of time on such documents so that institutional intentions are available to stakeholders at all levels of an organisation. O’Connell (2005) also furthers this argument by stating that it is key to college business, performance goals and the measuring of ultimate accountability against measurable outcomes. In this research the documents publicly available about the case study college will be used to inform the overall context. I used these to gain information that the college wished to be made public and to aid the formation of the questions to the curriculum managers. For example, did they refer to the plan or were they aware of the advertised priorities pertaining to developing links with employers and increasing the higher education (HE) provision.

This research has been designed to allow for scoping (Newby, 2014), and a desire to create a strategy that is responsive to its setting, holistic and able to capture appropriate data about leadership and management to inform the research questions. I have done this by formulating questions that draw

upon key literature themes and provided a rationale for the study to the participants in the interview. Mercer et al (2015) have argued that FE has been generally under researched, therefore a single case study design represents something that has unique attributes, in that it will capture a particular view of FE at the time of the research. Furthermore, the case could have the potential to be revelatory as the exploration of leadership and management in this case had been previously inaccessible (Yin, 2003). The participants were selected using purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling. The sample was available through existing professional relationships and therefore ensured a satisfactory response rate. Provisional access to the centre was via a gatekeeper (Goff, 2020), who has a relationship with the sample that has been formed via their professional duties, however, all the participants were not personally known to myself in any other capacity other than as researcher and a participant in this research. In selecting my case I am clear from the outset that the college and its curriculum managers are the case or as Hamel (1993) describes, “the unit of study” (Hamel, 1993, p.41), whilst leaderism is “the object of study” (Hamel, 1993, p.41). I also acknowledge that ultimately the project is a result of my relationship with the literature and my professional understanding of leadership and management. Whilst this has the potential to undermine the credibility of this research, I believe it to be a powerful statement, as it underlines the commitment of this research to generate knowledge of the situation and consider the role of the researcher, and the ontological perspective of uncovering the truth as I see it (Jacquette, 2014). I also recognise that leaderism isn’t necessarily a negative theoretical framework, or a tool to criticise the practises of curriculum managers. It has theoretical substance.

Research Methods

The selected method to inform the case study was semi-structured interview. This enabled an inductive approach by allowing a structured set of questions to be asked of each participant whilst also allowing for other key information, through wider discussion should it arise (Dawson, 2009). I completed 10 interviews. I was an outsider but with similar interests and experiences to the participants. Furthermore, I was mindful of the handling of a new relationship and the need for this to be positive to produce informative responses (Platt, 1981). My peers in other institutions have similar and relevant characteristics to myself. It is also possible that we will have shared similar experiences of the FE sector and may have performed similar roles. Platt (1981) describes this as the sharing of “sub-cultural understandings, and they are the members of the same groups or communities.” (Platt, 1981, p.76) In building my understanding of this complex situation I needed to be aware of how I will be received by new peers. I will have some understanding of their knowledge, but no definitive grasp of their interest in the research. I conducted the interviews anticipating that

there may be reluctance to share their views about leadership and management due to any perceived suspicions of the research and the potential for negative feeling towards the college hierarchy. Furthermore, I was not anonymous in the process but will have perceived characteristics, some of which may be relevant to the research topic. Fort (2015) has previously considered this and states:

As a doctoral student carrying out research, I considered that I held insider and outside status in the following ways: when conducting research within my own college I am an insider-researcher as I am employed at the college, though I am also an outsider in terms of the research subject (as I am a teacher and not a middle-manager). I am an outsider when conducting research at external colleges as I am not a middle-manager and also work outside these organisations, though can be considered an insider, as a teacher employed within the FE sector (Fort, 2015, p.64).

This research could also lead to an amount of speculation. Leadership and management are often questioned in relation to institutional performance and the research could be perceived as a challenge to those in power, which could lead to rumours circulating within the group “about what one is looking for and what the interviews are like” (Platt, 1981, p.77). Despite having several shared experiences detailed ‘insider knowledge’ of the professional communities in the participant institutions was limited. I also anticipated that there would be elements of discussion around the project as both I and the research project were unfamiliar to the interviewees. I approached this by carefully balancing talking about the project for a short period of time before performing the actual interview.

It seems offensive not to give some honest and reasonably full account of the rationale and purpose of one’s study to such respondents, and the account cannot be one which is intellectually condescending. However, it is difficult to do this without inviting discussion of the study rather than getting on with the interview, and without providing so much information that it may bias the course of the interview. (Platt, 1981, p.80)

Key to knowledge generation was the insights of the insiders of the institution and the need for this to be probed carefully. Furthermore, the interaction between myself and the participants was crucial, I also believe that this was a key point in the deciphering of the interview data. There was a reliance on collaboration between me as an outsider and the participants in the research as the insiders. It was through this relationship that knowledge was generated. However, this does not have a limiting role in the interview strategy, and not one that disenfranchises the insiders from making an important contribution (Elliott, 1988).

Sample

In the first instance I was able to make contact via an existing colleague, or “gatekeeper” (Goff, 2020, p.322) who was a curriculum manager at the college, familiar to me through my current job; however, prior to this I had considered the case study college through convenience of location and by utilising freely available data such as enrolments, staffing, inspection grade and turnover. I am assuming given the available data, that a large college in the Northwest will be subject to typical policy agendas and employment trends for the area. All FE colleges are facing challenges against the context of cuts and a desire for increased employer responsiveness through the development of apprenticeships. Further to this all colleges nationally are subject to OFSTED inspection. Several colleges in the Northwest at the time had recently undergone inspections. Steps were taken to avoid undertaking the research in the college at the same time as any inspection. The selection of one college as the case will allow for critical case sampling as Bryman 2012 states: “sampling a case that permits a logical inference about the phenomenon of interest – for example, a case might be chosen precisely because it is anticipated that it might allow a theory to be tested” (Bryman, 2012, p.412).

The use of a gatekeeper to access the research played a pivotal role in how the sample was selected and, in the data generated. Goff (2020) argues that gaining access to a group of participants is a critical component to any research. Furthermore Goff (2020) also asserts that it can also be a challenging process as the gatekeeper manipulates their own professional standing and relationships in their institution, this supports the notion that I am reliant on the professional communities that the gatekeeper holds in the institution. I would also argue that this played a vital role in the research, as it determined the sample and a specific group of linked curriculum managers from within the college. Despite this, sampling in each case study is unique, even within the same site (Goff, 2020).

To gain access, I was clear that sample will include curriculum managers only. This approach was purposive (Bryman, 2012) or non – probability based (Newby, 2014). The ultimate goal was to perform this in a strategic way so that the potential for data generation is illuminative of the questions for the research. In the college identified for the research there were 24 curriculum managers. I contacted all of them with an anticipation that not all would wish to be interviewed. The access to the curriculum managers (managers with dual teaching and managing responsibility) was a little problematic, although 10 interviews were carried out. Of the 10 interviews 6 could be classified as ‘curriculum managers’; the others were middle quality managers who did not teach and 1 was a senior leader. All had teaching experience and answered all of the questions. When designing the study, I had considered widening the sample base to include low, middle and high middle managers,

however, this would be problematic and hard to manage as part of this PhD given the intentions of the research. I took the decision to allow the extra data from non-teaching managers to illuminate the context and to then relate the themes from their discussions against what the core sample had said. I attached significance to the notion that non-teaching curriculum managers or quality managers came forward for the research and self-selected even though all had been given the same information. I decided that this broadened the scope of data available for analysis and the definition of a curriculum manager and would therefore be relevant to the case. It was harder to gain access to the 24 teaching managers than non-teaching ones, of which three were subsequently interviewed. To further the rationale behind the inclusion of the extra participants it can be argued that all are from the same institution so therefore there should be similarities and relevancies in their responses. Many had been teaching managers in the past and will be working under the same strategic guidance and plan. Quality also has a curricular focus so this perspective could be significant.

I requested access to a specific group that had an assumed set of characteristics. Their relevant experiences and location were also familiar and had common experiences with my own working history however, some of the respondents self-selected and so it could be argued that they were recruited via snow-ball sampling as respondents identified themselves during the purposive sample process (Newby, 2014). The first set of 10 interviews took place between January 2017 and June 2018. A semi-structured approach was used, and all followed the schedule outlined in this chapter. Interview questions were based on the research questions, and I added in follow-up questions and prompts in certain cases to encourage depth to the responses. In the interview some responses were more in-depth than others and some data was unexpected. Some respondents were considered as being guarded when responding to the questions. This was a factor to consider both for the theoretical framework and for the overall research design, for example could future research in the field of leadership consider alternatives to interviews. In addition, I considered whether the guarded nature of some responses was symptomatic of the leadership and management in the college. Generally, I used my own judgement to probe for further responses.

Interview Schedule

In the following section I explain the strategy used in formulating the set of questions for the interviews and how they link to the literature review and the overall theoretical framework.

How long have you worked in education?

This question is designed to be an introduction and to allow for an amount of contextualization and understanding of how curriculum managers attain their positions. In the final analysis the relative periods of duty, and the types of roles and subjects will be considered.

Tell me about your role at the college?

The purpose of this question is to maintain the introductory approach; however, this does have a more direct link to the literature. Embedded within the concept of teaching managers are the dualities of such a role regarding balance of teaching and managing. This can also lead to questions of perceived identity and when considered within the discourse analysis it will be useful to see what emphasis is placed on the varying roles.

In your opinion what do you see as the main challenges facing the FE sector today?

I acknowledge that this question may be challenging as it could be interpreted as a typical job interview question, but a middle manager in a large FE college would be expected to be informed with regard to this. In the framework of leaderism it has been argued that many of the practices take place in a metaphorical vacuum. Whereby little of the day-to-day practice has meaningful links to wider views of context and policy. My aim in asking this question is not one of testing knowledge, it is to explore the context in which their practice is taking place.

What would you say is the approach to leadership & management required of you by the College?

I am using this question to identify the institutional ethos of leadership and management. Leaderism is argued to have been a deliberate approach derived from historic managerial and distributed leadership ideas. Boocock (2019) has argued that these ideas have permeated the FE sector. I will be analysing the language and discussion to indicate the existence of deliberate and historically-informed approaches.

In what ways do you organise your team?

The literature suggests that distributed leadership requires leaders to disperse power across their teams to create a sense of collective. Embedded within this are ideas of democracy, role matching and enhanced autonomy through the language of leadership. The responses to this will indicate some of the ideas used to organise and motivate complex teams to deliver challenging results. I have also argued that evidence of distributed leadership is a contributing discourse to leaderism.

Do you consider there to be differences between leadership and management?

Particular to the case will be the understanding of participants with regard to these core ideas. Teaching managers are subject throughout their careers to a varied experience both through training and in practice. Leadership has a particular language and the responses to this question will be considered against the discourse of leaderism.

What do you see as the strategic targets of the College and what role have you had in formulating and delivering them?

The purpose of this question is to explore aspects of leadership practice in the managers context. A key argument in the modern notion of leadership is involvement at multiple levels of managers in strategic decisions. I will be using this aspect to form a narrative around the relationships of middle managers with senior managers and the context of distributed power and subsequent relationships.

How is individual and team performance managed in this institution?

The research questions guiding this research highlight the Foucauldian roots regarding power and discourse in FE. Accountability and marketisation are components of increased neoliberal approaches in the sector since the mid-1990s. Ideas of performance management and their subsequent approaches are also embedded within power relationships. I will be using the responses to better understand the institutional ethos.

Can you describe how your curriculum area targets are aligned with trends in the sector?

I am exploring the extent to which the curriculum manager displays strategic oversight regarding the planning of their department. Further to this I am linking their responses to the wider context for education and their sense of autonomy regarding important localised strategy.

Is there anything about the leadership & management in this college that you have not had the chance to say that you would like to discuss?

I am allowing the participant to volunteer data that may interpret as being important following the themes of the previous questions. The responses here could be potentially significant as it could allow for some individualised understanding to be demonstrated. It could also indicate the level to which the respondent feels engaged in this research or whether they appear guarded.

Approach to data analysis

Kendal & Wickham (1999) outline a five-step method for utilising a Foucauldian approach to Critical discourse analysis (CDA):

1. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic
2. The identification of rules of the production of statements
3. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure);
4. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made;
5. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.42)

The Kendal & Wickham (1999) model, whilst useful, also recognises that realistically there is no simple methodology to using discourse analysis, however, it does provide a critical lens for which societal, cultural and notions on institutional power can be explored. Fairclough (1995) suggests that the functions of modern power relationships have distinctive language features, however, it is not limited to the sole practice of the use of language, but also material practise embedded into discourse, such as the formation of rules that govern knowledge production, and the general "mundane practices of social institutions" (Fairclough, 1995, p.136). In the case of this research, the descriptions of leadership and management will inform the discourse. Further to this the concept of leaderism is considered as an archaeology of knowledge (Foucault, 1972) due to its incumbent characteristics of rules, language and historical context (Willig, 2017). Willig (2017) argues that discourse has the concept of discipline within it, but that it also refers to how objects, concepts and strategies are formed. CDA will allow for these attributes to be considered from the descriptions of practice from the interview transcripts. Wodak & Meyer (2001) state that the central issues of CDA are, what knowledge consists of, how this knowledge evolves, how it is passed on, its overall function for the constitution of subjects and the overall impact on the development of society. Importantly, Wodak & Meyer (2001) also argue that knowledge consists of all kinds or meanings and is generally informed by history. The knowledge generated by the CDA undertaken for this research will include the knowledge from the people

interviewed and their respective individual discursive contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). In addition, Wodak & Meyer (2001) proffer that discursive contexts represent individual existence and extends to include dispositive analysis, whereby the knowledge generated by the interviews is valid at the time and place that it was produced. This I would argue provides an element of validity to the data as it acknowledges the responses gathered as being valid at the time of their undertaking and:

Any researcher conducting such an analysis must, moreover, see clearly that with his/her critique he/she is not situated outside the discourse he/she is analysing. If not, he/she places his/her own concept of discourse analysis in doubt. Apart from other critical aspects which discourse also comprises, he/she can base his/her analysis on values and norms, laws and rights; he/she must not forget that these are themselves the historical outcome of discourse, and that his/her possible bias is not based on truth, but represents a position that in turn is the result of a discursive process. Equipped with this position he/she is able to enter discursive contests and to defend or modify his/her position. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.34)

This approach will be used to allow for themes to be generated through an overall inductive methodology that; “embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation” (Bryman, 2012, p.33). I also need to account for the context of the selected college, demographics, OFSTED grade and a range of strategic documents. Once the data has been collated it will be possible to utilise CDA to capture the essence of the case and to allow the data to inform the general field of leadership and management research. I aim to analyse leaderism by looking at the responses and coding key messages. For example, the language and terminology used can indicate the existence of a key paradigm. If leaderism is characterised by control and performance management then responses to the questions will highlight related concepts and language. This last step will ensure a movement towards an inductive approach as “the researcher infers the implications of his or her findings for the theory that prompted the whole exercise. The findings are fed back into the stock of theory and the research findings associated with a certain domain of enquiry” (Bryman, 2012, p.24). I will record and transcribe the interviews and then identify key themes and trends. I therefore need to be clear about the characteristics of leaderism, and the differences between, managers, management, and managerialism (Cunliffe, 2009). This approach also facilitates a process to summarise the data and link it back to the central argument for the presence of leaderism. This approach will be systematic and rigorous, whilst also requiring examinations and verification of the terminology in relation to the framework of leaderism. The benefits of discourse analysis along with the inductive approach will allow for coding against the terminology but may also allow for an interpretative approach (Bryman, 2012) which could allow other meanings to appear. The final aspect to the data analysis will be the understandings of leadership set against the possible known limitations contained within the project and a desire to be critically reflexive. In acknowledging the wider role of

the researcher, the individual respondents, the institution and the unpredictability of research an overall interpretivist stance will be formed. To do this the analysis will attempt to critique the case study approach taken from the outset, the context of the unit of study, the relationship of the data when analysed inductively against the framework of leadership and finally, the broadly accepted limitations of the overall methodology adopted.

Researcher expertise and the contribution to the implementation of the methodology

Gunter (2005) and Cunliffe (2020) have called for increased reflexivity in research. In this PhD I have stated that this has been my intention throughout. To do this, I have firstly considered how reflexivity is defined and then identified how this applied to my methodology. Cunliffe (2020) argues that sociological theorists use reflexivity as an ultimate condition of “our ever-changing uncertain contemporary society” (Cunliffe, 2020, p.65). FE, I have argued is an example of this with an ever-changing context and an untidy history. Furthermore, Cunliffe (2020) argues that reflexivity enables the examination of the broader social field, and how “knowledge, practices and perceptions, and dispositions and identities are reflexively constructed and contested” (Cunliffe, 2020, p.65). Ultimately, I would argue that reflexivity offers a more rounded and deeper perspective for enquiry than common notions of reflection, that are often linear and person centric, Gibbs (1988) for example. Cunliffe (2020) argues that there is a fundamental ontological difference between reflection and reflexivity, whereby reflection is a functional process that enables solutions to be found through the identification of patterns from which we are separate from, whereas reflexivity, enables a rationalisation of practices, policies, texts and actions based on assumptions and norms. I have used a reflexive approach to assess the norms in FE sector and critique my own relationship with this research.

In implementing the methodology, I am arguing that two aspects were considered reflexively; the first being the generalisability of this research; the second being the consideration of the data. Central to my data analysis has been the use of *moderatum* generalization, such an approach allows for certain instances in qualitative research to have a broader meaning (Bryman, 2016). This allowed holistic consideration of how the participants came to be involved and where they might have been previously. By revisiting the data and considering this reflexively, it could be identified from the interview responses that the curriculum managers involved had not only worked in the FE college utilised in this research but had experiences from a range of providers in the FE sector and beyond. This was further backed up by the data.

Andrew, for example, stated that he had recently moved from another college and Beth had recently moved from an apprenticeship provider. Debbie stated she had worked in two other colleges, as had Elaine. Halima discussed that she had worked in a secondary school and Jo explained that she had held a variety of roles in different sectors. To summarise, 60% of the sample readily acknowledged wider experiences from the education sector, much of which has been subject to neoliberal reform.

The second reflexive element to this research was the use of the data and how this was analysed. During the interview process I was mindful that I understood the responses of the curriculum managers and had a degree of empathy, due to my own career in education and my previous roles as an FE curriculum manager. This I would argue enabled me to understand the responses given, the terminology used and when to follow up and probe appropriately, however, this is also fraught with complexity. I needed at times to separate from the danger of knowing too much. To do this effectively I had to maintain, where possible reflexivity and allow for an interplay between my own knowledge and the data from the interviews. Kendall & Wickham (1999) describe this as a suspension of second order judgements. For this to be achieved they argue for the need to recognise your own position in the research and avoid the use of previous analysis. Kendall & Wickham (1999) further argue that a total suspension of second order judgements is largely unrealistic, however I used this reflexive approach to allow the participants to demonstrate their own views and answer the questions as they saw fit.

The last phase of the research was to consider how to approach the identification of the themes of discourse and justify my decisions. I took the decision to consider the data as a corpus of statements (Kendall & Wickham, 1999) that appeared rhizomatically by appearing at multiple times in the data. I was careful to acknowledge that I had chosen rhizomatic strands related to the literatures that were identifiable against the framework of leaderism, and whilst at times these were obvious, it also led to the possibility of the data demonstrating other characteristics. Honan & Sellers (2011) describe this as the production of a discursive web however, reflexivity allows this research to acknowledge this along with the assumptions, norms, historical perspectives and researcher positionality underpinning this PhD.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis – Manager Interviews

Introduction

This chapter will utilise Kendall & Wickham's (1999) five-step analysis of Foucauldian discourse. Each response to the interview schedule from each participant will be taken in turn and compared to the theoretical framework of leaderism discussed in the literature review. The Foucauldian approach is justified via the concept governmentality and enables a reflective tool for the study of networked governance (Misfud & Day, 2022). Governmentality aims to provide a critical approach to the understanding of the micro practices that are used to govern (Day & Pirrie, 2020). Embedded within the concept of leadership are notions of power, Lumby (2017) & Gunter (2021) both argue that notions of power have been inadequately dealt with previously in the literatures on distributed leadership. I am arguing that Foucault's thinking regarding governance enables a critical discussion to take place that acknowledges the critical analysis of power called for by Gunter (2021). In the literature review I further argue that leaderism has borrowed characteristics from managerialism and distributed leadership, and that we are now in the era of leaderism. In this chapter I further explore this argument using a Foucauldian five-step approach to discourse analysis to critique the presence and characteristics of the central argument regarding the era of leaderism.

Generally, it is recognised that each response is a "corpus of statements" (Kendal & Wickham, 1999, p. 42). This corpus or group of statements is designed to reflect the discourse through a collective analysis of how the practises are described and the language that is used to describe them. Furthermore, it is recognised that discourse is systematic, organised and consequently has rules. These rules are not just limited to language, they are also designed to describe material practices and the conditions in which they exist. Kingston (2021) further argues that "Discourse is productive in that it creates that which it describes and is defined by (Foucault, 1972) as bodies of ideas that produce and regulate the world in their own terms, rendering some things common sense and other things nonsensical" (Kingston, 2021, p.65).

Step one of the five step Kendall & Wickham (1999) Foucauldian analysis method is described as necessary for the following four steps to take place as "for this you need to also know that statements involve things as well as words" (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p43), and you have to be mindful to "the danger of confusing the term discourse with language" (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p42). The Kendall & Wickham (1999) steps are

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic
- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements
- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure);
- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made;
- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p42)

Step one is designed to recognise that discourse exists and has a historical context. Step two enables the consideration of the rules that govern the research. For example, what are the socially and culturally embedded expectations that are reasonably able to be expected. In this case, it is reasonable to expect that management structures are in place and that the college has quality systems and a level of localised accountability to its stakeholders.

