# How professional service managers in higher education understand leadership

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# How professional service managers in higher education understand leadership

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**Contents**


| Page | Topic |
|---|---|
| 0 | Title Page |
| 1 | Thanks and acknowledgements |
| 2 | Contents |
| 5 | List of Figures |
| 6 | List of tables |
| 6 | List of appendices |
| 7 | Abstract |
| 9 | Chapter 1: An introduction – why leadership remains important |
| | Preamble |
| 11 | 1.1 Why leadership remains important |
| 13 | 1.2 How can leadership be understood? |
| 17 | 1.3 Why is context relevant? |
| 20 | 1.4 Some contextual features of the field of higher education |
| 22 | 1.5 This study |
| 25 | Chapter 2: A review of the leadership literature |
| 27 | 2.1 Leadership etymology |
| 28 | 2.2 The development of leadership scholarship |
| 31 | 2.3 Leader-centred models of leadership |
| 33 | 2.4 De-centering the leader – followers |
| 35 | 2.5 De-centering the leader – leadership as relational, process and social construction |
| 36 | 2.6 Leadership in context |
| 39 | 2.7 Leadership process – persuasive communication, symbolism and care |
| 43 | 2.8 Leadership versus management |
| 44 | 2.9 Distributing leadership – analytical framework, empowerment and decision-making or democratic ideal |
| 53 | 2.10 Summary |
| 54 | Chapter 3: The higher education context – issues for leadership and management |
| 54 | 3.1 The changing state of higher education |
| 58 | 3.2 The drive towards mass higher education |
| 61 | 3.3 Managerialism versus collegiality |
| 64 | 3.4 Distinctive features of research-intensive universities |
| 69 | 3.5 Universities as administered or managed institutions |
| 74 | 3.6 Issues of identity |
| 80 | 3.7 Summary of the contextual implications for understanding leadership and management |
| 82 | Chapter 4 – Methodology |
| 82 | 4.1 General issues of ontology and epistemology |
| 86 | 4.2 Social ontology – structuration theories |
| 93 | 4.3 Research process, strategy and methods of data construction and analysis |
| 95 | 4.4 Research strategy |
| 97 | 4.5 Qualitative leadership research – support for and some difficulties |

| | |
|---|---|
| 100<br>104<br>109<br>110<br>114<br>117 | 4.6 The interview as data collection/construction method<br>4.7 Sampling<br>4.8 Ethics in qualitative research<br>4.9 Some approaches for analysing qualitative data<br>4.10 Thematic analysis<br>4.11 The conduct of the empirical study |
| 126<br><br>127<br>132<br>142<br>149<br>153<br>155<br>170<br>175<br>180<br>182<br>225<br>230 | Chapter 5 – Results<br><br>5.1 Key word analysis<br>5.1.1 Culture<br>5.1.2 Management<br>5.1.3 Structure<br>5.1.4 Role<br>5.1.5 Relationships<br>5.1.6 Interactions<br>5.1.7 Leadership<br>5.1.8 Summary<br>5.2 Stories/narrative analysis<br>5.3 Individual distinctiveness and difference<br>5.4 Responses to specific interview questions – challenges, perceptions of leadership effectiveness and leadership and management |
| 236<br><br>236<br>240<br>241<br>244<br>246<br>247<br>247<br>250<br><br>251<br>254 | Chapter 6 – Discussion<br><br>6.1 Understanding of context<br>6.2 Challenges<br>6.3 Understanding of role and relationships<br>6.4 Understanding of interactions and relationships<br>6.5 Understanding identity as managers of ‘professional services’<br>6.6 Understanding managerial identity as credibility through delivery<br>6.7 Understanding identity as a manager undertaking effective leadership<br>6.8 Understandings of the differences between leadership and management<br>6.9 Different managers, different understandings<br>6.10 Summary |
| 256<br><br><br>256<br>267<br>268<br>271 | Chapter 7 - Conclusions, contributions to knowledge, limitations of the study and areas for further research<br><br>7.1 Conclusions<br>7.2 Contributions to knowledge<br>7.3 Limitations of the study<br>7.4 Areas for further research |
| 273 | Reflexive review |
| 275<br><br>275<br>276<br>278<br>279<br>281 | Appendices<br><br>Appendix 1: Email to potential interviewees<br>Appendix 2: Schedule of interview questions<br>Appendix 3: Extract from the test analysis of the pilot interview<br>Appendix 4: Briefing note for interviewees<br>Appendix 5: Example concept map – interview responses summary, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | person D |
| 284 | Appendix 6: Key word analysis table |
| 286 | Appendix 7: Table of themes identified in the stories of the interviewees |
| 289 | Appendix 8: Table of quotes linked to the individual differences figure |
| 294 | Appendix 9: Summary of the interview responses to the questions around challenges |
| 299 | References |