According to Kendall & Wickham (1999):

The third and fourth steps in our guide to using Foucauldian notion of discourse – the identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which are never rules of closure) and the identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made – cover similar ground to Step 2 (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 43)

In identifying the rules that govern the statements, or as Foucault's (2002) description of statements asserts a "collection of discursive facts; but we must then define" (Foucault, 2002, p.30), we are essentially identifying the rules that delimit the sayable, whereby the rules allow us to understand the statements made or how new statements can be made (Foucault, 2002). This means that careful attention must be paid to the features of Step two that differentiate themselves from Step three and four. Step three will offer more detail and will take into account the limits of the research or of the responses given. It will not offer closure; however, it will hold open the possibility for innovation. The rules in Step Four will produce the categories of new understanding and how they emphasise the particularity of the conditions found within the case-study college and the surrounding context. Critical to this will be the linking of this to wider discourses of leadership and the framework that is underpinning this research. Step four will seek to avoid restating the earlier steps and link back to the literature underpinning this area of inquiry.

For Step Five, it is important to recognise that discursive practices are linked to the rules and regularities that are evinced by the archaeology of management within the case study college. Foucault (1972) uses the term archaeology to signify an investigation of the archives of historical discourse. For curriculum managers, these are the management practices that "at almost every

point in our discussion of Foucauldian approach to discourse lurks the anti-Hegelian (and hence anti-Marxist) theme of the inseparability of materiality and thought” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.45).

In the discussion below, I will analyse each question in turn and apply the five-step model as outlined above. Each participant has been given a letter from A-J.

Question 1

How long have you worked in education?

Participants	Years worked in education	Subject / Role	Gender
A (Andrew)	13	Education	M
B (Beth)	3.5	Apprenticeships	F
C (Chloe)	24	Assistant Principal	F
D (Debbie)	17	Creative industries and computing	F
E (Elaine)	15	Creative arts	F
F (Faizal)	22	Safeguarding manager	M
G (George)	15	English & Maths	M
H (Halima)	20	Quality manager	F
I (Ian)	20	Creative arts	M
J (Jo)	8	Childcare	F

The responses to this question produced a range of three and a half years to twenty-four years. Upon closer analysis out of the total sample only two participants gave a response that was less than ten years with one being three and a half and one being eight. The next least was thirteen with all of the others over fifteen. None of the participants were new to education as it can be broadly accepted that a curriculum management position requires a period of career building, promotion and general development. There is no definitive time scale when a practitioner would attain or be promoted to curriculum manager. The length of time served in these roles is also indeterminable as some of the respondents may have held multiple middle-management level positions across different organisations. The role of a curriculum manager requires experience and has a varied set of time frames within the career trajectory. The story underpinning the social and cultural experiences that coincide with this are the characteristics to which a curriculum manager will respond to a qualitative study such as this. These spaces allow the topic to be informed by the responses given.

The responses to question one provide an indication of the typical time frame of a curriculum manager. In recognising this we are providing a type of archaeology to the history involved in attaining such a role. The other responses to the questions will provide a more informed discussion with regard to the discourse and the seemingly inseparable nature of practice and thought. Attaining access to curriculum managers also presented itself as a significant challenge, in this institution other middle managers self-selected to respond to the request for participant interviewees. Methodologically this presents a challenge as the self-selection can impact the validity of the data, however, it also allows interested respondents to give their views who are willing to take part (Newby 2014). It can “also be used within an organisation to allow members to express their opinions about how it is run or its developmental strategy” (Newby, 2014, p.259).

Question 2

Tell me about your role at the college?

Participant A, Andrew began by discussing the team leadership role they undertake whilst also outlining how the management structure was constructed and how it functioned in practice. Throughout this, the word leader was used multiple times in relation to their own role but did not feature when referring to the organisation structure or how they worked with their own superior. Interestingly this was referred to as being managed or a management structure. Andrew also referred to themselves as a subject specialist and believed that this allowed them to exercise a degree of autonomy when reporting to senior management, “she’s never worked in *subject* before, she doesn’t know about the sector, so she just leaves me to get on and do that.” The final theme from the response was the lack of discussion about being a teacher. In the transcripts Andrew was prompted to discuss this and eventually described their teaching load as being one and a half days a week. Andrew also described this as being reduced from other curriculum managers in the organisation.

Participant B, Beth described their role as a quality manager within the apprenticeships team. Beth was more reluctant to provide a thorough narrative than other participants however, their focus was quality assurance of assessing and working with apprenticeships. The teaching aspects were described as support for assessment.

Participant C, Chloe volunteered for the study and was the most senior manager interviewed. Chloe had been recently promoted to an assistant principal role and has considerable teaching experience. The responses given focused on policies and the management of the quality and standards

managers. Chloe said “I run quite a lot of cross-college groups; working with teachers and middle managers to discuss quality issues.” Chloe also stated that they were responsible for lesson observations, coaches and general teaching and learning issues.

Participant D, Debbie is a curriculum manager working in creative industries. This participant outlined their management duties as being responsible for the curriculum and the pastoral care of staff and students. Debbie also mentioned tracking and the pressure that they were under to deliver success. In accordance with other participants, Debbie was prompted to talk about teaching and disclosed that they taught 18 hours a week, but also had to cover for absence as necessary and offer specialist workshops. In addition, Debbie stated that away from teaching their duties were diverse, “I think the rest of the time is a mixture, I tend to have an open-door policy, so, if staff need to see me, I’m available.”

Participant E, Elaine worked as a curriculum manager in creative industries and her role incorporated higher education, apprenticeships and commercial training. Elaine was notably more reluctant, so I spent time prompting for further information. Elaine was asked if they saw themselves as a teacher or a manager, to which Elaine responded simply, “a manager”. Elaine did go on and explain that they had little time to do anything else and that the time available for planning and focusing on their teaching practice was very limited. So how much did this person teach?

Participant F, Faizal had also self-selected to be involved in the research and had previously been in both teaching and head of curriculum roles. In recent times Faizal had been moved into a middle management role responsible for pastoral care across the institution. Whilst Faizal was no longer teaching they were responsible for training staff dealing with students in tutorials and how to manage particular safe-guarding concerns. Faizal gave a detailed account of their career trajectory that included subject-based teaching and the provision of enrichment activities.

Participant G, George gave a concise answer and was able to articulate his role in relation to a group of subjects. For example, the incorporation of maths and english into music, business and computing. The answer included reference to managing the learners, staff and process of accessing the maths and english provision. In the interview, the subject of teaching was approached, however, George only taught nominal hours that academic year and hadn’t done any teaching for a while, “I’ve got to concentrate on manager responsibilities this year”.

Participant H, Halima was also a self-selected participant. Halima described herself as a quality manager who had a remit for teaching and learning. Within this remit was the line management of a group of teaching and learning coaches. Halima was able to give detail about the structures in place and specific areas of responsibility. Halima had taught and managed curriculum previously however, they indicated that they missed teaching, and claimed that this was a common feeling amongst managerial colleagues. Despite this comment none of the other interviewees mentioned this. “I don’t (teach), which I miss and none of the managers have a teaching remit and I think most of us miss that, the closest I get is delivering CPD.”

Participant I, Ian was a curriculum manager and gave a list of roles, planning, organising, mentoring, managing staff, managing courses, observing, supporting, assessing, and writing reports. I also asked about his teaching commitment to which he responded, “I also have an 18 hour a week teaching commitment.” In comparison to Halima, this demonstrated a mixture of teaching loads in the sample and within the middle management tier, that consisted of groups of teaching and none teaching managers.

Participant J, Jo referred to herself as a team leader however, her response was similar to that of Ian, as they listed a number of roles and then after being asked also indicated that they had a teaching commitment, “I have to sort out timetabling, I have to deliver learning, so I teach two days a week.” Jo also mentioned that they were responsible for managing seven members of staff.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of ‘statements’ whose organisation is regular and systematic

In all responses the practice of management appears first, and the attention given to this is more detailed than the description of any teaching. This was also evident in the responses given by the managers with a larger teaching commitment than others. Misfud & Day (2022) argue that that choices of action take place within a dominant existing discourse, whereby decisions are taken willingly on the basis of individually determined decisions. Furthermore Misfud & Day (2022) suggest that these actions are subject to reasonable expectations. Lemke (2002) describes this as a neoliberal rationality, whereby moral decisions are based on economic assessment. In this research management practices appeared strongly in the responses via a predetermined expectation that aligns with a dominant discourse influenced by Governmentality (Foucault, 1978).

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

The duties of a manager will be prominent in the responses to this question as in all cases the titles given to the respondents included this term. The brief given to the case study college was for curriculum managers to be identified for interview. As highlighted by the literature review this term has become a generalisation and can be broadly defined as a 'teaching manager'. Despite this being clear in the respondent information, a number of non-teaching middle managers self-selected to be included in the research. Essentially, a 'rule' or boundary had been moulded by the case itself. Foucault (1972) suggests that discourse is productive when it is allowed to create the boundaries for which it is defined by. Furthermore, by allowing the self-selection of middle managers in this case I would argue that the ideas created in relation to the framework of leaderism are regulating themselves in their own terms. Subsequently, this enabled a new theme to this research as access to the teaching managers became problematic and others came forward.

c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

It is evident that defining the role of a curriculum manager is problematic. Most of the responses focus on the roles of a manager, which, given the attributes of the sample could be expected; however, this appeared to be the case for the 'teaching managers', too. It is also evident that there is a wide range of middle managers in the case study college that have middle management roles, at similar levels, with a range of titles and interrelated responsibilities. The teaching managers appear to have a wider array of roles and also have a teaching commitment. Foucault (2002) argues that we must be ready to question "ready-made syntheses" (Foucault, 2002, p.24) and that discourse enables us to accept any population of spontaneous events. From a Foucauldian perspective accepting the complexity of the curriculum manager roles and the dominance of management allows a rule to be formed that enables an understanding of the dominant discourse at the time the statements in this research were produced. Foucault (2002) also argues that the language used allows us to describe the statements whilst acknowledging other possible outcomes. I would argue that there is evidence to describe the dominant discourse using the complexity of the role and the notions of management, however, this does not delimit possibilities of other existing evidence to produce an alternative analysis.

d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

Whilst generalisations are not able to be made, it is worth considering what is new and specific to this case about the conditions for curriculum managers. It appears that their roles are more varied than other middle management positions. It can also be deduced that management practices are prioritised across all levels. In some cases, a section of the middle managers had direct responsibility for teaching and learning but did not have any current teaching commitment themselves. Hierarchical

management and the delivery of instructions to teams also appeared very strongly in the responses, and there were examples where this was described in the greatest detail. This suggested a pre-existing continuity (Foucault, 2002), that consisted of strong historical notions of hierarchical management practice.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

It is difficult to ascertain definitive facts about the role of a curriculum manager however, Foucault (2002) characterises this by suggesting that we can derive a collection of “discursive facts” (Foucault, 2002, p.28), that are defined based on grouping. For example, in this case organising, planning, managing staff, structure and meetings, are the dominating discursive facts described by the interviewees. Learners or students appeared much less frequently than other terms associated with management. The analysis of the first two questions has identified limited evidence of the discourses of leadership identified in the literatures, conversely, much of the discussion has focused on the practice of management. Thus, formulating a linguistic sequence (Foucault, 2002) that enables a rule to be made, that subsequently allows for other statements to follow.

Question 3

What do you see as the main challenges facing Further Education (FE) today?

Andrew indicated that he felt the recruitment of talented staff who are qualified or have the correct vocational experience was problematic. It was also evident that this was a problem in certain subjects such as accountancy or electrical engineering. “A continuation of bringing people to the sector from their vocational area to teaching, when they have been earning £60,000 a year as a plumber; are they going to come and be a £23,000 a year tutor?” Andrew also felt that constant change in the FE sector and the introduction of T-levels is also a challenge. In his opinion this created uncertainty and complications in relation to the allocation of funding. This response from Andrew acknowledged some of the big current policy changes affecting the FE sector, the introduction of T-levels, and the potential ramifications that this might have on FE.

Beth felt that the biggest challenge was engaging employers and having the necessary infrastructure to do this. Beth described that the institution was relatively unprepared and that how they will support apprenticeships was undecided. They also felt that this was a particular challenge especially when staff needed to be supported and the inspection process still required effective management. Overall, this respondent seemed more concerned with one specific issue and how this was responded to internally.

Chloe indicated that there was a myriad of things to contend with. “Where to begin? It’s been a period of immense change, so if we look just recently, we had an OFSTED inspection, and there was pressure to find work experience for all learners at levels two and three, for a college of this size that is an enormous task.” Chloe was also keen to discuss the apprenticeship framework changes and how these will function in relation to the levy. Chloe also explained that changes in FE are frequent, and the college has to be ready to meet these challenges. Chloe was non-committal in regard to whether these challenges were problematic and focused on the need for the standards set by regulatory bodies to be continuously met.

Debbie was clear that she felt the sector and associated policies were restrictive on the overall student experience.

I think the frameworks that were offered and what we need to deliver can be restricting in terms of student experience. I think the targets, because they are financially driven are becoming a challenge and we are having to be everything to everyone. I get it, but, for those that can deal with those kinds of challenges, that’s great, but, what does it say for those that have the love of teaching?

Misfud & Day (2022) argue that Foucault’s notion of technologies of the self, whereby the subject of governance is prone to a neoliberal rationalisation through economics, which, in turn results in an individuals “mode of being” (Foucault, 1997, p.282). The financially driven approach described by Debbie, suggests that this neoliberal rationalisation exists and aligns with a predominant discourse of governmentality. Furthermore, Keep (2016) refers to this managerialism driven approach as “targets and terror” (Keep, 2016, p.4). This response also alludes to the possible characteristics that may be required to be able to meet the modern FE college demands, essentially creating uncertainty as the need to be entrepreneurial becomes essential if they are wanting to teach. Debbie also implied that targets, internal and external challenges affect the curriculum manager both operationally and emotionally. Debbie elaborated further by saying that over their seventeen years in the sector a target driven culture was much more prevalent and that in order to survive they had ‘created a bubble’ to focus on the success of the students. This was widely discussed as a resultant behaviour from practitioners almost thirty years ago by Gleeson & Shain (1999). Literature also widely acknowledges the growth of incentivisation and funding packages in FE (Hodgson, 2015). This could be construed as the creation of a protective barrier so that the general culture of the college could be strategically silenced so that some clarity could be given to the task of supporting students.

Elaine saw the main challenge to the sector being the cuts or changes to funding. Elaine stated that “cuts in funding is directly impacting on quality.” Bagnall (2000) argues that this is an example of economic determinism, whereby the commodification of lifelong learning results in a regressive

discourse of critically devoid, unethical approaches. In the example given by Elaine related to staff leaving an organisation and not being replaced, Elaine felt that this burden was being picked up by curriculum managers and that this was making the role even more difficult. This meant that they could be teaching twenty hours and still being expected to line manage their staff and subject areas. The specific ramification of this for Elaine was the impact that this then had on their overall quality of teaching. Elaine felt that this started to occur ten years ago and was becoming more serious over time. Whilst this appeared to be a localised issue, when considered against the historical and theoretical framework of leaderism in this research, it indicates the existence of a tension between the identities of a teacher and a manager. Dennis (2016) calls this “ethical corrosion” (Dennis, 2016, p125). The increased need to hit targets has eroded the need to focus on teaching and learning and magnified the need for target hitting institutions.

Faizal chose to focus on funding and the implementation of the study programme. “Funding is the big one, especially with the reduction in funding, hours get cut. In FE, we’ve got the study programme, so your main programme is just part of that. English and Maths is just really important because if the students aren’t doing English and Maths, you don’t get the funding.” Faizal went on to describe the other elements including the enrichment and work experience elements. Faizal also described the typical FE student and the ramifications of an increased focus on compulsory studies in Mathematics and English alongside their main vocational subject. The problem of managing all of this was identified by Faizal as the key challenge. It was also discussed that the college had invested heavily in ensuring that it had the correct structures in place to support students especially in relation to pastoral care, work experience coordination and the staffing of subjects like Maths and English. Faizal made further comments about a Principal needing to be business-like and be qualified in economics in order to ensure that this challenge was able to be met by the college whilst maintaining its viability. This further supported the existence of a discourse of neoliberal rationality (Lemke, 2002), that requires the reasoned assessment of costs and benefits as a basis for decision making.

George was also primarily concerned with the implications of the study programme and gave a specific example of how a particular scenario was having an impact.

From a personal point of view the mandatory grade ‘D’ or a grade ‘3’ to do the re-sits. It has put an enormous strain on both the staffing and the students. So, to come onto the study programme, there are lots of learners who have to do a main programme, plus a re-sit GCSE and a GCSE Maths, work experience and a tutorial. To complete this in two and a half days a week, and so the strain on that is too much.

George further described the overall size of the study programme as being problematic. This was sighted as negatively impacting the overall quality as his resources were stretched. In order to

overcome this George felt that he had to display management skills to achieve the desired efficiencies. The tensions of this transactional approach (Hewitt & Crawford, cited in Glatter, 1997) are leading to notions of survival over quality.

Halima acknowledged that both external and internal factors played a part in the challenges facing the sector and these factors were inextricably linked. Misfud & Day (2022) & Gillies (2013) argue that Foucault's notion of governmentality is a useful tool when considering governance, Gillies also argues that by substituting the word governance for leadership, we can draw useful reflective tools. In this case Halima acknowledges both the internal and external pressures on curriculum managers, from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective this demonstrates the rules of the statements in this case, "the conduct of conduct" (Misfud & Day, 2022, p.3). Halima highlighted that the FE sector was competitive and that there was a scramble to attract students to the institution. Halima said "it's about bums on seats to a certain extent and that's difficult." She also highlighted the marketised pressures of being awarded an unfavourable grade by OFSTED as this has the potential to negatively impact upon the amount of students that enrol (Boocock, 2014, 2017). The result of this being a negative impact on the motivation and the morale of the staff, whilst also impacting the financial position of the college. Halima stated that "I think part of it is in the landscape, perhaps government don't always acknowledge FE and I know we are sometimes labelled as the poor relative (Lucas, 2004). In terms of funding, I think the impact is there as well." This reflection indicates a theme from the literature that FE has been given less attention, has a context of consistent changes and a government that has implemented a period of austerity.

Ian also focused on finances. "Investment, getting staff that have real world, industrial experience is difficult. Most of the staff I have managed have come straight from education, from university and not had industrial experience and that is missing." Ian highlighted that they felt that real-world experience was very important and that with the new qualifications that were being introduced that this was a significant challenge. Specific reference was given to the new T-level and the required employer engagement. This had also been mentioned by participant A, Andrew.

Jo gave a more operational response in relation to their own situation within the college. Joe was concerned with the amount of time that it took to develop an area, recruit students and have the necessary staffing in place. Jo indicated a tension existed between carrying out their role fully and then finding the time to then develop it in the desired way. Specific reference was given to the need to have suitably trained staff. This was seen as a key challenge in FE and concurred with aspects of previous responses from participants Andrew and Ian. Contextually, FE has undergone many

changes and in particular to curriculum (Ball, 2008, Orr, 2009). The opportunity to develop an area over a sustained period with a high degree of quality during this constant evolution is recognised as a significant challenge.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

A set of themes has been generated by this question which begins to allow a description of the discourse that exists in the case study, in Foucauldian terms these themes are a corpus of statements (Foucault, 2002) that appear as an intertwined group of linked factors. These range from curricular changes, policy changes, development of apprenticeships, work experience, staff training, Ofsted, funding and the overall complexity of carrying out duties in the timeframes allocated. Most respondents chose to focus on single issues, the new apprenticeship framework for example, whilst others acknowledged the wider role of regulatory bodies. It is recognisable that a corpus of statements exists in describing the discourse and that it does have systematic and relatable factors. Foucault (2002) argues that such descriptions are easily distinguishable in the language used. These factors include both issues of identity and human factors, whilst also being linked to the wider context of the institution and the policy framework for further education. It can be argued that this is typical for FE, however, the turbulent historical landscape for further education can be identified throughout.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

In recent times a larger focus has been on employer engagement following on from the increased funding for apprenticeships and criticisms of the sector contained in the Wolf Report (2011). Further to this the sector has been adjusting to the implementation of the study programme (2017) and an increase in students retaking their Maths and English qualifications as a compulsory element to their studies. Orr (2009) recognised that a multitude of qualifications exists and that constant changes have caused uncertainty in FE when compared to other sectors like sixth form colleges, currently this has shown little sign of abating with the recent introduction of T-levels. From a Foucauldian perspective all of these factors provide rules that enable the statements to be made.

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

The policy context and the tendency of FE to be in a state of flux has influenced the responses given throughout, however, the interpretation of this has differed between the respondents and is dependent on the nature of their role and their subject discipline, thus never being rules of closure. Despite this, all responses can be aligned to the rules and the corpus of statements. Respondent D describes the creation of a 'bubble' to allow them to focus on the needs of students and enable the noise of the target driven culture that has grown to be blocked out. This culture is described by Avis (2003) as a type of resistance that creates a vacuum in which they can work.

- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

All interviewees were concerned with performance related tasks and widely accepted notions of management. The discourse clearly has links to some of the historical notions of FE and the rise in performance culture. Neoliberalism and quasi marketisation (Chomsky, 1999) underpin the theoretical framework of leaderism and are informing the management discourse in this case. Compliance, targets, economics, and change create the categories for understanding this context and the real view of a curriculum manager. Leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) is underpinned by ideas of Managerialism (Gleeson & Shain, 1999) and New Public Sector Management (NPM) (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Foucault (2002) argues that aspects of discourse exist in the semi-silence that precedes it. In this case I would argue that the discourse of leadership and management already existed via historically well-established factors that support the existence of leaderism.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

Participants articulated the need to recruit students to generate funding in order for viable curriculum areas to function. In addition to this the challenge of meeting these demands in a constantly changing policy context with increased pressure on budgets were also a prevalent concern. Further to this, clear ideas were articulated about how a manager might meet these demands, with one suggestion being the creation of a vacuum for which a deliberate strategy of compliance can take place. Ultimately this gives rise to a sense of 'Fordism' (Avis, 2003) that reduces the work of managers and teachers to a reductive process of teaching, managing and measurement against targets. Misfud & Day (2022) argue that this has become a reasonable expectation and aligns with a predominant discourse of Foucauldian governmentality.