**List of figures**


| Page | |
|---|---|
| 20 | 1: HESA- total expenditure of UK higher education institutions by type in 2010/2011 |
| 29 | 2: Historical development of leadership schools |
| 41 | 3: Summary model of a range of leadership interests and perspectives identified in the literature (author) |
| 57 | 4: A typology of HEI culture, adapted from McNay, 1995 |
| 85 | 5: Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory. Burrell and Morgan, 1979.p.22 |
| 94 | 6: The empirical research process (author) |
| 95 | 7: Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies, Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.25 |
| 96 | 8: The logic of four research strategies. Adapted from Blaikie, 2000, p.101 |
| 99 | 9: Traditional and alternative criteria for judging qualitative research quality and rigour. Adapted from Klenke, 2008.p.40 |
| 113 | 10: A comparison of the steps in three qualitative research methods |
| 131 | 11: A venn-style thematic diagram developed from the key word analysis (author) |
| 184 | 12: Links between the analysed stories of the interviewees |
| 224 | 13: The broad themes emerging from the analysis of stories |
| 228 | 14: One word or phrase expressing individual differences |
| 232 | 15: Possible relational chains between themes |
| 258 | 16: Elements of academic and professional service manager habitus |
| 262 | 17: Sources of capital supporting managerial leadership |
| 264 | 18 Self-limiting beliefs of some of the professional service managers |

**List of tables**


| Page | Table |
|---|---|
| 120 | 1: Job role and structural location of the twenty interviewees |
| 121 | 2a (and 2b): Biographical data tables for interviewees – universities A and B |
| 183 | 3: The number of stories from each interviewee selected for analysis: |
| 234 | 4: Perceptions of service effectiveness – leadership or management |


**List of appendices**


| Page | Appendix |
|---|---|
| 275 | 1 – Email to potential interviewees sent on my behalf in university B |
| 276 | 2– Schedule of interview questions |
| 278 | 3 –Extract from the test analysis of the pilot interview – December 2011 |
| 279 | 4– Briefing note for interviewees |
| 281 | 5 – Example concept map – interview question response summary – person D |
| 284 | 6 – Key word analysis table |
| 286 | 7 – Table of themes identified in the stories of interviewees |
| 289 | 8 – Table of quotes linked to the individuality diagram (Fig X) |
| 294 | 9 – A summary of interview responses to the questions around challenges |

## Abstract

Based on the idea of leadership as an intentional process of influence the research question for this study asks **how do professional service managers in higher education understand leadership**? This question is answered by investigating the understanding of leadership by twenty professional service managers operating in two research-intensive universities in the United Kingdom in 2012. The topic of leadership has been much researched and debated, however the leadership of professional service managers within the particular context and culture of higher education, where the primary focus is on academic activity and leadership, has been little considered. Therefore, given their supportive or even subordinate role, the way in which professional service managers believe they need to undertake the leadership of their own staff and influence academic and other colleagues within the organisation is important to providing a more comprehensive understanding of the processes of leadership within higher education.