Question 4

What would you say is the approach to leadership and management required of you by the college?

Andrew was keen to stress their overall autonomy and that this wasn't the norm in other colleges that they had worked at. "I'm pretty much given a free reign over what I want to do. So, I see my boss rarely, she doesn't work on this campus." Andrew went on to say that elsewhere in the college the lines of accountability across the management tiers were more clearly defined. The suggestion made by Andrew was because they were given more autonomy this enabled them to be more relaxed and discuss key decisions with the team so that agreement could be found. In addition, on a team and daily basis Andrew did feel autonomous regarding the generation of ideas and curriculum management. He didn't have any control over budgets and this aspect was managed by accountants. Part of Andrew's role was to sit with the accountants and analyse income and expenses, thus suggesting, that a subservience existed to the role of the accountants. This subservience complicates the notions of autonomy suggested by Andrew and seeks to legitimise the role of funding and neoliberal rationality in management (Boocock, 2011, Elliott, 1996).

Beth responded very differently to Andrew. Instead of outlining their degree of autonomy or focusing on their team they chose to give a personal view of what skills a leader should possess. "I think it's all about honesty, understanding expectations from external parties and communicating that across to the internal management." Beth also chose to be a little restrained in their initial response but went on to say that they considered management to be the action of accountability in relation to targets and that leadership was about taking the steps to improve. Beth then outlined their belief that leadership was generally lacking across the institution. "We've just come out of inspection and yet nobody has debriefed their team, they've just relied on somebody else to do it, there's no leadership in place to lead them to the next steps."

Chloe outlined some clear beliefs and an operational approach. Chloe indicated that there was a fluidity expected and that a highly detailed knowledge was required. "I think there is an expectation that we have a detailed and in-depth knowledge of curriculum, of students and of teachers at a micro level. This was surprising to me given the size of the organization." Chloe also outlined that some departments were the same size as other colleges in the area and that a "microscopic knowledge" was an unrealistic expectation. Chloe also went on to say: "There's an expectation that your priorities will be the priorities of the principalship and the leadership team, and this as a culture is very target driven, data driven, numbers driven – which I completely understand in this difficult financial climate." These statements link directly to the policy framework and context of leadership

highlighted in the literatures. Targets, finance and data are described as being pivotal to the duties of a management professional, this is further reinforced by Ekman et al (2018) who argue that leaderism contains notions of market driven consumerism. Teaching and learning was also mentioned by Chloe:

When you are dealing with aspects to do with quality, particularly trying to improve teaching and learning, the numbers don't always lead to the improvements that you want to see. So, it can be a relationship of conflict and sometimes challenge.

The response of Chloe also described the use of microscopic knowledge, and what this could mean for the working culture and the concept of managing improvements through numbers. It is possible to suggest that unrealistic expectations are placed upon managers and that a culture of micromanagement and an overall lack of trust is prevalent. Boocock (2017) further describes this as in order "to secure compliance internally, college leaders and managers have also been required to deprofessionalise staff and depoliticise lecturing staff to inculcate a culture of performativity and student commodification" (Boocock, 2017, p.354).

Debbie concurred with the response of Chloe and described an approach that was dependent on the situation or task that was presenting itself. Debbie also utilised terminology that could be associated with theoretical attributes of functional leadership models from commonly available training materials, such as those that characterise leadership styles as 'authoritarian' or 'laissez-faire'. Gunter (2004) criticises such concepts as lacking in overall criticality. "If it's catastrophic, then obviously you have to become authoritarian." Debbie did elaborate on this by saying that their ideal approach would be participatory and that it would encompass a dialogue with staff, promote collaboration and one of collective decisions and accountability, this is similar in its ideology to distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). Debbie also stated: "However, because of the targets coming through, sometimes you have just got to say, this is how it is and you come up with the goods. So, there's, I suppose, three different styles." This alludes to concepts of styles and situational approaches (Lumby, 2013) to leadership and management that are commonplace amongst the literatures. The functional approach to targets as opposed to the collaborative approach provides a complex angle for future analysis. The reason for complexity is that despite the rhetoric for managers to champion collaboration there is little evidence to support a variance from the functionality of task driven management. A criticism of modern approaches to leadership, distributed leadership for example, is that it has done little to veer away from managerialism and transactional leadership cultures (Worrall & Mather, 2012). Misfud & Day (2022) argue that from a Foucauldian perspective the

approaches to management described by Debbie, provide an unstable contact point between the domination of neoliberal practices and the actual practices of management that the managers, or subjects use to manage themselves. I would argue that the desired collaborative approach to leadership and management is largely unrealistic, given the domination of the external pressures of neoliberal discourse.

Elaine's first response was "do everything yesterday." I had to provide a follow up question after this and ask if this was a deliberate, trained or reflected in colleague behaviour. Elaine claimed all of these factors were relevant and that the approach expected from middle managers was to get the most from staff at all times, to drive the meeting of recruitment and success targets. It had become embedded into the culture of the organisation and that new policies and procedures added to workload. "I think at the top they justify the workload by giving you extra training sessions. For example, you could have a training session which is all about a new policy or a new procedure, that should streamline things for you, when in fact it's just another procedure that you have to do." This response outlines some of the tensions of being in the middle, the Foucauldian rules of governance and the real demands placed on a curriculum management professional in a performative environment. Ball (2003) stated that "performance has no room for caring" (Ball, 2003, p.224).

Faizal was candid about the fact that "even at my level" their approach was required to be strategic. Faizal also explained that leadership and management were fluid and that one could not exist without the other. Strategy was described as being operational and that senior managers used this all the time. In this context Faizal appeared to be describing strategy as a rigid and clear approach, however, this was contradicted by their assertion that these approaches were fluid and varied. Ultimately, this could be construed as an achieve at all costs mentality (Ball, 2003). Faizal also outlined that in order for operational and strategic goals to be in place managers had to "get their hands dirty" even in a big organisation. Faizal associated this with leadership and the building of respect through relationships. Faizal stated: "Leadership is really important, I think with leadership there's always a massive element of respect and you find that good leaders within the organisation, everyone looks up to them and will do anything they ask. Whereas you get other leaders that people just say, oh, right, they don't take their vision with them." Despite the candid nature of the response of Faizal a clear overall theme can be ascertained with regard to concepts of leadership and management. Faizal indicated that compliance from staff is more likely if leadership is effective, Faizal believed this to be via building relationships and the leaders ability to set an example through their own actions and the completion of tasks. Faizal's reasoned approach Foucault (1997) argues is

via a technology of the self, where the subject, Faizal, has reasoned what they believe to be true in order to govern effectively. This in turn is not intended to be a coercive practice, but as a means to attain a certain mode of being. Despite this altruistic desire for collaborative leadership, Collinson (2011) is largely critical of this heroic (Lumby, 2013) style of leadership as it supports the flow of leadership to their “acquiescent followers” (Boocock, 2017, p355).

This question garnered a firm response from George, and the emphasis was clearly placed on compliance, getting things done and that this is underpinned by a firm approach. This was further equated to an adherence to basic tasks. “I think the basics are to go down to my tutors and make sure that the marks and registers are done on time and that attendance is chased, targets are set. So, all the kind of compliance stuff, which they are very keen on here.” The overall tone of this response does little to engage with any common notions of fashionable leadership approaches, distributed (Harris, 2004) or otherwise or has any attempt been made to rationalise the leadership and management context. Thematically this would allude to a discourse of task-based management, and an operational focus that consists of limited trust and an overall acceptance of micromanaged duties. Referred to in the literatures as transactional leadership (Hodgson & Spours, 1999). George was keen to further emphasise some of these points by stating that, “obviously this is mirrored by the quality that is needed, so again it’s my responsibility to develop my staff for their *subjects* to make sure that their lessons are of a good standard – so, that is the balance between quality and compliance.”

The statements made by George were to the point. To delve further I asked a follow up question pertaining to their perceived approaches to leadership and management specifically. George then went on to say:

A personal management approach is the best way to try and get compliance and quality, to build a team ethic and to try and make the team feel valued. I don’t really agree with some approaches which can kind of stamp down on people if you don’t do something for the first time. I try and find out why people are not compliant. First of all try and get a buy-in from the team, I find that gets a much better response and that does ultimately raise standards, because people are more keen to take on board criticism, take on board my opinion; if they can see I’m doing it in a supportive kind of way.

Many themes are intertwined in this final response, whilst some indication is also given as to how compliance is ensured from George’s staff teams. This response also identified George’s underlying rationality and reasoning of the subjectification (Foucault, 1997) of George’s leadership and management practice. The overall focus is one of compliance, however, this appears to be expedient by trying to support staff and find out why something may have not happened or been as successful

as intended. It highlights management as a received intention and is described as done to another through a relationship. Basic notions of leadership imply that leaders need followers and that is best facilitated by supportive relationships. This concurs with Faizal's response and the existence of a theme of heroic leadership (Collinson, 2011).

Halima was generally succinct in their appraisal of this question and of leadership and management in general. Halima recognised the common beliefs around distinctions between leadership and management but argued that senior leaders rarely make that distinction themselves.

When you talk about managers, I know people make that distinction between the two. I think that senior leaders and the leadership team try not to make that distinction, it's just about giving good quality provision to all learners.

The theme of quality is once again apparent in this response and does concur with other respondents. Halima did go on to give some views about the overall approach in the college.

I don't think we get a direction from the senior leadership team in how to lead. So, if you looked at different teams in the college, I don't think there would be one model that people follow. So, some teams are very much micro-managed, and their meetings are all autocratic, and others that aren't so much like that.

Upon analysis this response indicates that there is fluidity in the overall approach required however, concepts of autocracy and micro-management (Boocock, 2017) consistently appear. Discursively the difference between the departments is something that does have wider complexities, as Foucault (1997) would argue that this is due to individuals rationalism of their own responses to the subjectification of governance. Furthermore, these complexities and the regular appearance of dominant features of the leadership and management discourse, autocracy for example, allow the formation of statements that are quite obviously related and concerned (Foucault, 2002) with the overall discourse present in the college.

Ian, chose an alternate way to respond by focusing on the tasks required, rather than the overall approach.

Understanding the department, understanding the role and understanding the staff that I'm managing; understanding the requirements of my line manager and the targets that are set. Monitoring staff and what they are delivering, so meeting the criteria and the curriculum. Supporting the staff and communicating with the staff is vital, making sure the staff understand what the curriculum is, what their targets are and what is expected from

students. I think the first priority is making sure they hit their targets, so I can hit my targets as a line manager.

A link is made between support and working with staff to meet the needs of students and meet the targets of the organisation. The emphasis is placed on the role of the manager in leading this and in monitoring performance. This is largely an element of compliance and this is emphasised in the response. As with other respondents it demonstrates a seemingly one-dimensional view in that management is a received transactional process that is best served in an understanding and supportive environment. This gives rise to supporting theories that give a chronology to the existence of linked and evolving leadership theories, transactional, transformational, heroic and distributed (Boocock, 2019) for example. The argument in this research is that these deviate minimally from managerialism and give credence to notions of leaderism (O'reilly & Reed, 2010).

Jo gave a more wide-ranging response that covered many of the previous areas, however, they articulated some clear ideas about leadership and management and linked this more closely to their own personal attributes. Jo indicated that their overall approach was “firm but fair” and that they had never been told how to lead or manage their team. Despite this, Jo did discuss that they had been asked what kind of leader they are in their interview. This indicates that there must be consideration of this by senior managers when they are appointing people, however, it is likely that they are expecting a particular response. Jo stated:

I think I am more of a coach, because when there is something expected of the staff, I don't just expect them to go and do it. I'm not the type of person to tell them something and not do it with them. So I think there is an expectation now, because I have been doing that overall coaching approach.

Jo also indicated that the staff sometimes expected Jo to be firmer and that Jo had been told she was too soft. In the interview I asked Jo to expand on this.

I could be any type of leader I wanted to be, I think my leadership style is that if I want to my staff to do something, they have to respect me first, and I have to respect them. Otherwise you're not going to get anything out of them, we're not going to get anything out of each other. So, although other leaders see me as soft, my team are the best performing area. So actually, it is that coaching and supporting that helps them to become better.

Despite Jo stating to the contrary the final two statements do give some indication as to the required approach from the institution as it appears Jo's overall style has been commented upon as being too soft. Despite this however, Jo articulates their approach with conviction and is willing to acknowledge more readily the role of others and the fluidity of their relationships. Thus, Jo is recognising the need

for compliance set against a less transactional approach characterised by leaderism, as Ekman et al (2018) argue that leaderism is based on the creation of change agents that unify interests, attend to the needs of consumers and purports to create enthusiasm for shared values.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

The responses to this question describe a range of attributes, actions and behaviours. To illustrate the discourse of leadership and management autonomy, accountability, knowledge and targets are all discussed by the respondents. Further to this, notions of monitoring, performativity (Ball, 2003), leadership and notably those of quality and compliance are all frequently utilised. In all responses these ideas and attributes are readily recognisable, and to some extent expected, however the conditions for their production are specific to the case, as Foucault (2002) argues that these elements of discourse are treated as an irruption, as something recurring and an interplay between what is described and what is happening. The use of terms such as 'micro-management' and 'buy-in' occur systematically and are used to describe the material practices of the discourse of leadership and management, that I have argued is framed by leaderism.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

This question sought to explore the perceptions of the respondents as to what is required of them in their leadership and management roles in the college. The rules for this are set against the wider perceptions for the need of a quality centric and auditable approach. This approach was often described as being none directional from senior management, however, a clear overarching set of rules can be deduced. Leaders sought to gain compliance in a supportive manner through behaviours that were focused on meeting targets and providing a successful learner experience. A clear indication of the presence of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) via ambiguous notions of inspirational leadership and market driven consumerism. The rules for this exist within an auditable and accountable framework that is implemented across the departments and teams. Fundamentally this environment is widely accepted and the approaches are personalised in each case. Reinforcing Foucault's (1997) notion of transforming oneself in reaction to the subjective conditions of governmentality.

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

It can be argued that many of the rules identified in the analysis are the accepted norms for managers in the FE sector. The modern FE colleges are inspected, have recruitment targets and are required to operate in a financially responsible manner. However, it can also be argued that the response to his question are indeed limited by this acceptance and therefore impacts on the notion for further

innovation and an increased platform for further individualisation in approaches. In essence, despite variation of the responses they ultimately relate to the fundamental concept of neoliberal ideals and the transformation of FE since the mid-nineties (Randle & Brady, 1997).

- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

This research is highlighting the level of acceptance of these conditions and that resistance to the overall culture has eroded (Dennis, 2016). What is not clear is whether the overall approaches to leadership and management are beneficial, socially just, or as Foucault (1997) describes an ascetic practice of self-formation (Foucault, 1997, p.282). I would argue that middle leaders focus purely on getting the job done, through subjective self-formation and a need to motivate others for success targets to be achieved. In addition, there is a firm acknowledgment that the duties of a curriculum manager require high levels of detailed knowledge about their respective departments and the ability to manage teams. Conversely, the teaching roles of these professionals is rarely discussed, and their priority is to ensure others perform and are monitored accordingly.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

This college describes the discourse of leadership and management in this context as a necessary relationship to support the wider accepted belief that targets are to be met. Notions of quality are also supported and that the responsibility for this lies with the teaching staff and is controlled by curriculum or middle managers who have clear accountability. Further to this it also outlines the need for immediacy in most areas and that tasks are set and worked towards quickly. Strategic approaches are required at all levels of the organisation and that leadership requires a specific set of supportive behaviours. Highly detailed knowledge is also required to ensure that performance is to acceptable levels and that buy in is a crucial concept to maintain and improve towards collective and individual targets. Leadership is further characterised by firm, fair and supportive behaviours and that this is received by staff to create followers or a shared sense of purpose. Macfarlane (2014) argues that we can be too easily seduced by the democratising ideal “that everyone is a leader” (Macfarlane, 2014, p.3). Furthermore, Macfarlane (2014) also argues, that distributed leadership is manipulative and seeks to promote a collective responsibility for brand reputation. I have argued that distributed leadership ideals permeate leaderism Macfarlane (2014) agrees with this and suggests that this has contributed to a “leaderist turn” (Macfarlane, 2014, p.2) in the education sector and subsequently constructed a dominant discourse.

Question 5

In what ways do you organise your team?

Andrew described the approach to this as it being Andrews's responsibility to plan for this and to come up with the ideas and the overall direction for the curriculum area. Andrew also suggested that they were able to allow the team to participate in this process and that the course team would be part of the plans for implementation.

We do everything, almost everything, collectively. So again, this wouldn't work everywhere I'm sure, but I'm very lucky that I work with a team who have all worked for the college for at least six years..... All experienced in terms of the organisation.

It is significant that Andrew regards it as his responsibility to withhold certain elements to ensure he has the most significant role in leading the department. This retention of power, Misfud & Day (2022) argue demonstrates Foucault's notion of governmentality and encapsulates the "relations between power and subject" (Misfud & Day, 2022, p.3). Andrew also indicated that this isn't the norm and that other managers would be less powerful in other departments that contain less experienced managers. Andrew also went on to say that they "come up with the plan" and then asks the others how it might be done. The overall response was a little confused as Andrew appears to say that he trusts his staff to lead the courses but does see it as his responsibility to lead on everything overall, thus maintaining the top-down power relationship. This can be construed as creating buy in and trust with staff whilst manipulating this strategically so that overall control is retained. Leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) is argued to be a hybrid of managerialism and distributed leadership: "NPM-style managing implies an onus on instrumental rationality via organisational rational planning and implementation, whereas leadership is construed as involving value rationality via strategic adaptation to, and shaping of, the social environment." (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.962) Andrew reinforced this by going on to say:

I have to lead on everything, So I am the course lead for all courses. In reality Person 1 leads on this and Person 2, leads on that, so there are elements that I have little to do with. They know, however, I would get involved if I thought there was an issue with something.

Beth was consistently restrained in the fullness of some of her responses. In addressing this question, she indicated that she didn't run a specific team but acted as a consultant to other areas in the college. Beth was seemingly negative about the approaches to leadership by management colleagues and doubted whether some of her middle management colleagues had the ability, communication skills and knowledge of external expectations to manage teams effectively through an inspection process. This did not confirm that any specific strategies were in place for organising teams, or that Beth was

aware of them, it did however support the notion that Corbett (2020) argues regarding the often lack of preparedness for management roles that exists in FE.

Chloe approached this question by focussing on operational systems and outlined the functions of quality across the organisation. Each function was dealt with in turn, for example self-assessment or the different types of provision. Apprenticeship falls under a different strand of quality as to those of Higher Education. This appears both logical and rational, however little emphasis was placed upon the skills and attributes of the individuals within the quality functions. Chloe stated that “we all have roles that fit into the landscape of quality assurance and quality improvement”. This assertion simplifies the management functions as existing to support quality processes and a proliferation of bureaucracy (Ollin, 1996). Within this Chloe did further describe some areas of shared responsibility such as the undertaking of observations, internal quality reviews and the quality of assessment.

Debbie also approached the response to this question with a focus on quality:

We have clear processes and systems and that can be around quality and there’s certain things we have to get right. We have to make sure we are meeting standards and the same goes for observations. So the approach is very direct, that’s what’s got to happen.

Debbie asked me to repeat the question and chose to add an additional approach based on motivating the team to perform. Debbie explained how the team is performing well in getting students to attend. Debbie described that these kinds of successes are highlighted to motivate the team so that they can then function against the tasks that need to be completed. This response focused on the required functions as opposed to the attributes of those who are required to perform them. O’Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that the root metaphor for leaderism manifests itself in the prioritisation of leaders inspiring others in collaborative endeavours. The example given by Debbie highlights this however, O’Reilly & Reed (2011) further argue that this root metaphor of leaderism in inspiring others is idealistic and protects the values of an idealised consumer. Furthermore, O’Reilly & Reed (2011) suggest that this consumerist approach has been borrowed from neoliberal managerialist ideology.

Elaine gave a guarded response and was reluctant to elaborate.

There’s a structure that you have to follow, so for everybody who I have on my team, they are all lecturers, new lecturers, course tutors or programme leaders and there’s expectations that come down from the top that you have to get them to do.

Whilst succinct, this response illuminates a perception from Elaine as to the flow of direction, who is accountable and the level to which they feel autonomous. Elaine understands their role as ensuring that their team is organised to perform, and that each role has a clearly defined set of

responsibilities. It infers that the team is organised by role, established responsibilities and their accountability to management.

Faizal elaborated a little by highlighting how they might allocate roles and responsibilities to the team they are responsible for. Faizal chose to indicate their desire to achieve a team ethic for their staff to be able to understand this in order to gain their sense of shared purpose. Faizal stated, “I’ve got a real team ethic and I get everyone to buy into my vision and what I want to do.” Emphasis has been placed by Faizal on motivating the team to complete the priorities as set out by their immediate line manager. Faizal articulated the use of the words vision and buy in to describe this and these are common strategies for middle leaders. In concurrence with other responses the completion of the tasks and the motivation to do this being the primary focus for how the teams are organized. O’Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that:

By the development of leaderism – its development as a new form of privileged agency – is explored through developing the key strands of its contradictory nature: on the one hand, its strong linkage to a unitarist communitarian and managerialist imaginary of control and performance, and on the other its weaker, but still important, linkages to a quasi-pluralist imaginary of networked professional (O’Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.32).

In this case, Faizal is using persuasive terms such as vision and buy in, to create a team ethic that creates the networked professional. However, a strong ideology or performance management exists to strengthen the notion of the existence of leaderism.

George outlined the functional approach to organisation by describing the frequency with which the team met. This process was to ensure that they were clear on a weekly basis as to what is required of them and for them to have input and share their thoughts. This process was designed to keep all the team members engaged, and if required, to facilitate change and provide updates. Further to this George described other management tools such as learning walks and observations that were used to gather information. This then fed into a wider programme of continuous professional development (CPD) for staff. George was keen to emphasise that the focus was “team meetings, one-to-one and then general CPD.” The focus from this response was that the team was organised using meetings and that monitoring took place using observation and individual or team collaboration. This again outlined a task-based and largely expedient approach. O’Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that central to the framework of leaderism, are three root metaphors, professionalism, managerialism and leaderism. Professionalism prioritises client focused autonomy, managerialism prioritises control and leaderism prioritises the inspiring of others. Whilst these are fluid attributes, for example, I have

argued that leaderism has inherited managerialist values. George's example links to the managerialist roots of leaderism and describes how control is placed upon staff teams through a variety of tasks performed by curriculum managers.