In recent decades, academic research on leadership has expanded beyond a focus on the traits and competencies of individual leaders to considering leadership as a social process encompassing 'followers' within an organisational context in which 'leadership' may be distributed or variously configured. My study retains a focus on the understandings of leadership by professional service managers who, as knowledgeable agents, undertake leadership as a process of intentional influence on the basis of how they perceive the 'context' in which they operate. My research question is, "how do professional service (administrative) managers in higher education (institutions) understand leadership?" To address this question data constructed from semi-structured interviews is analysed thematically and interpreted using elements of the 'structuration theories' of Giddens and Bourdieu which seek to bridge the apparent divide between agentive and structural social theories and align with process/practice notions of leadership. From Bourdieu I particularly draw upon the idea of leaders acquiring and using a range of capitals or sources of 'power' to energise their leadership action and from Giddens I utilise the idea of leaders as knowledgeable agents who can go beyond 'practical consciousness' to formulate and enact leadership intentions.

My study reveals some of the dilemmas that professional service managers face and the intentional activities employed by them to achieve multi-directional influence amongst their direct reports/staff and other organisational members (own manager, academic colleagues, peers). The relevance of understanding the organisational

context in research-intensive higher education institutions is highlighted together with the potential constraints of leadership effectiveness imposed by the perceived identity of professional service staff and some of the self-limiting beliefs and perceptions of the managers themselves. Drawing upon a wide-ranging literature review and the findings from the empirical study, I propose a holistic model of *managerial leadership* consonant with a conceptualisation of leadership as a process of intentional influence and delineate ways in which the managers develop and draw upon various capitals including upon positional power.

Finally, I review some of the limitations of the study and propose a number of areas for future research which logically arise from the theoretical and empirical findings in this study; I also reflexively account for my potential influence and bias on the study as a whole and the challenges and personal learning and development that has arisen for me from its delivery.

## Chapter 1: An introduction – why the study of leadership remains important

### Preamble

This thesis re-visits the well-trodden path of leadership but in the particular context of research-intensive universities within the United Kingdom and focusing on the understanding of leadership by professional service rather than academic managers. Professional service managers make a significant contribution to the effective running of higher education institutions in support of the primary academic goals of delivering excellent teaching and research. The research was stimulated by three inter-related drivers:

- A personal interest in the punishment and plaudits meted out to leaders in the media
- A professional interest to enhance my knowledge of leadership in support of my work as a staff development advisor in a research-intensive university
- A professional interest in better understanding the development needs of a key client group, academics and academic managers, and, if successful through achieving a doctorate, enhancing my professional credibility with them

The thesis encapsulates one significant element of a twelve-year doctoral learning journey that commenced in October 2003, a journey that has been beset with a variety of personal and work challenges and pressures. Following helpful feedback and guidance the thesis has been tailored and structured to focus on and around an empirical study conducted in 2012 involving twenty middle-to-senior professional service managers in two research-intensive English universities.

My research interests evolved during the first nine years eventually focusing on the main research aim for this empirical study that of investigating the understanding of leadership by the twenty professional service managers. Given that a qualitative methodology was employed in which reflexivity is emphasised, I reflexively review my learning journey and explicate ways in which my work and life experience and philosophical assumptions have shaped this study at the end of thesis.

In this introductory chapter I will signpost some of the important issues that I will explore in more detail in my literature reviews, methodology and the empirical results, conclusion and discussion chapters. To aid the reader, the arrangement of chapters

in the thesis conforms to the standard pattern as set out in Philips and Pugh (2000), although other formats are conceivable for a qualitative research project of this type. Each chapter is subdivided into numbered sub-sections that address specific topics relevant to the broad theme for the chapter as a whole as detailed in the chapter title. This introductory chapter is comprised of the following sections:

1.1 Why leadership remains important
1.2 How can leadership be understood?
1.3 Why is 'context' relevant?
1.4 Some contextual features of the field of higher education
1.5 This study

## 1.1 Why leadership remains important

Whilst the nature of leadership and how effectively it operates in different circumstances remains open for debate the perceived importance of leadership is indisputable. The volume of published literature and comment attests to the perennial public fascination about 'leadership' arising from the pervasive belief that leadership (leaders) both good, and bad, can impact on the success of people, organisations and countries as well as the narrative inclination to tell stories about the achievements and failures of individuals. The extent to which leadership effectiveness is both political and perspectival is indicated in the responses to David Cameron's ultimate inability to mobilise support to block the appointment of Jean-Claude Junker as President of the European commission on June 27th, 2014 with the Deputy Leader of Labour's MEPs, saying that, "*This represents another EU humiliation for David Cameron, an abject failure of leadership.*" (1) and The Telegraph headlining that, "David Cameron is the only leader with the courage to take on Europe." (2).