Halima described the regular meeting calendar as the way that the team were organised most effectively. This was a congruous approach with George. Halima also indicated a clear desire for these meetings to be engaging so that their instruction didn't dominate and to allow team members to participate in the agenda.

The meetings are weekly and within them we try to make them engaging meetings. It's not sitting there for two hours listening to me or my colleague drone on, so we all have a part to play in the agenda. We set the performance reviews, all the teachers have targets, we agree the targets, its not just here is your target get on with it, it's also about their professionalism and their workload. We are here to support them if they need support, it's not about what time did you arrive today?

This response gave a view that Halima wished to involve their team actively in how tasks were organised and that they would be supported to do so. Halima was also keen to stress that they wished to propagate a culture of autonomous practice. This approach was again task focused, however, it articulated a clearer strategy that started with notions of individualised support and Leaderism, (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011) "Prioritises devolved authority and service innovation within competitively designed environments; and culture management" (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.962).

Participant I, Ian focused their response on the training and mentoring of staff. Indicating that their focus was ensuring their team had the necessary skills to carry out the tasks that had been agreed through a regular series of meetings. Ian stated "we make sure we have the skills, if not, we arrange CPD. If we are taking on new staff or a trainee, we would mentor them and the budget is important." Ian went on to further state that their focus in organising their team was to be seen to be always listening, communicating and monitoring them on a weekly and sometimes daily basis. Ian referred to the staff as an investment and that even though ensuring they know what they are doing at all times was time consuming it was a vital aspect of being a curriculum manager. Ian strongly felt that having the correct staff who are appropriately trained was key to a team's success but also expressed the view that it was their job to monitor and implement this to a very detailed and intricate level. This exemplifies the clear tensions of the dispersion of tasks, via the spirit of entrepreneurialism whilst retaining control (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010).

Jo affirmed their beliefs that they organised their team via a coaching approach that took into account the skills of the team members.

I've got to know the staff based on their skill preference, in terms of their skills set, knowledge and experience. But also, if there is a new challenge that I think somebody is perfect for I'll look at the skills that they have and I'll pair them up based on how their strengths and weaknesses complement one another. There seems to be a lot of mentoring and coaching within my team, but it works.

The overall tone of this response was largely different in nature to the others in that it placed the staff team or individual member at the centre of the organisational approach and the tasks were fitted in around this perception. Whilst this approach did depend on the decisions of the manager, it also alluded to a more receptive position that included the team members as a deliberate tactic. This was well articulated by Jo in their response to this question. Leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed 2010) is characterised by an inter-related set of beliefs and a desire to provide guidance and direction via a supportive relationship.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

A series of identifiable themes emerged that enable a description of the discourse. Responsibility for organisation of the team was seen as a key area of personal accountability. In addition, there was a description of a democratic process that involved negotiation with team members and a desire to create a shared sense of purpose. The majority of practices described involved functionality and a top down approach. These were based on meetings, targets, strategy and hierarchy. Only one of the respondents placed most emphasis on team. The ideas and direction of the team were described as emanating from the leader and the team were encouraged to participate. A strategy for this was to develop a supportive culture that would propagate team motivation.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

In all cases, an embedded desire for democracy and team participation could be identified. This is a characteristic of the conditions for which the discourse is being informed. The environment and staff development for leaders can influence this as can the element of perceived good practice in the persuasive language of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010).

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

The identification of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) as a possible framework for characterising the discourse we are giving credence to the theory. Discourse does not always happen deliberately and in this case elements of the description of the discourse occur organically. What is apparent is that there are clear material practices that are being described. All are based upon quality systems and the achievement of targets.

- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

Most of the characteristics of leadership and management can be argued as accepted conditions for describing management practices in FE, however, much of what has been written has been reinforced across the varying responses. The newness is the opportunity for it to be explored and for the staff involved in this research to take time to think about the practice of management.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

Specifically, the management practice is described as leader centric, task driven and with a desire to engage a shared sense of purpose. The material practices are logical and set against common quality concepts for FE such as recruitment and student success rates. In addition, this occurred in differing levels of detail in the responses, with some choosing to have individual staff members and their skills as their focus and others choosing to place the task to be performed as their focus. A selection of the respondents also reflected upon the skills required and how staff could be supported to either carry out tasks or be trained to do so. I would argue that whilst this isn't necessarily unexpected, consistently in all responses students and teaching are rarely referred to by task or by name. This description is succinct and non-discursive and supports the description of the conditions for leadership and management in the college (Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

Question 6

Do you consider there to be a difference between leadership and management?

Andrew stressed that there was a clear difference between the two concepts and described management as being authoritarian and limiting in providing autonomy. "There's no autonomy for the people, no independence, and no creativity because actually your way, is the way." In addition, Andrew described leadership as "sharing a path" and encouraging others to join you in a journey. The sense of democracy and shared vision also being pivotal attributes to build capacity to achieve

common goals. Such rhetoric is common to notions of leadership. Furthermore, Andrew described leadership as being more appropriate for new teachers, who in most cases required more direction, however, this could also be balanced against complacency from longer serving members of staff. In these cases, a more managerial approach was required. Andrew concluded their response by saying; “management is a lower-level thing than a leadership thing, which should be much higher level.” This final statement offers a privileged status to the ideas of leadership as opposed to management.

Beth critiqued this giving a short example. “You manage staff and their teams in terms of making them accountable to targets. But at times, there is no leadership, so for example, we’ve just come out of inspection, and yet nobody has debriefed their team. They have just relied on somebody else to do it, there’s no leadership in place to lead them to the next steps.” Whilst concise in its nature a clear theme of managing targets through accountability and leading for improvement is evident. O’Reilly & Reed (2010) argue that this discourse is characterised by leaderism as it has a prominent attribute of being able to lead transformation and institutional change.

Chloe offered little variation from the previous responses and indicated that the ideas around leadership and management are well embedded and she had been asked this same question many times. This indicated a fixed set of ideals that has been individually honed via a historic set of experiences. Chloe stated:

When people talk about managers, it makes them think of more operational matters, more practical matters – you manage your time, you manage your staff. Whereas a notion of leadership brings forward something about being transformational, it’s about an ethos, it’s about culture, it’s about much more than just managing the operational it seems more strategic.

Allix (2000) discusses transformational leadership and argues that such a leadership style was largely unrealistic due to the pressure placed by the institution on the leader. Furthermore, I have argued that transformational leadership gave rise to distributed leadership (Harris, 2004), which, in turn, provides the foundations to leaderism (O’Reilly & Reed, 2010). These notions of leadership, can be argued as being expected, however, the ideas are very clearly embedded in the practice described in the responses of Chloe. Chloe concluded by saying, “I think there is a higher calibre associated with leadership; it’s seen as being almost spiritual or abstract, whereas anyone can manage.”

In accordance with Beth, Debbie also gave a short response with a clear example. Leadership was linked to leading by example and demonstrating that you have high standards in order to transfer

your ideas on to others. This was described as giving staff teams something to work towards. Managing was described as being concerned with quality procedures and processes. The higher status of leadership compared to management can once again be deduced from this. Leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) argue that the languages of leadership describes the act of a leader as being visionary.

Whilst limited in detail, the response from Elaine was illuminative of leadership and management idiosyncrasies: "Management is what we are all doing, and leadership are the ones shouting the orders." In this case, I probed for further detail and then Elaine added, "it's very much do as I say, not as I do." It is inferred that management is the practical element of performing tasks and this is what the middle leadership are doing. Elaine clearly sees a hierarchy and associates the firm outlining of duties as being associated with leadership. There also appears to be a perceived disconnect between the tiers of management as Elaine is indicating that middle tiers of management are expected to perform and behave in certain ways, that are not necessarily exemplified by senior leaders.

Faizal discussed their belief that even at his level of management the overall approach is "supposed to be strategic". Faizal also stated:

It's never leadership or management, it's always both. It's quite operational and even managers above me, like Assistant or Vice Principals. I see them doing really operational things all the time. Even with the strategic steer, to get that going it's got to be quite operational and hands on.

Faizal indicates that they believe there is a link between leadership and management; however, their answer is primarily concerned with traditional notions of management. This concurs with the discourse of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). This was further emphasised when Faizal restated their belief that leadership was vitally important:

Leadership is really important, I think with leadership there's always a massive element of respect and you find that good leaders within the organisation, everyone looks up to them and will do anything they ask. Whereas you get other leaders that people just disregard, they don't take their vision with them.

The context described is one of using notions of leadership to gain compliance and to build collective capacity. Faizal saw leadership as being a trait of certain individuals and not necessarily just embedded in senior leaders. Faizal gave examples of influential teachers that were able to get good

results or had the ability to articulate themselves effectively in meetings. Faizal concluded, “so leadership isn’t about level, it’s about respect and about how you get people to buy into your vision.” Faizal is demonstrating that he believes leadership to be more equal and democratic, this has been argued as a dominant discourse within ideas of leadership that support devolved decision making and localism in FE (Keep, 2016). I have argued that this also supports leaderism (O’Reilly & Reed, 2010) as devolved democracy supports powerful language and the buy in required for ensured compliance.

The response of George had some similarities to Faizal. George stated that they deemed leadership and management as working ‘hand in hand’.

To be a good leader, you need to be a good manager, so I think if you lead well, the management qualities go alongside it. If you are just a leader, but don’t have the compliance, if you are too supportive, give them too much of a free reign then things can catch you out.

George went on to discuss the need to differentiate this approach and balance between the supportive approach and the need to emphasise compliance. George also implied that being too supportive could lead to apathy and underperformance.

Halima saw no specific differences between management and leadership and chose to focus on practices rather than defining either term. Halima stated:

We train and share as much as we can with our team about the direction we head in, why we’re doing this and that, we are very, very open. I don’t think we do much of taking orders and following them through. So, either title (leadership or management) doesn’t match what we are doing.

Halima went on to say, “it’s about giving ownership (of tasks) that is both manageable and achievable.” This idealistic approach fits with models of distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). Capacity of teams is built through a sense of democracy and the sharing of duties. The intention of this is to create a sense of ownership so that the capacity of the team is enhanced beyond the sum of its individual parts. Leithwood et al (2006) used these attributes to promote distributed leadership as a model of best practice. This led to extensive reports that promoted leadership approaches and characteristics, the NCSL (2006) report titled ‘seven strong claims about school leadership’ being an example. Gunter & Ribbins (2002) were critical of the hegemony that led to such best practice claims and Lumby (2003) also critiqued the validity of such an approach in colleges. Despite this Keep (2016)

and Boocock (2017) acknowledged the deliberate existence of such distributed approaches to leadership in English FE colleges.

Ian formed a link between meeting targets and getting staff motivated to do so. This concurred with other respondents as no specific distinction was formed between leadership and management, however a specific practice was described.

I think it's not to bully, you have got to lead. You have got to be supportive and you have got to be passionate. You have got to drive staff through communication, not in a bullying way, it's got to be in a realistic way to set targets and I think that is leadership. You have got to inspire.

Transformational leadership (Allix, 2000) placed great emphasis on the practice of the leader. Analysis of the response given by Ian concurs with some of these ideas as persuasive terminology such as to inspire has been used. Historically, transformational leadership (Allix, 2000) was superseded by distributed leadership (Harris & Muijs, 2007), both of which have been identified in the theoretical framework as contributing to the historical discourse of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). Finally, Ian also stated that should his team not be performing then addressing this would take priority over all other duties, including Ian's own teaching practice.

The final participant, Jo, described a clear difference between leadership and management:

Management are top-down; they have a goal, they are the autocratic leaders, they do what they need to do to get there. Whereas leaders are the ones who steer the tribe to the goal – I'm definitely a leader, I wouldn't ever class myself as a manager. I don't manage people, managing people for me, makes out they are not capable of doing their job.

Here, Jo is giving a higher status to leadership than managing. This powerful discourse is argued as an attribute of Leaderism as "Leaderism is composed, firstly, of an explicit use of the language of leadership, that is, such linguistic terms of 'leaders', 'leadership', being 'led'", (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.963). Essentially, in this example leadership is a desired and favoured approach, but mainly only in the terminology used. Jo further qualified this by discussing leadership attributes and a view of the further education sector in general, "I think in a lot of colleges there is a lot of micromanagement." Following this I asked why she thought this was, "control, because management know what is expected and how to get there." Jo also added that leaders were more effective if they had done the job they were asking others to do having done it themselves previously.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

This question generated a series of themes concerned with ideas and perceptions of leadership and management practice, many of which re-affirmed ideas from the literatures. Management is generally perceived as authoritarian, less creative and task driven. Whilst ideas of leadership are democratic, visionary, desirable and generally of higher regard than to those of management. Systematically, whilst differences were described between the attributes of each concept, they were not discussed as existing separately. It was broadly acknowledged that leadership and management operate simultaneously.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

These statements were governed by well-established leadership ideals. With many participants giving an overall higher credence to notions of leadership. This is a common element to CPD packages and leadership was articulated using powerful metaphors. Leadership is "sharing a path" and forward thinking. Leadership also manifests "buy in", respect and vision. Furthermore, leaders do not bully, they lead by encouraging and empowering others. These rules of discourse are powerful in their nature and allow for justification to the practice of leadership, as Foucault's notion of discourse recognises that such language allows for a particular view of leadership that creates rules, structure, knowledge and issues of power (Gillies, 2013).

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

The ideas of leadership and management are historically critiqued, both with regard to functionalist and socially critical perspectives (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002), and the discussion that arose from this topic were not entirely unexpected. Given current conditions for further education and the sharpened focus on efficiency and audit regimes, a business-like model exists. These rules limit the expected responses, however, this research can be limited by what the participants think the researcher wants to hear, and by a general perception that their knowledge of leadership and management is being tested. Furthermore, participants were generally keen to outline their commitment to the targets of the institution and their desire to drive continuous improvement.

- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

Leadership was generally given a higher status than management across the responses. Middle leaders said they wanted to adhere themselves to inclusive and participatory practices. But accountability was widely recognised and this participation in decision making had a finite

characteristic. This was often described as the point where something has to be done, or the manager has to insist. The general premise for this is built on previous democratic approaches such as distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). Intertwined in some of the responses it was acknowledged that leadership does have a limit, in that too much leadership breeds apathy. It was implied in this case that management can be used to compensate for this limiting aspect of leadership by supporting authority and a task driven approach.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

Overall, even though much credence was given to the idea of leadership, general practice described was more closely linked to target driven management. In all cases it was neither one nor the other, with very little separation. The language used to describe leadership was persuasive as it was imbued with the language of democracy, and the general idea of collective goals and an encouraging ethos. Bolden (2011) & Gronn (2000) describe this approach as being socially more inclusive, fluid, emergent and intuitive.

Question 7

What do you see as the strategic targets of the College and what role have you had in formulating and delivering them?

Andrew responded by describing a plan called 'College 2020'. Andrew also stated that managers knew what the plan was and what the overall aims of the plan are; however, Andrew stated: "In terms of our say in it, zero, I would suggest." Andrew further stated that they had no input whatsoever. Andrew further qualified this by describing the approach of leadership:

In fact, lots of leadership elements, that the senior leadership will say 'this is what we are doing'. I don't feel I have had much involvement with and that is another unusual thing about being here at this level I suppose. Again, I'm used to sitting in a management team, whichever level, and talking about what is coming up and you present that back to your teams, having those conversations. But none of that sits at my level, that is the assistant principal and above.

The suggestion here is that middle managers often act as conduit of limited resistance between the senior staff and the teaching staff. It can also be deduced that little strategic input comes from middle management. Andrew said, however, said that "It would be nice to have those conversations."

Beth stated:

I'm aware of the 2020 vision, I have to be honest I'm not overly familiar with everything in there... I won't lie, I'm not one for the future, I think I'm more for the immediate future than the strategic plan. I have had no part in the strategic plans, I think I'm too junior to be part of that plan.

Beth considered herself to be too junior to be involved in strategy and was more concerned with operational duties. Effectively, this was an acceptance of her place within the institution's hierarchy, and Beth's acceptance of this was compliant and offered little resistance. Ball (2012) describes this as a struggle with performativity, whereby the practice of performativity works to define us in a way we do not want to become. In this case Beth has subjugated, knowingly or otherwise, to a form of power defined by others (Foucault, 1982).

Chloe also said that her participation in strategic target setting had been very limited

In terms of my contribution to the formulation of it, I would say none, maybe some critique of it when it had been formed, as to what it looked like and what the wording was like, but not really planning... No ! That seemed to appear from above, like the ten commandments!

Chloe used a powerful metaphor to describe the planning process. This aligns itself with a traditional view of hierarchical management and does not support notions of participation and democracy, that many of the respondents used to describe how they manage their teams. This hierarchical view pre-dates the concept of distributed leadership and supports the existence of a more historic transactional approach (Boocock, 2017).

Debbie had a comprehensive though more operational response to this question. This focussed largely on core performance indicators such as attendance, retention and success. Intertwined in the response was a largely competitive theme that Debbie liked to have good statistical performance and used this to monitor overall success. Debbie was very aware of recent trends and how this compared to other subject areas. Little or no detail was given about the overall college plan, all aspects were equated to subject based targets and performance monitoring. During the response I prompted the respondent to focus on curriculum however, this resulted in a response that suggested ownership over immediate subject based curriculum development, but little further detail about overall college strategy and plan was given.

I think as long as we are making progress, we're very much empowered to do that, and I think unless there's a particular challenge or some sort of negative data comes out, then that's when we'll be questioned, which I think is right.

This concurs with a number of themes from the literature. It can be deduced that little or no involvement was had by participant Debbie in the strategic plan and that their focus was solely on performance. Objectively this analysis is not looking to criticise this, however, Debbie also accepts the need to continuously improve and the culture of accountability. Managerial and neoliberal ideals seek to promote continuous improvement, in essence, static data is deemed as a failure. This along with other quality improvement policy agendas has been widely debated and has been associated with FE colleges since the early 90's (Ball, 2001, Gleeson & Gunter, 2001, Randle & Brady, 1997).

Elaine largely concurred with Debbie:

We've got very challenging targets here, we are fortunate in that we are secure, financially secure. My responsibility in that is to meet the growth and the targets, to find new areas to replace anything that is out of fashion or out of trend. When I propose a new course, I have to say whether I have completed formal market research and what my expected target is for the first intake – that is then ignored, and I am given a target.

This response supports the theme of limited input from curriculum managers into overall strategy and, whilst there is a seemingly participatory process in the development of new courses, the final instructions and related targets are allocated by senior management.

Faizal, described the formulation of the plan, and the overall idea of how it had been developed. Overall a different perspective was provided in comparison to other responses with a background to the context and the history of the new chief executive officer (CEO) given. Wider influences such as a recent OFSTED inspection were also outlined.

When we got our new CEO, who came from the private sector into education. He's really good, he's turned the college around really in a business sense and in getting people involved. So, there's him and the principal, and both help in having people involved in the development of everything – so they worked on a new vision and new values, which were simple and do what they say on the tin. The college has also got a 2020 vision, which is where we want to be in 2020 and that keeps on getting shared with all the teams.

There are key themes and contradictory ideas in the above. Pivotal in debates around Leaderism are its links to managerialism and its adherence to modern neoliberal ideals. O'Reilly & Reed (2010) state that in an endemic situation of competition Leaderism requires "social co-ordination to the benefits

of all involved” (p. 964). The business background of the CEO has been outlined; this supports what O’Leary (2010) describes as the acquisition of borrowed initiatives to improve FE from the private sector. In addition, little evidence of the involvement of curriculum managers in the plan had been described. This was described as being shared with them, with most suggesting the planning had been done between the CEO and principal. This would again suggest little or no involvement of curriculum or middle managers, despite Faizal saying that there had been wider involvement. To further contextualise this answer, I asked again about Faizal’s specific role in the plan and Faizal stated: “Since the OFSTED inspection we have a new set of targets, so there’s a lot of work to be done on attendance, punctuality, and general behaviour.” It can be clearly ascertained that Faizal didn’t have input into the overall strategy and saw their role as delivering against key performance indicators. This is not untypical for this case.

George said:

Ultimately, I think the college is looking at getting learners into work and making them employable. So, that is the big drive that we have got and that has changed significantly over the last five or six years. It’s not just about the main qualification anymore, whereas it used to be just about you leave here with a level three in Art and Design and go and make your way in the world. I think the introduction of the study programme and the emphasis on English, Maths and employability, has meant that the profile of my role and my position has kind of raised.

George saw their role as crucial in delivering the study programme, and whilst they did not reference the detail or the name of the college strategic plan directly, the direction and interests of the organisation are intended to be well represented in their overall response. The role of this manager was to manage English and Maths, so, whilst not entirely unexpected given the focus on organisations to implement and manage the study programme, a theme has developed in this research that differentiates between subject areas. George also explained: “I do think that there is quite a lot of emphasis now on attendance and engagement and also what I do see is that there is a kind of growing influence that we need to have as English and Maths tutors, or as an English and Maths manager on the wider curriculum.” This aspect wasn’t referred to by other managers in other subjects. Further to this, George didn’t indicate involvement in devising the strategic plan; however, a clear sense of ownership could be deduced in their detailed response.

Halima gave a clear response:

The idea is that we are going to be the number one provider of education in the Northwest, and that’s as part of a group. In terms of strategy, I think because our roles are about teaching and learning, we tend to have more influence in terms of what is coming out of

inspection – so we have a post-inspection action plan and it's about how we are all accountable to deliver on certain aspects of that. In terms of strategy, I wouldn't say we're particularly involved with that, it tends to sit with the executive board, Principal and senior leadership team. We're probably a bit sheltered from that, to be honest.