The claims made for the importance of leadership are legion and are used to justify the sizeable financial rewards awarded to the 'very best leaders' as evidenced by the defence provided by Nicola Dandridge on 4.3.15 of the huge salaries given to UK Vice-Chancellors (3):

"*Nicola Dandridge, chief executive of Universities UK, said: "The salaries of university leaders in the UK are in line with those in competitor countries and comparable to similarly sized public and private organisations.*

*"Senior management pay needs to reflect what it takes to attract and retain the very best leaders to UK universities, in what is a global market for leadership talent."*

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| 1 | Eureporter online 2.41 28.6.14: http://www.eureporter.co/politics/2014/06/27/labour-meps-slam-camerons-eu-summit-performance/) |
| 2 | The Telegraph online 2.44, 28.6.14: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/10928211/David-Cameron-is-the-only-leader-with-the-courage-to-take-on-Europe.html/ |
| 3 | www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-31715020 |

The UK Government's commitment to effective leadership has led to the creation of several **organisations** devoted to leadership research and development:

1. The decision by the Government to set up the Council for Excellence in Leadership and Management (1999)
2. The creation of the Institute of Leadership and Management (combining the former Institute of Supervisory Management, ISM and National Examination Board for Supervisory Management, NEBSM) (2001)
3. The creation of the Leadership Development Commission by the two National Organisations for Local Government (2002)
4. The launch of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (2003)
5. The setting up of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (2004)

Within higher education in England, HEFCE has stimulated considerable leadership and management development activity such as the 'Rewarding and Developing Staff' initiative leading to, "*Sustained investment in the development of leaders and leadership teams…*" (Oakleigh Consulting, 2009, p.4) supported through the Leadership, Governance and Management Fund established in 2004, albeit with some bids demonstrating a lack of understanding concerning the purposes of the fund (Dowds, 2008) and, of course, through the activities of the Leadership Foundation (LF) for Higher Education (LFHE). A report by Blue Alumni (2010) shows significant progress in the sector: "*In 2000, 70% of HEIs provided little formal development of their leaders…now (a) 73% of HEIs have systematic leadership/ management development programmes in place.*" (p.1) and that, "*We have found substantial evidence that the LF has played a key role in bringing about these changes.*" (p.2)

Academia too displays a keen interest in leadership with comments frequently expressed in the literature (e.g. Bass, 1990) concerning the huge volume of leadership research that has been undertaken. Confidence in the study of leadership can be seen to wane and wax with Yukl (1989) reporting that, "*The field of leadership is presently in a state of ferment and confusion*," (p.253) whilst Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009), "*cannot imagine a more opportune time for the field of leadership studies.* "(p.423) Given the vast time and effort poured into studying leadership, why is it that so much work continues when some definitive findings might reasonably have been expected? Hunt and Dodge (2000) suggest a kind of academic amnesia that leads to 'Leadership déjà vu all over again' whilst Grint (2005) asserts that leadership is an 'essentially contested concept' subject to the changing fashions that have impacted on scholarship resulting in competing narratives about what leadership is (Grint, 2011). Alvesson and Wilmott (2012) see the situation as ironic, for whilst interest in leadership and being a leader is as strong as ever the space and

need for leaders in many modern organisations is, in their view, much reduced. Perhaps 'leadership' has become an institutionalized fashion (Perkmann and Spicer, 2008) with vested interests maintaining unnecessary research?

MacBeath (2003) likens leadership to an 'alphabet soup' in which multiple definitions of leadership lie broken like Humpty Dumpty. Arguably, the word 'leadership' is used promiscuously to mean several different things, for example talk of 'the leadership' often refers to senior organisational managers whilst talk about 'leadership style' often relates to the nature of the interpersonal relationships between a leader and other organisational members. References to an organisation needing 'more' or 'better leadership' can imply several things including concern over the direction of the organisation as a whole and related decision-making, concern about the actions of 'the leadership' (Chief Executive/head and their senior team) or about actions taken by members of the organisation (who are seen to be out of control in some way), or the expression of a view for greater visibility of the leader/senior management team or the demonstration of exemplary character. The obvious danger in the loose usage of the word 'leadership' is that of mutual misunderstanding as parties to the dialogue conceive of it in different ways.

I take the view that a significant problem for leadership scholarship is the general tendency to eschew a consistent and clear definition of leadership that is etymologically congruent with the word 'leader' (that is, one who undertakes leadership) and a tendency to be unclear about or conflate the different ways in which the word leadership can be used. I will expose some of the important elements that are both necessary and sufficient to inform a usable definition of leadership in my first literature review.

### 1.2 How can leadership be understood?

Etymologically, the sense of the word 'leader' implies one or more people who are 'followers'. To lead is to be in front or set the direction, therefore leadership logically involves an interaction between a leader or leaders and follower or followers that is oriented in some direction. Grint (2002) traces the etymological history of the word leadership to the Old German word 'Lidan' and it's equivalent in old English 'Lithan' meaning to show the way or guide and contrasts this with the derivation of the word management from the Latin Manus – hand, through the Italian 'maneggiare', meaning to control, for example, horses.

This terminological differentiation is congruent with the scholarly debates that have run from the 1970's concerning the difference between leadership and management (Kotter, 1990) and leaders and managers (Zaleznik, 1977; Bennis, 1990). The essential difference here is in the portrayed *nature of the relationship* with, on the one hand the leader being a source of knowledge or guidance that you utilise for your onward journey (a mentor or guide who has the power to assist you) and the manager being someone who controls you and guides by more hands-on means (and who through organisational position has power/authority over you). Rather than horses, organisational leadership is about people; how they are in the world of work and how they are influenced by the interactions and relationships with the people attempting leadership. However, management, typically associated with planning, organising, co-ordinating, controlling and monitoring (Fayol, in Pugh and Hickson, 1996) is also about people, and managers work with and through other people in order to discharge their obligations and with 'management' typically able to use formal authority and organisationally acceptable methods of control. In contrast, Kotter (1990) argues that management and leadership are *complementary systems of action* with the key difference being that management is about coping with the complexity or planning, organising and controlling current activity and leadership is about setting direction and aligning and motivating people to cope with change. Yet again, the activities of both management and leadership involve working with and influencing people in order to effect some current or future state of affairs.

Particular understandings of leadership are embedded in the definitions sometimes stated and at other times implied. Whilst there are a range of definitions of leadership, reflecting to some degree the type of power applied in the relationship (Hersey et al, 1979; Yukl, 1989; Hollander and Offerman, 1990), many definitions see leadership as a non-coercive process of influence between leader and followers individually (dyadic – Dansereau et al, 1975; Liden and Graen, 1980; Vecchio and Gobdel, 1984) or as a group (Zaccaro et al, 2001; Sivasubramaniam et al, 2002; Dionne et al, 2004; London et al, 2012) to achieve a mutually shared objective (Rost,1993). There are strong functionalist and apolitical overtones sounding with such definitions which assume that leadership must, by definition, use only certain sources of power (non-coercive) and not others and that the process of influence necessarily leads to a shared organisational vision or objective. Such definitions also polarise a difference between leadership and management as appointed managers have the organisationally endorsed right to use coercive power and sanctions if necessary. Good or effective leaders are seen to have a 'transformational' ability to

get everyone on board and mobilise commitment to achieve organisational goals that people presumably share (Bass and Avolio, 1993, Ross and Gray, 2006). It is little wonder that organisations strive to identity and recruit and/or develop people with such abilities as is evident from the resources dedicated to this task with Hayward and Voller of Ashridge Business School (2010) reporting a global spend of around £30 billion on leadership development..