A repetitious theme is once again present in this response, in that there has been little wider involvement in strategy from middle leadership. Additionally, however, teaching and learning has been mentioned as opposed to the usual rhetoric around attendance and targets. The concept of being sheltered from the strategic plans is also an indicative use of language, as this could imply that they are being saved from the burden of responsibility. Ultimately, this supports a traditional hierarchical view of organisational structure.

Ian gave minimal variance in his response to the other participants:

One of the main ones (targets) is to make sure we achieve the grade of two or one, that is the main target, and how we bring that down to different strategies and delivery – that's the backbone to the strategy, to do with content and the quality of it. So, my role would be, I know I have to achieve that grade from the line manager, there would be weaknesses that'll have been assessed in the SAR (self-assessment report) at the end of the academic year.

The focus here is formulating a plan linked to graded outcomes. The purpose of this plan would be to raise quality in teaching and to target perceived areas of weakness, whether it be concerned with attendance or how to support learners to achieve. This participant sees their role in the overall plan to identify and target weakness to facilitate constant improvement. Coffield and Edward (2009) likened the focus on constant improvement "to a ratchet screwdriver with no reverse movement allowed, only constant forward progression is allowed" (Coffield & Edward, 2009, cited in O'Leary, 2010, p.3).

Jo asserted that the overall plan is always focussed on OFSTED and success. Jo stated: "all our targets are on making sure that our success comes in and then making it clear for OFSTED when they come in" The purpose of this question was to explore the influence of middle managers on strategy, so during this interview I restated the question by asking again, about what they perceived their role to be:

Management know what they want, but if they were to lead us correctly, I think we'd have a bigger role, because there are a lot of people at the college, they have got a lot of knowledge and skills in different areas. Sometimes, if it's not what they are expecting or its not come from their brain, they don't acknowledge it's a good idea.

Clear themes were highlighted here, that ultimately, middle and curriculum managers had little involvement in the strategic planning and that their role was to deliver against targets influenced and contextualised by OFSTED inspections. Additionally, Jo had some ideas about leadership and that in order for it to be effective it had to be participatory across management tiers thus to acknowledge a wider range of skills and expertise. Furthermore, an example was given of recent training that developed the understanding of embedding British values in the curriculum, this had been mentioned as an area for improvement in the OFSTED report.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

The managers produced a range of responses that had common elements and related to a small core of inter-related principles. Notions of hierarchy, target setting and an overall lack of engagement with the middle management tier was widely accepted. The level of the detail also varied as did the amount to which a critique of the planning process was offered. The majority of participants did not state that they had taken part in the target setting process or were able to give an example of how their targets were aligned with sector trends. Only two of the managers gave any detail about this, with one in particular, the manager for English and Maths, explicitly stating that they felt involved. In the main, curriculum development was mentioned as being a participatory process with limited evidence to support this, however, the targets and wider thinking around this were driven by local competition and the use of benchmarks. Target setting was a received process. Little evidence was given to support the participation of curriculum managers in the target setting process overall, and that the leadership and management strategy was largely functional (Lumby, 2016) and retained ideologies of managerialism (Gleeson & Husbands, 2003). I have argued that these factors contribute to the discourse of leaderism.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

Managers were able to identify and name the plan and also had a general desire to have more involvement in the whole planning process. Not enough engagement with the middle tier was a common element and this was described as being driven from above and their position was too junior to be involved in such an important process. Lumby (2016) argues that this has been accepted in FE and has been taken for granted. In addition to this there was awareness of the importance of targets, success rates and the need to produce data for comparison, both internally and externally. It was also accepted that this facilitated the institutional need for continuous improvement and accountability. Very little resistance to this was evident and compliance was universally accepted

and, the requirement for this understood. The culture embedded within middle management was that they act as a conduit for the flow of information across the institutional hierarchy, this bodes complexities as to their actual duties with regard to their freedom to manage and make decisions. Macfarlane (2014) argues that this has resulted in a largely compliant culture.

c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

OFSTED was mentioned on multiple occasions as a pivotal aspect to drive the strategic plan. This dominated the discourse and limited any response that acknowledges wider sector policy or economic trends. Critiques were offered of this, and any strategic planning was discussed by the middle managers after their formation, however, in all responses the concept of target setting and satisfying internal pressures was the dominating aspect to drive institutional development in this case. Lots of ownership regarding their individual targets was evident, with almost all acknowledging the need for this and their subsequent accountability. Ball (2012) argues that this is a received notion of performativity. In addition, there was very minimal discussion of teaching and learning or students. Laing (2018) argues that this urges us to consider the tensions between the identity and fundamental priorities of a teacher and a manager. It was also acknowledged that statistical analysis and planning allowed for areas of weakness to be identified so that improvements can be made.

d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

The managers in this case generally felt sheltered from the strategic planning process, and that they were too junior to be involved. Many of the responses indicated an operational focus that acknowledges their accountability, but at the same time allowed for a largely seamless flow of strategic guidance through the middle management team to the frontline teaching staff. In almost all cases very few policies or sector trends were mentioned by name, with only one detailed example of how this might occur, this was provided by the creative arts curriculum manager. Fort (2015) argues that curriculum managers are rarely focused on curriculum, sector trends and new provision for example whilst, Gunter (2001) asserts that managers occupying the middle management tier simply act as conduits.

e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

Specifically, the dominant material practice evidenced in the responses is one of received direction. Targets are set by the senior management, and then disseminated with very little involvement or critique from the middle. Tyler & Dymock (2021) argue that this has been going on for quite some

time and has continued to present day. The explanation of these targets also generally lacks context other than the ones of local competition and the general pressure to improve. Limited evidence was given regarding the new development of curriculum, however, strategically this wasn't disseminated as coherent practice or contextualised extensively to general policy frameworks. The driving factor in almost all responses was target setting and action planning for improved statistical performance. I have argued that this has contributed to the presence of leaderism in FE.

Question 8

How is performance managed in this institution?

This prompted one of the first responses that focussed on teaching in the first instance. Andrew stated:

Through observations of teaching and learning and that's currently graded, and the plan is, to remove graded observations from September, to move to a much more triad peer observation like system, with some CPD behind it. But once the performance element is done on the teaching side, there is a coach allocated to support them with teaching and learning and essentially move them from a four or a three or two or better. If that doesn't work then there's a process through HR that requires them to move on, to get them out of the organisation and then otherwise it's your standard disciplinary process.

The merits of observation are widely debated, most notably in recent times by O'Leary (2014, 2019). Much of this work supports professional discussion and peer reviewed practice. In this case, a clear link has been made between performance and teaching. A crude process is outlined that suggests if you are not able to be coached to a better outcome, then you would no longer have a position in the organisation. In opposition to previous responses Andrew had indicated that new teachers would benefit from a democratic, almost humanistic leadership approach akin to understandings of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011). The process described here, does little to support modern critiques of observation or the seemingly democratic views of leadership. However, a new process for observation as described by Andrew, could have the potential to be more participatory.

Beth gave a disgruntled response and largely queried the validity of the institution's approach.

Very poorly. We've had underperformance of several managers that's not been managed out and we've had assessors that have underperformed. Again, we've managed to lose at least 15 assessors from the apprenticeship unit, but most have been paid off. We don't manage them out in terms of getting rid of where they're not performing, they tend to get paid off

and leave. In terms of systems, on paper we have established systems, but they are not practiced consistently or fairly.

The purpose of this research is not to appraise the effectiveness of the institution with regard to such policies, it is to understand the perceptions of leadership, however, the role of policy and how it is intertwined to the overall complexities of college functions is important. In this response the language used to describe this practice is illuminative of the overall culture in relation to this question. The term 'managing out' and what this means generally can allude to a certain culture. Further to this the suggestion is that managing out is a process whereby an employee is put through a process where they are forced to choose to leave. It is imbued in this response that this is preferable to the other more expensive option of simply offering a financial incentive to leave. Gillies (2013) argues that from Foucault's perspective this is "an alternate reading of educational leadership, not as aimed at school improvement and at achieving educational success, but instead representing a subtle form of discipline" (Gillies, 2013, p.26).

Chloe was less disgruntled than participant Beth. Chloe's response was largely a description of a common set of quality systems that are largely the norm in the further education sector:

We have a traditional appraisal system, which would take place three times per year, to set targets at the early stages, review mid-year, then at the end. We have a capability and a disciplinary process, we also manage and monitor performance through things like observations of teaching and learning.

Chloe described commonalities to do with the coaching and the support in place to help teachers to improve and also described internal audits as "mini-OFSTED's". In this case, the removal of staff wasn't discussed, however, the concept of a mini-OFSTED and the use of observation to audit were clear descriptions for the approach taken to manage performance. As with the response to previous questions a link is easily formed with large organisational factors that are primarily driven by satisfying the OFSTED requirements. Boocock (2017) describes this context in FE: "Leadership in FE has been driven by incorporation and the resultant FE quasi-market, which through centralised funding formulae and inspection frameworks has created a hierarchical and autocratic form of leadership" (Boocock, 2017, p.350).

Debbie also focussed on describing the overall process in place for managing negative performance, how this is identified and the support that is given. It was stated that: "There is a clear process" and "obviously the appraisal is integral". Debbie also divulged that there was a trend analysis that can

trigger support for under performance, this wasn't discussed by other managers, but Debbie described this as an intervention process with varying actions:

So, it'll start as a supportive mechanism, where it might be occupational health, or it might be do you need additional CPD? Or do you need to observe another teacher's work? Or do you need something to do with time management? If things do not resolve, then, you'd go down the formal route.

The assumption is that the formal route described by Debbie involves disciplinary proceedings, but as with Chloe, the removal of employees isn't directly referred to.

Elaine gave a short response and was reluctant to give a lot of detail:

It's quite a strict process of managing performance, if it's a performance of teaching or results or quality, through observations you may be seen as inadequate or requiring improvement. Then, again, more training is put in place for you to develop, that is quite supportive, for people to improve their teaching.

A theme is developing that aligns performance with classroom practice and the focus on observation. This has long since been established as a quality tool in further education. The validity of a seemingly deficit model whereby an observation happens and then an intervention takes place, has been discussed elsewhere (Coffield et al., 2008) and gave rise to a raft of policies in response to 'upskilling the nation' (DfEE, 1999, p.2), however, the culture that this promotes is the significant aspect for this research. The idea that professional development is forward thinking, and discussion based to create a constant dialogue for teachers to improve (O'Leary, 2019) isn't being supported by this model. Which is one of test and fix, as opposed to develop, support and improve. The test and fix model can foster a culture of distrust in the observation process. This was largely in response to a two reports, *Why Colleges Succeed* and *Why Colleges Fail* (2004) that labelled underperforming colleges as having insufficient observation schemes (O'Leary, 2010).

Faizal co-ordinated safeguarding and pastoral care so did not answer this question directly. The assumption is that they were not concerned with the teaching of core curriculum areas, so the relevance of performance management wasn't a factor for this manager. In all previous responses, performance management was deemed to be primarily concerned with the performance of teachers with very little detail given as to the ramifications for managers, both from senior and middle tiers.

Consistently the notion of observation and performance management were linked by the managers. George further reinforced this:

Ultimately, I suppose, there is the success rates, which we're all kind of judged on. We have targets set for this, which needs to be met, we have attendance targets and there is a whole host of criteria that lies underneath as far as observations go. Tutors are expected to deliver good or better lessons, although on that we have just moved away from graded observations this year for the first time, that'll be slightly different.

George also went on to say that the bottom line on which they will be judged is success rates. Thus, further reinforcing the ideas of Jameson (2008) cited in Boocock (2017). This response didn't build on the conditions for managing performance but placed emphasis on how it is judged. This was highlighted by the importance of observations for teachers and the judgement for managers using success rates.

Halima directly referred to OFSTED and described how their performance management systems had previously not been effective enough to assess and monitor individual performance. The suggestion had been that the targets had been too generic, for example, whether team members had completed mandatory training, and not sufficient to support the development of teaching learning and assessment. Halima outlined how this had been addressed:

So, we've got rid of graded observations, we now have lesson visits, that directly inform the appraisal. We now have work scrutiny done on a regular basis that directly informs the appraisal, those sorts of things weren't happening before.

Upon analysis this would constitute a rebranding of the observation process and an increase in the overall work monitoring processes. Halima also stated that "the appraisal process will be much more holistic than it was". When considered alongside the wider concept of work scrutiny, this suggests potential for further high stakes assessment of teacher performance (O'Leary, 2014).

Ian's response placed importance on communication between staff members. Furthermore, his response focused on a broader sense of culture that built support for all stakeholders ranging from staff, to students and parents. The suggestion from Ian was that this model supported overall performance across all tiers of the organisation. No direct reference was made to teaching, learning, observation or OFSTED. Ian was reluctant to engage in the widely acknowledged themes from the other participants.

Jo immediately began to discuss capability:

Capability – so there's no set three strikes and you're out, it goes off achievement success, whether you are actually performing, compliance or whether its capability, as they are two different things.

Whilst aspects of the above are largely to be expected, Jo went on to say, "sometimes I think the lower ranking you are, the more at risk you are and if managers and leaders are expected to be the drivers for everything, then they should be a lot more responsible for a lot more than they are." Jo was asked to clarify this and said that accountability is disproportionately apportioned at the bottom of the management structure. The inference here is that front line staff are more likely to be held accountable and be subject to capability procedures than senior colleagues. Jo went on to say:

I do like the word management for the right people, but at my level, if you are leading the team correctly and they go on capability or compliance issues, then there's something to be said about maybe the way they are led. Is it the leader? Is it that the information is not being disseminated properly? Is it that they don't understand, but don't feel comfortable to talk to their leader about it?

Jo recognises her role and has a clear interpretation, so, whilst she is recognising that there is an uneven impact of compliance and ultimate accountability for front line staff, she also accepts responsibility that her leadership is a contributing factor. This is both critical and complicit in its nature. Jo has gone through a process of aligning herself with the dominant discourse of leadership that exists in the college, therefore is complicit in its existence (Gillies, 2013).

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

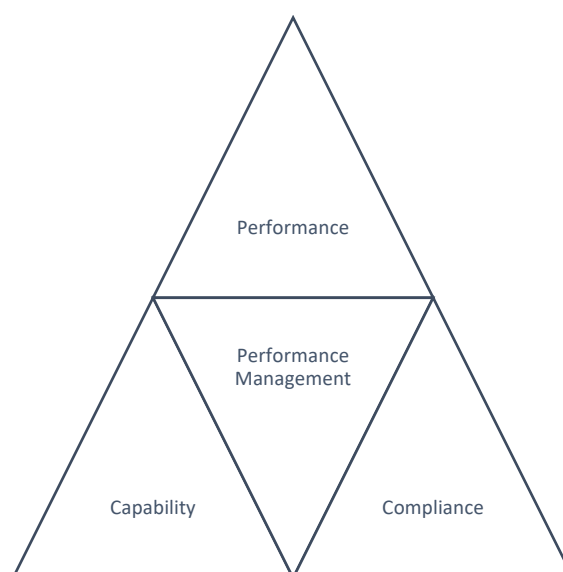
Distinctive material practices were detailed by the participants. In all cases, responses focused on teaching and learning, and the practice of observation. These practices were associated closely with the management of teachers and how they are encouraged to improve. In addition, rigorous auditing practices were described as 'mini-Ofsted's' which allowed for a wider focus on course performance, student feedback and the result of the classroom observation. Thus meaning that performance management was disproportionately focused on classroom practice. Minimal deviance from this was apparent in the data generated from this question. Mitchell (2018) suggests that this is a reductive approach to rationalise education.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

OFSTED appeared throughout the data and is acknowledged as a wider influence to guide the rules of discourse. This also ensures that “practices are material and discursive at the same time” , whilst also within “the ambit of discourse” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p46). Mimicking the OFSTED focus to performance manage is widely accepted in the sector, however this offers a series of complexities and limiting paradigms, whilst further promoting a discourse of reductivism (Oates, 2004). Broadly, Institutional development is dependent on a wider focus, these can include local demographics, conditions for employment, and the availability of resources such as the skills of staff. It is possible however, that adhering and practicing the conditions for an inspection can offer a sensible approach, this alone can also be a limiting factor, thus further supporting the notion of reductivism (Naz, 2021).

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

The managing of performance in this case was consistently referred to as having a causal link with teaching and learning, very limited detail, if any, was given of the mechanisms for the management of managers, although an appraisal system was mentioned. O’Leary (2014, 2019) has consistently discussed the merits of observation as a tool to measure performance, with current thinking moving away from singularly graded lessons. Many of the managers understood this and described a new ungraded approach that was to be taken. This was couched as being a new system of broader work scrutiny. This practice can be described as test and fix, that has a more holistic approach to teaching practice, Boocock (2019) argues that this type of fashionable approach can further promote neoliberalism through a reculturing process. The figure below is illustrative of the rules that delimit the sayable (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.99):



- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

A discourse of managing out was referred to by curriculum managers in performing arts. This was described as managing staff to a point, through overloading and constant change, where they are left with little choice other than to leave. This equates to a test of resilience that is designed to erode competency and morale to drive underperforming managers out of the institution, thus resulting in the avoidance of a costly severance package. This was also described as being poorly implemented in some cases where a selection of colleagues hadn't been managed out effectively and had subsequently been offered a relatively costly severance. These instances were primarily concerned with the managing out of managers, not teachers, it was implied that the managing out of teachers was historically more effective. This further supports the notion of performance management being unfairly weighted against teaching professionals. O'Reilly & Reed (2011) describe this as the prioritising of controlling practises by groups of managers. The term 'managing-out' was new to this research and provided novelty as described by Kendall & Wickham (1999) in their use of Foucauldian analysis.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

Most of the participants responses referred to performance management as being concerned with teachers, and teaching and learning. The one middle manager who was not directly responsible for teachers did not see a great deal of significance with performance management processes or give any detail. The majority of judgements made about performance concerned success rates and the performance of teachers. The embedded notion being that teaching staff and lower tiered managers are more subject to performance management than senior post holders. The general perception from middle management was one of critical complicity. The managers interviewed were disparaging of poor practice and management systems yet complicit in its inconsistent implementation. This reductive approach Mitchell (2018) argues is lacking in emotion and is largely unrealistic.

Question 9

Can you describe how your curriculum area targets are aligned with the trends in the sector?

Andrew described the current situation in his subject area and declining trends in general recruitment for his subject. He stated that "our targets have moved to reflect that". Arguably, this

demonstrates a realistic link between expectations and a declining trend for recruitment in his subject overall. In his response there was no mention of policy factors or current initiatives, the study programme or apprenticeships for example. Andrew's final response was of the greatest significance:

There we go, what a world we live in where education is all about targets, numbers and not people. Anyway, so yes, I do have to speak the language of targets, even though it's not really me.

When considered against the literatures, this complicit reductionism Mitchell (2018) isn't entirely unexpected. However, this situation is accepted by Andrew, whilst the language of targets is a description of the types of discourse used to portray leadership and management. This also further emphasises the historic policy background that "Under the Conservative administration (1993–1997) a transactional leadership style was encouraged through FEFC funding incentives acting on leaders to increase the volume of students at lower unit cost" (Boocock, 2017, p.351). Despite a largely rhetorical shift away from a transactional style to a more persuasive distributed model, very little has changed (Lumby, 2016).

Beth stated that she didn't have specific targets. Her overall response questioned the stability of the institution and doubted the ability of the senior managers to be strategic and set realistic targets.

Chloe insisted that curriculum area targets were not aligned to current sector trends. She explained that she and the curriculum managers set the targets, and that there were areas of declining recruitment, although the target setting rarely reflected this. This contradicted Andrew who stated that recruitment targets were set to reflect trends. Chloe, however, insinuated that this was a process to satisfy management rather than to provide realistic targets for teaching staff and curriculum managers. Ainley & Bailey (1997) wrote, soon after incorporation, that such processes are merely a distraction to teachers from their focus of being an effective educator. Boocock (2019) argues that currently, despite the rise in fashionable leadership models, formulaic mechanised benchmarking is embedded within the FE sector.

Debbie, however, insisted that all their curricula targets, recruitment trends and new courses for example, were aligned to trends in the sector, and in particular with industry.

Yeah, I think everything we do really. I'll talk from the performing arts perspective. Not everybody is going to hit the West End, as they would like to, a majority of our students

want to do that. We offer them a musical theatre project to improve retention, but also give those students a taste of what it could be like.

Debbie gave further examples of industry relevant experiences offered to students such as the use of guest speakers. Debbie did not reference targets or specific policy initiatives directly; the primary concern was with managing localised expectations without referring to wider policy or influences. This concurs with notions of Leaderism as O'Reilly & Reed (2010) state "social co-ordination is best achieved through single or small groups of specially gifted and / or positioned individuals who lead" (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.964). In this case the leaders are operating in management silos, that are inward facing and largely working towards independent, incohesive targets. This has resulted in a corrosive environment (Dennis, 2016) that supports functional, self-interested practices that focus on survival.

Elaine responded with an example of recent training that enabled curriculum managers to reflect current trends and also referred to the wider policy context:

For example, most recently we have received training on the new levy reform and there is an expectation that you know it inside out because everyone on the shop floor, who's customer facing and speaks to employers. I think that is what I would say is a trend, I'd say that's a movement at the moment.

This was a clear example of training that was based on marketised and reductive practice and demonstrated the importance of curriculum managers being involved in delivering economics driven strategies. Elaine had recognised the intention of the recent training and linked this to funding opportunities. The language used also informs aspects of the theoretical discourse, one that prioritises neoliberal policy ideals, Boocock (2019) this as meeting the need of the education market. The terms 'shop floor', 'customer' and 'employer' are used to highlight the long-standing historic presence of post-Fordism in the post compulsory sector (Avis, 1998).

Faizal was more concerned with data and targets relating to the success of the students identified as being at risk. This aligned directly with the middle management role that Faizal was responsible for. He did not reference wider policy, although that wasn't unexpected. During the interview I prompted Faizal to discuss inclusion and widening participation. He responded by being measured on the attendance, punctuality, and success of the students on the college's at-risk register. As with other responses to this question this did encourage a more individualised response focussed on the immediacy and nature of their middle management role, however, this was reduced to a series of key performance indicators.

George discussed benchmarks:

We look at national averages and look at national benchmarks, to look at how we're performing against other colleges in the sector, both locally and nationally. Obviously, we take into consideration the performance across the country.

Following this, I prompted George with a further question about how this analysis was undertaken:

Senior managers will ultimately set a nominal target to start with and then there is some negotiation that can go on between departments that can feed into the overall picture for the college. We look at trends within the department, we look at how things progress, so again, if a department has done particularly well and gone above benchmark, then that would be expected to continue to raise. Whereas there will be some departments who have done particularly badly, they would have a more realistic target to move up and gradually progress

Notions of neoliberalism and Leaderism are embedded in this response. Success is rewarded with more challenging targets as, "driving up educational standards has become a global preoccupation" (O'Leary, 2014, p.533). Confusingly, however, a more realistic view is seemingly undertaken for areas of underperformance. This ideologically appears as a contradiction within itself. Previously, George had demonstrated awareness of policies such as the study programme and also felt that he was playing an integral role in cross-college development. This wasn't a shared view of the other managers.

Halima gave a detailed account of how targets are formed by the senior management team:

The vice principal and the assistant principal will have formulated the targets, then they are shared with us, then we get to say as to whether we think they are achievable or whether we think something is missing.

I prompted Halima to consider whether this was an externally facing process, one that took into account local priorities and employment trends. Halima stated: "No, I think it's internal, I think in terms of moving from requires improvement back to at least good. So, a lot of it is focused on that." Halima described this process as being participatory between middle and senior managers, which supported the presence of Leaderism by the utilisation of a moral obligation to improve, O'Reilly and Reed (2010) state that: "Individuals that lead use particular moral, intellectual, interpersonal, conative, material, politico-cultural resources in order to achieve social co-ordination" (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.964). Halima did not reference any current initiatives other than the need to satisfy OFSTED. Again, this is not to be unexpected, but it demonstrates the ability of OFSTED to dominate

the colleges focus even when not in attendance for an inspection and supports the politico-cultural aspect of constant improvement.

Ian focussed on benchmarks and the general need to either meet or exceed them. Ian described the process for this as being disseminated from either examiners or from immediate line management. The purpose of this was to ensure that he knew how his subject area was performing in comparison to others, in addition to this Ian stated:

We visit (other colleges) and do CPD training as well, as part of the curriculum (development), if we were introducing a new awarding body, which we changed once or twice in the 13 years that I have been at the college. So, we need training to deliver that new curriculum.

Ian's response largely drew upon the competitive nature of modern colleges and how success targets drive improvements both in the curriculum and in teaching. The external element is acknowledged as local competition, and national benchmarking, however, no indication of engagement with employers or the current policy context was specifically discussed.

The final participant, Jo, also chose to discuss success targets and national bench marking for their subject, Childcare. "Well, our targets are aligned with national targets, but we're achieving a lot higher – so our college targets are about 10% higher than what's expected." This culture of performativity (Ball, 2003) fits with common discursive interventions into the public sector that promote efficiency, competition and self-interest.

Jo also described tensions in the department about how targets and subject areas are managed:

We are attached to another sector area, I won't obviously say what that sector is, but that sector isn't doing as well, so that's dragging our success down and there is a bit of... (rolls eyes). Say there was a learner who was to withdraw for our area, for our subject it wouldn't be an issue, but because it is attached to a different area there's a lot of hostility about withdrawing a learner. So that can have an effect on the staff and the team

Embedded in this response are several persuasive attributes to describe the associated context, for example the acknowledgement of the importance of data, and the apparent resentment of another sector negatively affecting this. Despite the sector area being amalgamated as one department clear subject identities are explained as clearly existing. The success of these respective disciplines is also clearly demarcated, and a potential tension is described due to differences in the respective success rates. The word 'hostility' being used to emphasise this tension. Departments being amalgamated is

not uncommon in FE and in particular during the restructures, that have frequently took place following the increased pressures on finances in FE post-incorporation (Simmons, 2009).

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

Overall, the data reinforces the importance of targets, internal annual success rate trends and the need for economic viability. Targets were generally accepted as being concerned with course success, achievement and retention however, limited specific detail was given to how these relate to wider recruitment trends or sector priorities. Childcare contradicted this and stated how their expectations had been altered at a senior level, although that was not the overriding view shared by others. More of the rhetoric was driven by the recent OFSTED inspection and the pressure to meet targets set from senior managers.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

Two major factors influence the context for curriculum managers, externally by OFSTED and internally by how management interpret their response to this. Each departmental area had specific targets set for them and accepted this as a necessary process. This acceptance in some cases allowed for apathy towards the resultant target setting and this meant that it was construed as being meaningless or a bureaucratic management process. Some doubt existed that there was a substantive or a meaningfully informed approach to the setting of curriculum targets.

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

Responses offered some insight into the production of the rules of discourse for this research subject identities came to the fore in many responses. The manager for English and Maths expressed that they felt involved in the target setting process and with the wider strategy for their area in general. They also acknowledged the role of the study programme in this. Other subjects did not share this and tensions concerning relative subject performance were detailed. Further to this there was also recognition of the need for training and knowledge exchange to set targets and plan. This was not a holistic view and further supported the existence of management silos.

- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

Imbued in the responses were notions of silo management practices. Each area working in a bubble with limited opportunities for sharing and minimal external engagement. Targets were set by immediate managers that offered little significance for the subject teams and this rendered the overall approach as functional and performative. This situation was largely accepted and managing expectations from senior managers was seen as key to the role of the middle managers. In addition, localised competition was seen as significant with other local providers performance being taken into account. Curriculum development and new courses were also discussed however, in most responses, little information about how this linked to government or national priorities was given.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

Evidenced in the responses were common attributes of how success and expectations were managed, much of which were aligned to the current political context for FE predicated by neoliberalism (Boocock, (2019). Meeting targets is rewarded with higher targets and examples were given of curriculum priorities exceeding those of national benchmarks. Curriculum managers also acknowledged that the dominant leadership and management approaches are concerned with measurable success and the achievement of targets. The existence of hybrid departments, examples being those that have been rationalised to form new subject schools because of declining recruitment trends demonstrated the potential for an existence of internal hostility. Subject area departments with Creative arts and Computer technology for example, compared each other's success rates. This caused tension when reported on by curriculum managers and accumulated into a departmental performance table. This also indicated the presence of subject area rivalry and internalised competition.

Question 10

Is there anything about the leadership & management in this college that you have not had the chance to say that you would like to say?

Andrew said:

To meet with some other people and kind of talk about things around leadership and management, that would be nice. That would be really positive and a really useful thing to do and actually meeting somebody else might give me the chance to do that. But I don't really get the chance, I don't really know any of the other leaders in the college, I've never met most of them. Which I think is unusual, that we don't meet until we need a one-to-one,

but we never do.... You're very much just on your own in your curriculum area, which again I am not used to because how do you share elements of what you do best?

This statement describes the limited opportunities for leadership and management ideas to be discussed or shared. Andrew describes an isolationist context to which each curriculum or subject area exists, further to this he states he finds this unusual in this college. Gunter and Fitzgerald (2015) articulate this tension as a contradiction to the lexicon and discourse of distributed leadership ideals. Andrew is recognising the persuasive discourse of neoliberal management however, he is identifying a clear tension as to why this does not exist in this college. O'Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that leaderism prioritises inspiring followers into creative endeavours, the sharing of best practice for example however, in Andrew's case this has only been partially achieved with recognising that this is not happening and that they are working in isolated teams.

Beth took the opportunity to acknowledge some strengths and weaknesses across the college, however, more focus was given to the poor practice of former senior managers. Beth described that there is some good practice and that in her immediate management group, that she described as being localised, was supportive and more likely to exhibit good practice. Beth also stated:

We've had 3 very senior managers leave us in the three years that I've been here, so perhaps we haven't had the right managers in the post and haven't had the strategic oversight or they haven't had any understanding of quality. Some of them haven't managed any work-based provision in their lives and they've been brought in because they've managed business, and can't translate these skills to learners. I think that's my biggest frustration.

Much has been written about the issues of business models and how they are translated into further education to the detriment of professional teachers and the reductive nature of such practise on education values. (Randle & Brady, 1997, Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Beth is recognising that after three decades these ideas and tensions still exist in FE. Orr and Avis (2016) argue that marketisation has become prevalent across the education sectors as institutions seek to constantly improve and win customers.

Chloe described the current situation facing the college and its staff:

I think it's a period of immense cultural change, so a lot has happened very, very quickly. You know we went through the enormous change with the massive reductions to the skills budget – then there was a period of very significant restructuring.

Chloe also described a period of “trying to settle down”. The difficulties of a stable environment in FE are discussed by Orr (2009) & Simmons (2009), with the FE sector being subjected to multiple policy changes in its history, thus settling down, or embarking upon a period of stability is largely unrealistic. Finally, Chloe went on to describe the status and visibility of senior leaders in the college:

It's so unusual in some ways that it's difficult to see for example Principalship around the campus, you don't see them. So, people like myself or people below my status form, I suppose, not a more significant role, but we're kind of leaders in different sites, but that's unofficial. But Principalship is quite separate, and leaders are quite separate from teachers.

To describe the conditions for leadership as being separated from sites and from different staff groups suggests pockets of leaders operating silos across a largely disparate institution. Chloe also recognises status and hierarchy as being embedded within the tiers of the college staffing structure. This represents powerful language to describe the discourse of leadership and management and suggests sufficient room for leaders to hold authority (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010).

Debbie concluded the interview by declaring that “I finally sort of get why senior managers have to be rigorous about setting targets.” Debbie also added that she was now able to be sympathetic to the pressure that senior managers are under. Furthermore, Debbie added that “a few years ago I probably thought I was a very good leader and manager, but now I know that you're evolving.”

Elaine accepted that targets were intrinsic to the role and her view was that you have continue to learn and to be flexible. This desired flexibility appears illogical when considered against the recognition of a target driven institution however, Elaine's belief is that through effective leadership these challenges can always be overcome. Lumby (2016) likens this to the overly ideological view of distributed leadership and general leadership rhetoric as having the ability to overcome all.

Faizal justified the college's position in relation to OFSTED. He gave a staunch riposte to the recent report and claimed that OFSTED had an agenda and had failed to understand the demographic of the students that the college recruited. Faizal insisted “it's a very, very strong leadership and management group. Unfortunately, a lot of the hard work that they have done, when OFSTED came in, OFSTED just had an agenda.” This implies a suspicion around OFSTED, and a general rejection of neoliberal governmentality (Ball, 2016). It also demonstrates the impact that this can have as none of the questions asked in this research mentioned OFSTED or were intended to criticise the college's approach in relation to a recent inspection. Faizal insisted that the college was doing a good job and that the national picture in relation to the inspection outcomes was somewhat bleak. Faizal's

defence of the college position also implied notions of social inequality as Faizal described the lack of flexibility within the inspection framework to judge effectively, when, taking into account as Faizal describes a “leafy college” and the deprived area that is proximal to the college in this research. This is an historic criticism of the hegemony that underpins education policy (Apple, 2009).

George highlighted some complexities in the structure of the organisation:

I think that this institute has a lot of layers of management which, personally, from the structure we’ve got can sometimes lead to little bit of... not confusion, but a little bit of overlap sometimes which can cause difficulties.

George was keen to emphasise that this did not cause confusion but did result in a complex and sometimes problematic decision-making process between different departments, where finding a final answer was difficult. Layered management tiers and hierarchy is well established throughout the responses and demonstrates that despite many years of development concerning the approaches to leadership in FE, especially concerning participatory ideologies, overloaded ‘bottom-up’ accountability exists (Boocock, 2019) and further supports the idea that very little has changed (Lumby, 2016).

Halima gave a description of the leadership and management conditions and compared it to another smaller provider that s/he? had previously worked in, “If I wanted to speak directly with the senior leadership team, not my own manager, it was a journey up the stairs.” Metaphorically this is described as a journey up the stairs, this alludes to notions of higher status and well-established tiers. Further to this Halima also described the communication process.

It’s so big, the Principal describes it as a tank. It’s really slow and that creates difficulties in communication and in logistics and sometimes you’ve got a set idea and you go ahead with it and you might not be aware that this person over there is doing something similar. Or is actually doing something the opposite to you and it conflicts what you are doing.

With many colleges long since becoming multi-site and merged Halima’s response demonstrates the complexities of this with an insight into the potential difficulties. The isolated conditions across these sites are a prominent feature of these responses and has been a theme in this analysis. Halima also said that “the chief executive, I’ve never met, I’ve never had any contact with and yet I’ve been here 16 months.”

Ian said that “part of my CPD was to do leadership and management training, which all curriculum managers undertook.” Ian was the only participant that mentioned this training. He said that

“leadership and management come down to that element of pressure and how you cope with pressure.” Ian attached great significance to how a manager handled this pressure and the importance of being aware if it not only for yourself, but for others. He also described the need for “de-stressing tactics” to cope with pressure. I asked Ian if any of this was theoretical, or informed by training or research, and he insisted it was, although didn’t reference any concepts directly. He described this training as being workshops, and being linked to industry and business models:

In that training it wasn’t just with internal staff, we had external learners on the course, who were from business and industry. So, the workshops that we did, we got experience from their experience. So, you would get some strategies that you would adapt, that perhaps you hadn’t thought of in education, but would come from industry.

The links between education and neoliberalism are well established, (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2015) and the thoughts of Ian are a clear example of this. The intention of the training described by Ian is to create a more entrepreneurial approach. Ian went on to say that he enjoyed the training and that “it did help me rethink my approach, and it also justifies some of the actions that you do, in the way that you deal with staff.” Ian has linked the training received and apportioned credibility to it by using business ideologies as a justification, in that enterprise has a privileged position to inform other sectors. This has long since been argued as an embedded strategy of public sector reform in FE (Gleeson & James, 2007).

Jo gave her views on styles of leadership and on relationships between team members. This prompted a conversation in which I was able to probe for a range of responses, the conversation was multi-faceted and is detailed below:

ML: Is there anything about leadership and management in the college that you’ve not had the chance to say, that you would like to say?

Jo: I think it’s tricky to get into leadership and management, and if your face doesn’t fit, you might not get in.

ML: So, how do you think?

Jo: Younger people, the college I work at, there are three young women, including myself, who are management and leadership, sorry, middle managers and we have been referred to as ‘bolshy’ and ‘gobby’ because we know our areas and we’re not ashamed to say this is what we know about our areas. But this has come from an older member of staff, who is a leader that believes you should just get on with your job, rather than stick up for your staff or do what’s right.

ML: So, do you think that would inhibit potential future progression in the institution?

Jo: Yeah, for some, yeah. For me, yes, for other people who have been called 'bolshy', then, no, because they are strong minded, and it doesn't affect them. I've had a couple of issues with managers above me, who talk over me, don't listen to what I'm saying because they see me as maybe inferior.

ML: Is that to do with compliance then?

Jo: No, I comply, I do everything I need to do, it's just the way I approach it is different to theirs. Leadership styles are completely different, but I always think if your area is performing and performing well and your staff are happy and getting on with their jobs, then there really shouldn't be any issues.

ML: They would like you to be more harmonious, so you could progress? Is that what you're saying?

Jo: No, they just think I'm too soft and they don't like it because their staff are quite anti-leadership and I think there's a clashing of approaches and I don't know how to put it into words. Their staff will approach me differently to how they approach their own leader and I think that's an issue for their leader. With their own leader they say "no, I'm not doing it", whereas with me they say "yeah, sure, what do you need me to do?"

ML: So how is their style different to yours then?

Jo: Autocratic. This is what we want, this is when we want it by, no discussions, no arguments, no ifs, no buts, get it done and there's a constant overload and constant expectation. With no relevance or understanding of everything else they've got to do in their workload, that person hasn't been in that job role before, I have.

It can be seen from the above that there are complexities with what Jo describes as contrasting approaches and the behaviours of staff at differing tiers of management. Jo also chooses to reference her gender, although this isn't implicitly insinuated as being an issue, in contrast however, she does then reference the more complicit nature of older staff. Jo also states that she is able to get more from her staff as her approach is more gregarious as opposed to autocratic. Jo also describes this as being problematic as it is obvious that her approach is more effective than that of others. With the preferred approach of the college being an autocratic approach, this idiom of autocracy hadn't been as vividly described by other participants in the research. Jo also depicts a scenario for which she openly questions strategy whilst maintaining compliance. This demonstrates the existence of a range of historical leadership concepts, autocratic, distributed, and transactional Boocock (2017). It also suggests spaces for which leaders and practitioners can operate via strategic compliance (Avis, 2002) despite the existence of competing paradigms and approaches.

- a. The recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation is regular and systematic

A range of responses were given to this question relating to leadership and management styles, both effective and ineffective. A desire was evident to identify with their own good practices and to give a holistic overview of the colleges position. Furthermore, appraisals were given from their point of view of how the college was performing. In one case a staunch defence of the management approach and OFSTED report was stated however, this was not the consistent view of the sample, with many focussing on operational, negative and functional approaches to leadership and management. The general feeling was one of historical isolated working practices that now required wider collaboration and a broad acceptance of change and restructuring.

- b. The identification of rules of the production of statements

Some indication of frustrations with former colleagues who had exhibited poor practices, and these were blamed for previous poor performance. This was also attributed to senior colleagues and managers were keen to distance themselves from this and highlight the pockets of good practice displayed by themselves and their immediate teams. The multi layered management tiers were also described as inhibiting the decision-making process whilst also impairing communications. Despite this the acceptance of management processes existed and some sympathy was also afforded to the need for rigour in leadership and management approaches. A lack of visibility of senior staff around the campus was also highlighted as an inhibiting factor in the perception of senior leaders. All these factors contribute to a blame culture, cultivated by performativity (Ball, 2012).

- c. The identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure)

A more detailed view implies the existence of a blame culture where managers distance themselves from perceived poor practice and are keen to exemplify their own effectiveness. The isolated working conditions accentuate this, and this is a feature of this college. One manager also discussed leadership and management training, but this was not consistently mentioned nor did it lend itself to a consistent college wide approach. Status, management level and hierarchy feature prominently across the data and this provides a convincing view of the attributes of the leadership and management discourse in the college, thus indicating a preserved sense of hierarchy in the leadership and management discourse. There was also reference to apparent frustrations with businesspeople who have been utilised to manage employer responsive provision that were unable to teach. Ekman et al (2018)

support this by arguing that public sector management continues to be based on corporate organisational structures.

- d. The identification of rules that create spaces in which new statements can be made

Generally, a feeling of dissatisfaction was evident. One in which the curriculum managers were readily comparing themselves to the practice of others, whilst also indicating the presence of management silos. In addition, some indirect reference was given to preferred management approaches and that experienced managers who were willing to comply were preferred to younger staff in similar positions. Further to this regional and social inequality was also mentioned and linked to the OFSTED inspection and a negative perception of their overall agenda. Curriculum managers felt that they had been unfairly treated by OFSTED, and that this was a view shared by senior managers. The quality and type of training given to curriculum managers was also highlighted however, this raised questions about the validity of borrowing such ideas from business and the subsequent value for education. Corbett (2020) argues that generic management training is inadequate for the complexity of middle management roles.

- e. The identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time

The presence of management silos and associated isolated practices was described as unusual. Halima and Andrew referenced this directly but disparate communication, a lack of visibility of senior staff, and problematic communication was present across the data. Overlapping of roles and blurred boundaries were also present. Change and restructuring have long since characterised FE and in this case a desire for stability was evident. Considered against the historic nature of FE then the validity of this as a realistic expectation is complex. To contribute to this complexity were assertions of the need for collaboration, coaching and flexibility, alluding to a dominant discourse of distributed leadership ideals, in leadership and management approaches. Whilst others stated that autocracy was the favoured style of senior managers, in considering this autocracy alongside the descriptions for the need of collaboration and coaching, this strongly supports the existence of leaderism.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will begin by discussing the contribution to knowledge made by this research. In doing this I will acknowledge the methodological considerations and subsequent limitations of generalisability in discourse analysis. Following this I will consider in more detail the themes identified from the five-step discourse analysis undertaken from the series of interviews with a group of curriculum management professionals. Next, I will address the three research questions underpinning this thesis that have been designed to focus on how curriculum management professionals practice leadership, describe their professional identity, and to assess leaderism as a theoretical framework to critique leadership and management in further education.

Contribution

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the generally under researched area of further education middle management (Page, 2011) and to critically analyse the professional roles of a particular group of curriculum management professionals. In doing this, I have acknowledged broad understandings of the limitations of the methodological approach taken and suggested as to how the five-step discourse analysis can be enhanced for similar future research. I have further argued that defining the roles and duties of curriculum management professionals is complex and is influenced by selection of the sample, the use of a gatekeeper for example, and how the literatures define such groups of education managers. The knowledge claims in this research have set out to encompass a critical view of the literature available, and largely rejects functional approaches to leadership models and their implementation in further education. The contribution builds on my previous work (Lea, 2012) on the FE sector that identified managerialism as a dominant discourse, and I am subsequently claiming that this has become hybridised and accepted through dominant strains of leadership narrative and neoliberal policy rhetoric. I have argued that concepts of leadership have an historic basis and that can be linked to broad eras in the education sector. I have argued that notions of leadership have a strong presence within FE management, despite obvious flawed ideologies, and that in this research a series of interrelated themes have been critiqued using Foucauldian discourse analysis. Fundamentally I am arguing that we are now in the era of leaderism and that this has become an embedded norm, whereby middle managers are largely accepting of the discourse of leaderism and that it underpins the approaches taken to managing teachers in an FE institution.

Furthermore, it has also been argued, by Page (2011) that whilst the role of a curriculum manager is hard to define, it can include a range of teaching and none-teaching managers. The reason for this argument is characterised by the minimal differences found in their responses to the questions posed in the interviews. In addition, several interviewees self-selected for this research via the gatekeeper. This played a significant role in the analysis chapter and indicated that curriculum managers viewed themselves as largely being any middle manager related to curriculum activity, for example the management of teaching staff or the implementation of quality functions. This resulted in the term curriculum, middle and quality manager appearing interchangeably during the research.

Gillies (2013) argues that discourse is pivotal to the work of Foucault as it is how we construct the world around us and that everything is discursively shaped. Furthermore Gillies (2013) states that “this does not mean a denial of the physical reality, the argument that everything is merely textual, but a recognition that we never have direct experience or access to that world in terms of cognition, except through language” (Gillies, 2013, p.30). My research has used the language associated with historical eras of leadership to construct a framework to critique the roles of middle managers. Gillies (2013) refers to this as systems of formation. In this case, these systems contained descriptions of the duties and approaches undertaken by a group of middle managers. Furthermore Gillies (2013) states that approaching issues of educational leadership and management from a discursive perspective allows us to position ideas in an understandable way. Moreover, Foucault’s ideas of governmentality, provide a valid reference point to explain the appearance of management perspectives in the data and enable the rationalisation of the notion of power. Thus, allowing discourse to identify ideas as part of a singular system formation, but “even more crucially, to position them as but one way of seeing the educational world, as one way of constructing and framing educational issues” (Gillies, 2013, p.31). In this research, leaderism is an effective way of conceptualising the discourse of leadership and management, and evidence in the analysis supports this however, objectively as Gillies (2013) argues such a discourse is “not essential, not necessary and certainly not self-evidently true” (Gillies, 2013, p.31). I would argue that this thesis is instrumentalist (Gillies, 2013) and allows us to form a useful understanding of practices of further education middle management.

Leaderism has enabled managerial control to be maintained throughout the latter eras of leadership I have identified. Furthermore, distributed leadership has facilitated this so the practice of managerial control becomes embedded into a falsely democratic management structure that endeavours to promote autonomy amongst curriculum managers, however the reality is that most

of their management duties are to act as a conduit for senior managers to delegate tasks too. The notion of agency is significant as the imbued element of leadership in leaderism promotes the notion of agency whilst also ensuring compliance. O'Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that this concept of privileged agency is pluralist, by encompassing multiple power bases senior leadership and external stakeholders for example, whilst also contradictory and strongly linked to managerialism. Distributed leadership ideologies within leaderism are the most fitting example of this as the aim of such an ideology is to gain 'buy in' from followers who are given roles and accountability as a form of motivation. Ultimately, however, little changes in power relationships and the increased accountability network ensures a rise in the culture of performance management and measurement. This coincides with contemporary policy rhetoric to ensure a culture of continuous improvement and marketisation, Coffield & Edward (2009) describe this as a ratchet screwdriver approach with no reverse movement.

Methodological considerations

The college used in this research has a broad range of features found in many FE colleges. It has a range of provision including apprenticeships, vocational courses and a range of Higher Education in Further Education courses (HE in FE). This I have argued shares typical features of an FE institution in the North of England. The college researched in this case is urban, multi-site, diverse and employs a range of professionals from multi-subject disciplines, many of which are employability focused vocational training. Typically, it is subject to the challenges of the national policy agenda, regional priorities, and economic trends. It also contains a selection of professionals who have most likely worked in multiple FE organisations across the North and have built experiences from a range of institutions. This allows for a degree of insight about FE in general, however, Courtney et al (2021) argue that the agenda of "what works" (Courtney et al., 2021, p.175) in educational leadership research undermines the quality of knowledge generation when attempting to generalise on a large scale, as much of this leadership research, and in particular distributed leadership as I have argued lacks a critical base. Leithwood et al (2006) have produced distributed leadership research that makes strong claims about education leadership. This research uses multiple case studies and appeals to conventions of quantitative approaches, as it uses the number of case studies to validate itself. Courtney et al (2021) are critical of such approaches and argue that:

Case studies are very common in educational administration and leadership research. A scan of many journals confirms this observation. Arguably, the reason behind this frequency of case studies, and the common approaches of interviews and focus groups, is an appeal to the importance of context and participant voice, (bringing in the human) in seeking to

understand what works (and does not) in educational organisations (Courtney et al., 2021, p.175)

Despite the obvious tension stated by Courtney et al (2021), of providing 'solution based' frameworks, the intention of this research is to maintain its connection to the field by employing a critical approach (Courtney et al., 2021). Whereby the findings in this research are presented within the context of the case itself, the generalisable characteristics are given credence only through select attributes and a recommendation as to how similar types of research might be carried out in other FE colleges. Bryman (2016) argues that the scope of the findings of qualitative research, such as discourse analysis through interviews are often hard to replicate. Moreover, in this case it has been confined to a relatively small number of interviewees in a specific organisation. Bryman (2016) also argues that non-probability sampling is also problematic as the population interviewed may not represent the wider population. I would counter argue that in this research specific middle managers were targeted and the limitations of this, and of the use of the gatekeeper to access them has formed a theme in the analysis, as this affected the sample used. Furthermore, as acknowledged by Bryman (2016) "it is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of the data that is crucial to the assessment of generalisation" (Bryman, 2016, p.399). Yin (2009) and Mitchell (1983) term this kind of generalisation analytic or theoretical generalisation. Williams (2000) does not accept this view, as Bryman (2016) argues that researchers such as Williams (2000) are able to generate "moderatum generalisations" (Bryman, 2016, p.399). This is described as encompassing aspects of the focus of enquiry, for example in this case I have argued that this research has typical aspects of a particular group of professionals and the environment in which they work. Williams (2000) further argues that qualitative researchers often draw inferences in this way and that it can lead to comparative studies with other similar groups or organisations. This, Bryman (2016) argues, goes some way to countering the limited scope for generalisation in qualitative studies such as this one and suggests that generalisation isn't impossible, and permits a "moderatum generalisation" (Bryman, 2016, p.399), whilst having clear limitations for knowledge production, it does allow for scope for generalisation beyond the immediate evidence. The use of discourse analysis in this study further problematises the generalisability in this study. Reed (2000) argues that discourse analysis is generally a self-contained inward process, that struggles to acknowledge concepts that exist outside of its "self-referential sphere" (Reed, 2000, p.529). This research is important to provide a critique of the sample selected and to generate knowledge for further consideration and analysis, thus allowing for "moderatum generalisation". I have argued that this is vital to further the critique in the under researched area of curriculum management in FE.

I am further arguing that the role of the gatekeeper, in selecting the sample has been a pivotal factor in the data produced by the interviews.

1. The selection of participants was known to or selected by the gatekeeper.
2. Wider colleagues from the original requested sample self-selected, via the gatekeeper to take part in the interviews.
3. The data generated about the case was largely based on the sample determined by the gatekeeper.

Whilst the points above are acknowledged as limitations, it does allow for an argument that the data produced came from a selection of linked middle managers with a degree of common experiences. Furthermore, it can be argued that this allows for validity in any common recurring themes from the interviews and that the participants were willing to be involved and share their ideas. Ruane (2005) argues that researchers must confront access problems and that certain settings might not always be welcoming. To be successful in gaining access the researcher must assess the institution and its current position. In this case I used my local knowledge, my existing relationship with the gatekeeper and publicly available documents including the strategic plan and historical inspection data. The gatekeeper caused a disruption to the research as Ruane (2005) further argues that resulted in “reactive effects” (Ruane, 2005, p.165). Henn et al (2009) argue that gatekeepers can “wield extensive power” (Henn et al., 2009, p.74) and that ultimately, they can limit or completely deny access to your object of study or site for the research. They further argue that this can alter aspects of your research design and in some cases compromise your overall plan. I counteracted this by accepting what this told me about the case and how curriculum managers are defined. Given the complexity of the role and of middle management definitions in general, this resulted in the further consideration of the significance of teaching managers and none teaching managers. Henn et al (2009) argue, “the consequences of using a gatekeeper to gain access to research participants is the possibility of losing control over the sampling strategy” (Henn et al., 2009, p.101). In this case I did not lose this control of the sampling strategy, I allowed the themes to influence the discourse and maintain that my focus was a group of curriculum related middle management professionals. In addition, I have explained that these professionals were connected to the immediate community of the gatekeeper, either by similar beliefs or through positive relationships. This meant that a shared sense of beliefs existed within this sample and that this research depicted the data from a particular professional community of curriculum managers. Henn et al (2009) suggest that situations such as gatekeeper negotiation are inevitable and that there are consequences to such a negotiation in

qualitative research whereby, “the researcher may have to cede some power and control over the research process” (Henn et al., 2009, p.199).

Introduction to the themes from the analysis

Central to the discourse analysis has been the themes generated using the five-step method described by Kendall & Wickham (1999). Whilst five-step method provided a detailed analysis tool, I found justifying the production of the themes problematic. To rationalise the five-step approach I decided that by simply stating that the themes identified as representative of the range of discourses was insufficient. Furthermore, the interplay between the themes of discourse to characterise the presence of leaderism did not adequately explain the production of the themes. Discourse analysis, Bryman (2016) argues, requires the analyst to select significant themes using their own interpretation of the data, I concur with this, however it oversimplifies how or why this is valid and how it might relate to discourse. I would argue that the final stage of identifying the themes from the research is missing from the Kendall & Wickham (1999) model. Honan & Sellers (2011) argue for a form of rhizomatic discourse analysis. This approach acknowledges that there are differing “lines of flight” (Honan & Sellers, 2011, p.4) that connect different systems so that we can better understand discursive systems in any text. Furthermore Honan & Sellers (2011) argue that “discourses operate within texts in a rhizomatic fashion, intersecting and separating, over and under lapping” (Honan & Sellers, 2011, p.4). I am arguing that this provides a lens whereby we can recognise the intertwined nature of how discourse interplays in this research. The themes identified in the discourse analysis are produced by “delimiting the sayable” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.43) and include, experience of the role of management, teacher and manager identity, ethical corrosion, performance management, reductivism and an overall desire to lead. In this step rules that don’t provide closure are identified in order to provide boundaries for statements to be made. I am arguing that these rules are drawn rhizomatically from the data, and whilst they do not provide closure, they enable a particular network of interrelated roots of discourse to be drawn from the data to form a “discursive web” (Honan & Sellers, 2011, p.4).

Themes from the analysis

Experience

Generally, the research demonstrated that curriculum managers had a varied amount of experience in FE, and that ascertaining a set timeframe to achieve such a role was hard to define. One of the respondents had three and a half years' experience of working in education, this was unusual in this sample as all of the others had no less than eight. Despite this it can be reasonably assumed that progressing into such a role requires an indefinable amount of experience and a commitment to a longer career in education. Page (2010) argues that whilst leadership and management research in FE is a growth area, the majority of the research focuses on principals and senior leaders. Page (2010) refers to curriculum management as first tier management. Defining the middle tier of management is problematic, as it is "heterogeneous, elastic, contested, poorly understood and often badly defined" (Page, 2010, p.129). Page (2010) further argues in a similar study that the majority of the managers were internally promoted and had experienced difficulty when transitioning into the role of team manager, I would argue that these difficulties, managing your colleagues for example, also contributed to this research and supports a degree of similarity with the work of Page (2010).

Page (2010) states that:

The FTMs interviewed occupied a kind of occupational limbo: no longer solely a teacher, most were reluctant to fully embrace the identity of manager. Thus, occupying the border position between teacher and management (Page, 2010, p.129)

In opposition to the work of Page (2010), I found very little resistance to the role of management, and management duties had become an embedded norm, and a dominant discourse for all the managers interviewed. Given the focus of this research, ten years after the work of Page (2010), I am arguing in this study that erosion of the teacher identity takes place quickly once the middle management tier is joined. Fort (2015) argues that curriculum managers rarely focused on issues of curriculum, whilst Gunter (2001) asserts that middle management is primarily a conduit through which accountability through structures and policy is achieved. Ball (2008) further argues that middle managers are a "cipher for policy" (Ball, 2008, p.48). In my research this was embodied by a general preoccupation with data and targets. A passive compliance was also noted through minimal reference to policy by the interviewees and limited evidence of overall involvement in strategic

planning. In this case, the downward flow of power and accountability through the cipher described by Ball (2008) encountered very little interruption from the middle management.

Curriculum manager, teaching manager or non-teaching manager?

Despite the participant information including the term curriculum manager and the gatekeeper being asked to recruit teaching managers. Several teaching and none teaching middle managers from the same tier self-selected to take part in the study. A decision was taken to include this data as all took part in curriculum management in at least some way whilst, all appeared in the same middle management tier spanning an entire group of similarly paid managers. This also allowed for a degree of comparison between the responses of teaching managers and non-teaching managers. For the purposes of this research the term curriculum manager has been interpreted as a range of middle management professionals who contribute to the management of curriculum, this could be in regard to quality, subject or students. All did have staff management responsibilities. This sample was decided to be valid as it provided a narrative about the case and the typical context for a college with middle management. Page (2011b) argues that the job of the Principal in FE is “uniformly understood and titled” (Page, 2011b, p.102) however, the role of middle managers is much less so and has a “plethora of labels” (Page, 2011b, p.102). Rabey (2008) has previously argued that labelling middle managers is complex, whereby such titles as Programme Area Leader, Programme Manager or Curriculum Coordinator existed. In this study a further attribute occurred where middle managers selected themselves as curriculum managers through a sense of being curricula custodians. This resulted in a sample that contained teaching and non-teaching managers all of whom occupied the first tier of management (Page, 2011b). This however, I have argued demonstrated that similar discourse existed across all these roles and little separation occurred between those who were teaching and those who did not. From a Foucauldian perspective, this demonstrated the existence of a regime of truth. Lorenzini (2015) argues that regimes of truth are “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation distribution, circulation and functioning of statements” (Lorenzini, 2015, p.2). The statements produced to inform the discourse of leaderism across the sample demonstrated that all teaching and none teaching managers prioritised managerial control, thus highlighting a dominant truth to notions of managerially infused leaderism. Historically, Lumby (1997) argued that at any time there could be between 1% and 20% of employees that identified as managers, this also included course leaders that did not see themselves as management.

Teacher or manager?

The overall responses from all participants indicated very little difference in their priorities. The answers given in all cases focused on the practice of management, even for the teaching managers. These answers included planning, managing staff, meetings and general resource issues. Reference to students appeared much less frequently across the sample. The teaching managers acknowledged their teaching role however, there was little difference other than teaching adding to an already complex role in the middle management tier. The teaching managers openly discussed their management duties and despite being given opportunities to discuss their teaching this was met with general reluctance to do so. In one case, where teaching was mentioned, its secondary status to management duties was confirmed as they suggested that their teaching practice had suffered as the result of continuing pressure to manage. Page (2011b) argues that middle managers are “performance-orientated supervisors” (Page, 2011b, p.102) and they are preoccupied by the direction and control of work. This is further complicated by a variety of managerial tasks that are context dependent. Furthermore, the FE context is often turbulent and “defined by continual change” (Page, 2011b, p.102). This complex context has resulted in curriculum managers becoming the “final implementer, translating policy in a learning environment. Surveilled and surveilling, managing and managed” (Page, 2011b, p.102). I am arguing that the nature of the middle manager has resulted in management becoming a regime of truth, whereby the truth is created by the individuals who are obligated to take part, and thus valorises the leadership identity for curriculum managers (Foucault, 1979). Furthermore, parameters for student success have been reduced to statistical analysis to serve managerial notions of continuous improvement.

Ethical Corrosion

A clear tension between management roles and teaching was apparent. In the first instance many managers were reluctant to discuss students and teaching, however, this reluctance heralded its own significance. A few managers outlined that the target driven culture had resulted in tensions between the student experience and target driven culture. One manager indicated that this impacted negatively on overall student experience and resulted in managers being resistant, whereby this tension was put aside to allow a focus on students. Keep (2016) calls this target driven approach “targets and terror” (Keep, 2016, p.4) whilst Dennis (2016) alludes to the resultant “ethical corrosion” (Dennis, 2016, p.125) that has taken place due to the difficulty in prioritising students, for which minimal evidence of the regard for students was identified in the data to this research. In

addition, the role of targets was significantly acknowledged by the managers interviewed however, consistency in approach was varied. Ethical corrosion (Dennis, 2016) was evident in the response by one curriculum manager that proclaimed to be troubled by the notion that education had become reduced to the management of targets and was less about the individuals involved. Furthermore, a preoccupation with competition was easily identifiable some of which was internally driven, and with some examples of local competition. No overall approach to target setting was described with a balance of interviewees insisting that these were not necessarily externally driven and that targets were generally driven by internal pressure to consistently improve. O'Leary (2014) argues that constant improvement has become a global obsession within education. Lumby (2016) argues that despite a desired shift in management practice away from traditional transactional models and the supporting literatures, very little has changed. I would further argue that the resultant culture of leaderism and ethical corrosion (Dennis, 2016) has also supported silo management practice, with each faculty or operational team working independently towards internally facing, incohesive targets, Motwani & Kumar (1997) describe this as "functional silo syndrome" (Motwani & Kumar, 1997, p.131).

Performance management through teaching and 'managing out'

Ekman et al (2018) argue "that public sector management in profession-based organisations such as schools and universities is increasingly based on market mechanisms, corporate organisational structures and clear principles of accountability and responsibility" (Ekman et al., 2018, p.300). Overwhelmingly in the interview data the concept of performance management was linked to the performance of teachers in the classroom via observation. This was despite actual classroom teaching practice not appearing at all. I have argued that this was the only significant time that teaching and learning was discussed by curriculum managers in this research. Whilst the observation method of performance management for teachers has long since been established in education (Coffield, 2008), O'leary (2014) argues that this has led to a culture of observation and wider work scrutiny becoming a high stakes assessment for teachers. My data highlights terms used by managers such as assessing capability and compliance. Two new terms also appeared in the data that described the wider scrutiny of work as 'mini-ofsted' and that failure to perform consistently would result in a 'managing-out' of noncompliant teachers and managers. This however, indicated a discrepancy between the detailed performance management systems in place for teaching staff, than those for underperforming managers. Regarding teaching staff, under performance via work scrutiny and observation would be addressed either through continuing professional development

(CPD), or via a human resources (HR) disciplinary process. The managers interviewed offered a degree of detail regarding this. Some gave examples of a 'three strikes and you are out' approach or the use of a crude management tactic referred to as 'managing them out'. This was described as a continuous process of CPD and repositioning so that the staff member left without the need for redundancy. The concept of 'managing out' was also described for fellow management colleagues albeit with less detail. Other managers supported this view by stating that the lower ranking you are, the more at risk you are and that generally accountability was disproportionately apportioned to teaching staff. Theoretically and in practice, this supported the argument power relationships follow a transactional model, from senior leaders, through the middle management tier to front-line teachers. Additionally, I have argued that the lack of clear criteria for management professionals, and the complexity of much of their duties has diluted their accountability in hierarchical management structures. This has resulted in an unfairly loaded performance management system on teaching staff. Boocock (2019) suggests that a shift from transactional approaches to leadership to fashionable models, such as distributed leadership "would further inculcate the values of neoliberalism through a reculturing process" (Boocock, 2019, p.359). Bocooock (2019) argues that this is done through a shift in autonomy to meet the needs of the education market as opposed to the more localised needs of communities and students. Measurable approaches to teaching and the meeting of employment needs have taken priority. In this research the power has been retained with the overloading of bottom-up accountability, this has been done via the dispersal of tasks downwards. Furthermore, I am arguing that leaderism encompasses distributed leadership traits and characterises the neoliberal criticisms of fashionable leadership models, many of which promote functionality and a 'what works' agenda.

In other words, distributed leadership would lead to a dispersion of responsibility given the current controlling policy and leadership context, predicated on neoliberal values rather than a distribution of power (Boocock, 2019, p.359)

Boocock (2019) argues that the current political context for FE, that is largely more formulaic in its approach to funding than in schools, and is mechanised by benchmarking, inspection and general notions of managerialism, "would more likely lead to a form of distributed leadership where increased autonomy is embedded within an even more controlling performative culture" (Boocock, 2019, p.359). O'Reilly & Reed (2011) argue that "leaderism prioritises leaders inspiring others in collaborative endeavours" (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.1083). This varies in their description of managerialism that O'Reilly and Reed (2011) argue "prioritises managerial control" (O'Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.1083). These descriptions simplify leaderism and managerialism however, it is significant to also acknowledge these descriptions as being "constrained, modified, deviated from and inflected in

all sorts of multifarious ways” (O’Reilly & Reed, 2011, p.1083). I am arguing that this understanding has formed a theoretical base for this research, and that two of the multifarious ways to view leadership has been its link to dominant research ideals such as distributed leadership and managerialism. Moreover, managerialism as O’Reilly & Reed argue (2011) has long been the most frequently occurring attribute in the concept of leadership, the data in his thesis supports the notion that leadership is a form of leadership that strongly encompasses managerialist discourse.

Reductivism

Oates (2004) argues that reductivism in education has been in existence since the mid-nineties. This gained traction as Barnett (1992, 1997) were critical of outcome-based qualification frameworks that lacked context and an overly precise use of language. Oates (2004) furthers this argument by explaining that this was the result of an intensification of the relationship between education and labour markets. Oates (2004) states that this led to “putative narrow instrumentalism of vocational training” (Oates, 2004, p.63). Such reductive approaches are problematic in education as this level of aggregation in qualifications disrupts ontology through oversimplification and a focus on targets (Oates, 2004). I would argue that evidence in this research supports this notion from a leadership and management perspective, as whilst not entirely unexpected, this reductive approach is evident in the discourse of leadership in this research via the emphasis in the interview responses on targets and data. To understand reductivism, Mitchell (2018) suggests that the approach to rationalise in this way removes emotion, and that this is unrealistic as all judgements, feelings and desires are emotively irreducible. Reductivism and the notion of ethical corrosion interplay discursively, and act as a form of manifest discourse, described by Foucault (2002) as a repressive presence of what is said and not said. The curriculum managers viewed their practice against a policy context of responsiveness, much of which was internally driven, whilst maintaining funding streams and course viability via strategic compliance and a focus on targets. This simplistic view opposes the purpose of education against wider philosophical notions of citizenship and the right to be educated. The recent Skills for Jobs paper (DfEE, 2021) & the levelling-up white paper (HMGov, 2022) both reference lifelong skills and economic opportunity. The focus of these papers is to plug skills gaps, prepare the future workforce, increase productivity, and provide opportunities to change career into a post-pandemic growth area. The residual effect of this on FE will be the targeting of funding for specified areas and will result in a drive to maximise income. Naz (2021) argues for a shift from reductivism in education:

This market-based vision of education fits well with reductionist approaches whereby everyone should be able to use similar procedures and produce the same results. An approach such as this overlooks the complexity of an open range of possibilities in educational practices and how many 'it depends' there may be. We have seen how the exercise of disciplinary power in education presupposes certain organisational and social structures working in a uniformed fashion and demands the production of a certain type of learner experience which can be subject to regulation. The policy makers may have missed the point. The point here would be to loosen our links with reductionism informed by the McDonaldised-model of education (Naz, 2021, p.238)

I concur with the view of Naz (2021) however, this would require the undoing of a gradual increase in such market-based approaches, over 30 years in the making. My research has evidenced that the Mcdonaldised, neoliberal view of education has resulted in deeply embedded discourses that are intertwined and compliment multifarious notions of performance management. That exclusively focus on targets, measurable outcomes and further support the presence of leaderism.

A desire to lead

A desire to lead was evident in participants' responses and given precedent over traditional notions of task-based authoritarian management. When discussing teamwork and the allocation of tasks notions of leadership and in particular distributed leadership could be identified. The inclusion of staff teams was a desired approach alongside a democratic idealism of participation from stakeholders in decisions and task allocation. This highlighted the powerful and pervasive nature of leadership ideas and a clear associated lexicon. These ideas were reinforced when interviewees responded to the question about differences in leadership and management. Leadership was seen as visionary and providing direction whilst management was seen as being required when compliance was needed from underperforming staff. Leadership was described as sharing a path to common goals whilst management was inferred to as reducing autonomy and supporting accountability against targets. Evidently these ideas were reinforced in several ways, with management being linked to operational matters or practical tasks such as effective time management or task prioritisation. Leadership was seen as being transformational, culture changing or supporting a visionary ethos. It was also argued that leadership can be demonstrated by example through adherence to high standards. Furthermore, the responses stated that this resulted in a conflict between the two as leaders gave out the orders, whilst middle managers dealt with the outcomes through management. From the analysis, very little separation between the concepts of leadership and management existed, despite leadership being a preferred approach by the sample, however this was contradictory as most accepted that both interacted with one another, in the broadest sense, leadership gained buy in and management operationalised this. Hybridisation is central to the

leaderism framework, as I have argued persuasive leadership ideals pervade notions of managerialism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, 2011).

The strategic plan

O'Connell (2005) argues that college strategic plans are significant and rigorous and enable an understanding of the culture of FE colleges. O'Connell (2005) further argues that it is possible to ascertain the desired strategic focus from such plans. Senior leaders spend a large amount of time on such documents so that institutional intentions are clear to stakeholders at all levels of an organisation. In the data produced in this research there was little to suggest that the strategic plan was embedded into daily practice and that there had been very little input into strategy from the curriculum managers, the forming of strategy was a received process. Despite this, O'Connell (2005) furthers his argument by stating that it is key to college business, performance goals and the measuring of ultimate accountability against measurable outcomes. During the scoping for this research the college strategic plan was analysed. I asked middle leaders about the strategic plan; significantly however, none made any reference to it, with only two of the interviewees mentioning it. Furthermore, none of the values, mission statement or vision appeared in the answers given in the interviews. In this case the plan appeared as a reasoned set of statements, based on engagement and growth in key areas of activity, those of apprenticeships or Higher Education in Further education (HE in FE) for example. This I would argue serves to satisfy external expectations, marketing the strategy to governors for example and has little relevance to curriculum managers and teaching staff. Furthermore, the plan is formatted into mission statements with very little detail on how this might be done, the purpose of the plan is to advertise its intentions, whilst the detail is retained amongst senior leaders. I would argue that in this case this surface level approach to the plan vastly lessened its impact and was in opposition to the argument of O'Connell (2005). The data in this research suggests that there had been no involvement in the strategic plan from middle management and, in some cases they felt protected from it or that they were too junior to be involved. Boocock (2017) describes this as a transactional approach whereby power is retained by the top-level management and flows downwards through the organisation. Many of the interviewees expressed a desire for their involvement in strategic planning to be increased. Significantly, the lack of involvement in strategy and the reduction of curriculum management duties to deliver and improve data further reinforced the theme of reductivism and subsequently leaderism. Despite the organisations strategic objectives, the importance of constant improvement, adherence to targets and the focus of preparing learners

for work dominated the responses given. Dennis (2016) describes this reductive context for education as being driven by “negotiable strategic indulgences” (Dennis, 2016, p.116).

Localised meanings and discourse

Central to my argument is that the above themes can be understood through the lens of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). Foucault (2002) describes discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 2002, p.49). He also states that discourses act as bodies of knowledge or “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 2002, p.132), Foucault (1976) further argues that truth is “produced by virtue of multiple constraints and it induces regulated effects of power” (Foucault, 1976, p.13). Misfud (2017) argues that this enables the understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge and these can be expressed through an interplay between varied discourses. In this research these are characterised by the interplay between varied themes and their link to the ideas of leaderism (O-Reilly & Reed, 2010). Evidently in hierarchical structures power plays a role between the managed and the managers, notions of power interact with concepts of leadership and thus play a role in understanding the context for the case study, as Foucault (1998) argues that power and knowledge are often in simultaneous existence when understood through discourse. Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) conceptualise two broad meanings of Foucauldian discourse, one that encompasses broad social and cultural meanings and one that refers to more localised meanings. Misfud (2017) argues that localised meanings encompass linguistic approaches, in this research I have interpreted the use of discourse using linguistic approaches to outline the localised context for the case study. Misfud (2017) argues that this enables a fluid approach to the meaning of discourse so that themes and the generation of statements can be used interchangeably to accommodate the range of discourses under consideration for the interpretation of this research. Interpreting Foucault’s full meaning of discourse is indeed challenging as this has accrued meaning in the texts. Misfud (2017) argues that this broad linguistic approach can add meaning to the accrued understanding of discourse. Thus, enabling the use of a mixture of statements to develop understanding, in this case a discourse analysis was used that generated multiple statements and themes.

Foucault noted: Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (Misfud, 2017, p.41)

Misfud (2017) argues that such an approach to discourse analysis allows the researcher to identify the rules and structures that are interweaved into associated discourses, and in particular those from “utterances and texts” (Misfud, 2017, p.41).

Leadership and Foucault

Gillies (2013), Misfud (2017) and Olssen (2003) provide justification via the notion of Governmentality for the use of Foucauldian analysis when considering the discourse of leadership. Governmentality (Foucault, 2002) encompasses shaping the behaviours of others and highlights that institutions, such as FE colleges, have huge potential for change. Misfud (2017) argues that this implies that power is negotiable and that individuals all have their place in the hierarchy. In this research the concept of leaderism (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010) is analysed within a generally fixed middle management tier however, Misfud (2017) argues that the potential for change can be retained despite the retention of hierarchical structures. Furthermore, the conditions within the management structure, and the responses given by the curriculum managers shaped the discourse and the statements produced acknowledge the rules that delimit the sayable (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). The rules in this research are demonstrated by the themes constructed by the statements from the responses from the curriculum managers.

Foucault (2002) utilised the term government to characterise the “conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 2002, p.341). Misfud (2017) uses governmentality to describe the conduct of conduct as “encompassing forms of activity to affect the conduct of others, as well as the relation between self and self” (Misfud, 2017, p.39). Olssen (2003) goes further by suggesting that governmentality includes both political rationality, mentalities and discourse, in conjunction with the way that government is exercised. Misfud (2017) argues that Foucault, (2002) is preoccupied with the “art of government” (Foucault, 2002, p.201) when considering the complex nature of how one is governed, how this is done and by whom. Central to the argument that Foucault’s notion of governmentality can aid the conceptualisation of leadership in education is Gillies (2013) suggestion that by replacing the word ‘govern’ with ‘lead’ we can better understand the governments approach to leadership in education. Misfud (2017) further argues that the “government of leadership is focused on the shaping of others conduct” (Misfud, 2017, p.39). To further explain governmentality Misfud (2017) draws upon Foucault (2002):

According to Foucault, modern governmental rationality is simultaneously individualizing and totalizing in its attempt to explore what it is for an individual and for a number of

individuals to be governed. In his essay 'Governmentality' (2002a: 205), Foucault alludes to the 'multifarious' practices of government 'concerning many kinds of people', further describing how the art of government involves establishing a continuity in both an upwards and a downwards direction, learning to govern both oneself and others (Misfud, 2017, p.39)

Gillies (2013) argues by substituting the word 'lead' into the above quotation in place of 'govern' a link to concepts of leadership can be drawn, for example, distributed leadership (Harris 2004, Gronn 2000), attempts to provide a totalising or all-encompassing approach to how people are led whilst providing an idealistic view of how power flows through hierarchy in a place of education. Foucault (2002) problematises such idealistic concepts by acknowledging that complexities emerge when we consider how we are ruled, what methods are used and their ultimate purpose. Leadership, I have argued enables the complex conceptualities of such leadership ideals to be analysed, as its hybrid nature of language and management practice demonstrates the argument of Gordon cited in Faubion (2002), whereby Foucauldian approaches allow a practical way to assess the relationship between freedom and power. Furthermore, the contributing themes to the discourse of leadership in this research provide a view of the transactional realities, tools for negotiation and dissenting counter conducts (Misfud, 2017) to popular narratives of leadership. Gillies (2013) and Misfud (2017) argue that Foucauldian governmentality allows us to examine the rationality of leadership, its justification and the way it is commonly understood. Misfud (2017) further argues, leadership models, such as distributed leadership, also benefit from such an analysis using the governmentality perspective:

Foucault's concept of governmentality is a very useful analytical tool in my exploration of the leadership behaviour at college level as it facilitates the study of how leadership is justified, and how its exercise is to be understood. It allows me to explore the extent to which the leaders' behaviour is shaped by FACTS and the Principal's discourse. At the individual level, it allows for the study of how leaders make sense of and rationalise their own behaviour: what they understand of distributed leadership, and how their behaviour consequently affects others (Misfud, 2017, p.41).

Governmentality enables a theoretical framework to justify the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis in this research. The five-step approach to discourse analysis (Kendall & Wickham, 1999) produced themes, statements, and a series of broad rules to understand the context and the descriptions given about leadership. Gordon cited in Faubion (2002) supports this by suggesting that governmentality generates critique. Moreover Fort (2015) further justifies the use of Foucauldian analytical tools by arguing that much work has been published that uses such approaches, whilst

Blacker (1998) further argues that Foucault is “tailor made” (Blacker 1998, cited in Ball, 2013, p.142) for research in contemporary education institutions.

Addressing the research questions

1. What practices do curriculum managers in further education identify with to enact leadership in a case study college in the North-West of England?

Throughout this research there is clear evidence that the curriculum managers identified with ideas of participatory leadership. This was a preferred approach to managing staff from the sample. Evidence suggested that this approach to leadership was deemed as democratic and required an assessment of the teams and individuals and the managers intended to motivate their teams. Despite this, very little evidence supported such democratic methods and much of the practice was simplified into the setting of realistic targets. The most detail given to describe management was regarding performance management through observation, accountability for success and targets, and general compliance. Vivid descriptions of managing out were also given and a strong suggestion that monitoring and compliance was unfairly received by front line teaching staff as opposed to middle managers. Overall, these practices were much more strongly linked to those of managerialism than popular narratives of leadership. This supported the notion that leadership ideals appear as a framework to support strong managerialist action and pseudo compliance. I have further argued that reductivism and ethical corrosion supported this discourse and, in some cases, caused an ethical tension between target-based compliance and the practice of teaching. Students and teaching were fleetingly referenced however, reductive data driven practices were overwhelmingly accepted as being normal from the sample.

2. How do curriculum managers recognise their position and identity in relation to teaching and managing, and how is this shaped by the current context for further education?

Universally the data driven management identity dominated the position of the sample. Six of the interviewees were teaching managers and none of them willingly discussed their teaching. Very little difference between the respondents could be found when discussing their roles in the college and all prioritised their management duties. Student experience was mentioned once, and teaching and learning was only referenced in association with measurable outcomes. Significantly, teaching and learning only appeared prominently during the discussions on performance management and, in one case, a manager commented on the fact that their teaching had suffered due to their management role. In accordance with the way that leadership and management is practiced, the strong managerial identity and associated tasks was universally accepted with little resistance, albeit with

sincere intentions to produce successful outcomes for the institution in all cases. Given the current neoliberal policy focus in the FE sector this is not entirely unexpected however, in this case the discourse described that draws upon reductivism, ethical corrosion and performativity has been widely accepted and become an embedded norm for this generation of middle managers. The majority of the responses were internally driven, through pressure on curriculum managers from senior leaders, and took place in a form of management silo. The sample described their accountability as being to senior management to satisfy their internal target driven agenda and had limited correlation to other departments in the college. The external drivers mentioned included OFSTED and the 16-19 study programme, however, this did not feature as strongly as internal pressures.

3. To what extent is leaderism a valuable lens to theorise current leadership practice in further education?

The strength of the validity of leaderism as a critical discourse to understand leadership and management has developed throughout this thesis. The literatures provide an historic journey through leadership that focuses on idealised improvement and as I have argued 'off the shelf' leadership practice. I have consistently argued that distributed leadership has been the dominant theoretical framework for much of the research undertaken on leadership and management in education since the early 2000's however, I have presented counter arguments that suggest that despite this all-encompassing approach, very little has changed in public sector management. My argument is that we are now in an era of leaderism and that this has been the case for the last twenty years. This has taken place as leadership ideals have become well embedded in education management culture at the same time as a magnifying and reductive context of target setting and funding driven corporate colleges. The use of a discourse analysis to investigate this is a valid approach, as it allows a flexible knowledge production, via the detailed critique of descriptive and material practices, to which validating a theoretical notion like leaderism becomes accessible. I am also mindful that I have set out to find evidence for the existence of leaderism. I have rhizomatically allowed themes to be identified that support this. In addition, much of this research, the use of Foucault and the wide acknowledgment of managerialism in FE has been previously critiqued. I have used this to provide a new perspective and argue that much of this has become embedded in the present day and furthermore it is an expected norm in the FE sector. I would further argue that the literatures and my personal journey towards the concepts used in this research were guided by my reading and my experiences of working in a FE college. Foucault (1970) reminds us that knowledge and the presentation of a problem in the human sciences predates the norms of industrialisation in

society. This presents the opportunity to apply philosophical principles to the economisation of contemporary practice, such as curriculum management in FE.

Beach (2003) states that validity is conflicted by locating validity in the “mechanisms that maintain the savagery of capitalism in education” (Beach, 2003, p.864), and the scope for valid education research to legitimize and support democratic change. In this research the savagery of capitalism has been widely acknowledged, the recognition of reductivism for example however, Beach (2003) argues that “researchers are not immune to the mediation of ideology within the social institutions they research but are part of them” (Beach, 2003, p.864). I am mindful that leaderism as a theory has the potential to be ideological, and therefore oversimplify a complex discourse, in that it can draw together groups of other ideological contributing factors, distributed leadership and managerialism for example. Furthermore, arguing for what comes next is problematised with such a broad ranging idealistic view. Beach (2003) further suggests that such problems are easier to identify than to describe or operationalise. I concur with this, and whilst there are elements of ideology in leaderism and its rationalisation of a range of complex discourses, this research presents a social situation with which there are a number of other resulting possibilities (Beach, 2003).

The case for Leaderism and recommendations for future research

Continued leadership ideas in education are persuasive and shows little sign of abating. This is due to an abundance of existing leadership research that attempts to rationalise leadership practice in education. In undertaking this research, I am mindful that the concept of leaderism is not about bringing reform, it is primarily concerned with what is currently happening, and is a way to understand reactionary behaviours and processes in the current context. Governmentality dominates modern policy rhetoric and has decreased the spaces to which managers are resisting and, as I have argued has resulted in gaming behaviours. The current generation of managers is passively compliant with a largely reductive view of a complex existence. Leaderism goes some way to enable us to understand this compliance, it embodies the persuasiveness required to gain followers, whilst maintaining and sustaining the control required to organise and divide labour. Contextually, the FE sector plays a significant role in the conditions for managers and the discourses that influences the understanding of leaderism outlined in this study. Self-interested institutions that are risk averse have been crafted through the historical changes and the increasingly reductive education philosophy. In addition, performance management is widely accepted as the norm for FE managers. O'Reilly & Reed (2010) argue that leaderism can be viewed as a metaphor, one that is

symbolised by experiences most commonly articulated through the use of language, although not exclusively. O'Reilly & Reed (2010) state:

Metaphors are repositories of potential meaning. In critical realist terms, they are potential generative mechanisms in the realm of meaning (or semiosis). Metaphors are one of the means by which the assumptions of particular discourses are conveyed and reproduced. While discourses are heavily imbued with a socio-historical texture, metaphors, although they are of course historically produced and employed, are not reducible to the context from which they were generated. (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.974)

In this research leaderism is a culmination of an intertwined set of metaphorical discourses that have been drawn rhizomatically from the interview data. This set of ideals and beliefs have been identified in other metaphorical narratives that exist in the context of education relating to policy and leadership.

For future further research in this field, I am recommending the following:

1. Further research into leaderism in other colleges using qualitative case study. Whilst generalisability is complex and often limited due to the self-contained elements of discourse analysis in such research, a degree of comparison can be undertaken between sites. Furthermore, research into groups of middle managers in FE is still underrepresented in comparison to schools, and there is currently very limited research utilising the concept of leaderism.
2. A new study with a revised approach to the use of the gatekeeper. This would influence how the sample is determined and have the capacity to increase the control of the researcher over the selection of the sample. For example, using a gatekeeper to provide contacts in the organisation and then the researcher contacting them directly based on the pre-agreed attributes, this was part of this research, however, an insistence on self-selection and control from the gatekeeper influenced the outcomes.
3. Expansion of the approach across other management tiers of the hierarchical structure of an organisation. For example, the targeting of senior managers or groups of teachers. These groups could both be interviewed and then the data from each compared to understand the discourse embedded across all management tiers. This would also provide a new concept for the continuation of this research and provide additional data to strengthen any argument.
4. FDA remains a valid approach to understanding the complex social existence of professionals within education. The five-step approach used in this research enabled a detailed narrative

to be formed that produced statements and illuminated the themes from the literatures. In addition, I am arguing that this approach is further enhanced by acknowledging that the themes produced are better understood as a series of rhizomes, and rhizomatic discourse analysis interplays organically within the process. I used this to acknowledge that the themes were roots metaphorically pulled from the data.

5. Further consideration needs to be given to how curriculum managers are defined. The concept of teaching and non-teaching managers is problematic as in this case a broader consideration was given to those that considered themselves as custodians of the curriculum via quality manager roles. These quality managers often occupy the same middle management space and share common attributes and goals to teaching managers. Evidence from this research suggests that teaching managers did not generally identify as teachers, they identified as managers.

I am arguing that the data in this research demonstrated the existence of leaderism above other forms of leadership. In returning to the metaphorical narratives of leaderism argued by O'Reilly & Reed (2010) I have been able to equate the themes for the Foucauldian discourse analysis.

"We outline leaderism as 'the belief that many core aspects of social life can and should be co-ordinated by one or more individuals who give direction and/or purpose to social activity conducted by themselves and others. This can be seen to be composed, or supported by, a series of framing metaphorical narratives:

- that in an endemic situation of competition, survival and progress require social co-ordination.
- social-cordination is best achieved through single or small groups of specially gifted and/or positioned individuals who lead.
- individuals that lead use particular moral, intellectual, interpersonal, conative, material, or politico-cultural, resources in order to achieve social co-ordination.
- such social co-ordination by those who lead places them in a pre-eminent role.
- to perform this role leaders must be empowered by giving them sufficient room to manoeuvre - the 'right', or authority, to lead (adapting Pollitt 1993, pp. 2–3).
- those who lead require effort and commitment from those being led.
- such social co-ordination leads to progress which benefits all those involved." (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010, p.964)

Addressing the themes from the framing metaphorical narratives of leaderism. I have argued that academic teams managed by a curriculum manager are subject to internal competition, and that curriculum management is often a survival of the fittest scenario, that curriculum managers are often ill prepared for. Regarding the aspect of leadership, I have also argued that leaderism

incorporates ideological distributed leadership that validates leadership practice using democracy to provide moral and interpersonal substance. Furthermore, leaders find themselves in a pre-eminent role via the retained notions of power, validated by managerialism, despite the higher moral purpose of a general desire to lead, and the privileged status given to leadership by curriculum managers. Leaderism preserves notions of power, this power is created via regimes of truth that operate as an accepted concept by closed off societies of small groups of professionals managed by a curriculum manager. Ideological notions of leaderism, serviced by fashionable distributed leadership exist to objectify how follower buy in is ascertained, and subsequently provides benefits that collective progression involves. Foucauldian discourse analysis has enabled the discourse of leaderism to be critiqued, and rules for its existence have been argued, “the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized: we must define in what conditions and in view of which analyses certain of them are legitimate” (Foucault, 2002, p.28). The data supports the legitimate existence of leaderism via the rules taken from the set of statements, set against the neoliberal policy framework for FE identified in this research. Furthermore, leaderism is a calculated rational activity supported by Foucauldian (2002) notions of governmentality.

To conclude, this research represents a new contribution in that it specifically examines the existence of leaderism in an FE institution. This concept has appeared in recent literature but not in a detailed study regarding a group of FE managers. Previous work exists in the FE sector and in schools, however much of this is functional in its approach, and as I have argued, either champions best practice in leadership or discredits such leadership models for lacking social criticality. This research has provided a critique of a complex discourse that rejects functionality. In doing this, I have acknowledged limitations in the generalisability of the findings of this thesis and critiqued the use of discourse and potential tensions in validity however, this research does not hold an idealistic view that it will bring about reform but adds a new dimension to future possibilities for further research.

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