Some scholars emphasise leadership as a process (Hosking, 1988: Knights and Wilmott, 1992; Parry, 1998) or practices (Spillane et al, 2004; Crevani et al, 2010) and highlight the need to go beyond a traditional emphasis on the characteristics, traits and behaviours of individual leaders. Drath et al (2008) propose a new ontology of leadership that moves from the triad notion of leader, followers and shared goals to take account of peer-like and collaborative leadership and offer a new triad of leadership *outcomes* – direction, alignment and commitment.

Grint (2005) suggests four different ways of understanding leadership as person, result, position and process. In terms of development, a person or leader-centric view of leadership would focus on developing the attributes and abilities of the leader, whereas viewing leadership as a process would extend efforts to developing various mechanisms and interactions, for example group, team, system and organisational development, through which leadership might be enacted to be effective. Grint's reference to position calls for consideration of the level in the managerial hierarchy at which a (formal) leader/manager is operating and reminds us of the association of organisational leadership (in terms of strategy formation, organisational culture, and symbolic/public representation) with senior managers/directors/executives. However, talent management strategies and senior leadership development might be seen as ways to ensure that the right *person* is appointed to the most influential positions in the organisation. Finally, Grint's notion of the results of leadership as being the determining factor as to whether it has occurred or not reminds us of the extent to which judgements of leadership results are attributive, subjective, normative, contextual and political suggesting an emphasis on developing techniques of persuasion, impression management and public relations in order to present a convincing picture/narrative of leadership effectiveness.

In an organisational setting leadership ('the leadership') is usually associated with formal (particularly senior) managerial posts (Grint - position) but it is fully possible for people in non-managerial roles to undertake 'informal leadership' (Pielstick, 2000; Pescosolido, 2001; Collinson, 2005) and initiate attempts to influence others towards

various ends. Some ideas of distributed (Woods, 2004) or shared leadership (Crevani et al, 2007) advocate a focus away from top-down leaders and emphasise cultures of democratic participation. However, in organisational entities including higher education institutions (HEIs), different rights and responsibilities linked to organisational position and role are legally recognised and potentially enforceable but enacted within particular organisational cultures and sub-cultures (Lomas, 1999; Becher and Trowler, 2001). For example, professional and administrative employees work within a clear line management structure and to defined terms and conditions of employment that recognise and support the formal role of manager. The literature suggests that academic staff value academic freedom (Altbach, 2001), expect a greater degree of autonomy to conduct their work and usually operate within flatter or matrix management structures both of which potentially diffuse the impact of formal management (Henkel, in Bleiklie and Henkel, 2005). Wariness around the term 'management' and caution about taking up the role of 'manager' are evident in debates concerning whether an academic who is involved in management is a 'manager academic' (Johnson, 2002; Winter, 2009) or an 'academic manager' with different professional identity implications being seen to arise from each epithet. Bolden et al (2012) identify academic management with formal organisational management processes but relate academic leadership to informal roles and activities.

In relation to the nature or style of the leadership or management employed a significant issue is the conceptualisation of the *role* of manager/leader in a given organisational context/culture. Whether the role is termed manager or leader, on behalf of the organisation, it has a responsibility (specified in the job description) for employees in the organisation who have a contractual relationship with the organisation. The formal, legal, employment contract that pertains between an organisation and its staff/workers confers a right and obligation on managers to manage and for employees to follow 'reasonable management instructions'. There also exists a psychological contract (Guest, 2004) that requires that the management (leadership) be conducted in a personally and contextually sensitive way if it is to be accepted (Meckler et al, 2003). There are particular difficulties in higher education institutions (HEIs) given the number of highly qualified staff who are employed on fixed-term contracts (Brown and Gold, 2007), with Barnes and O'Hara (1999) claiming that over 40% of academics are in this category with a consequent impact on commitment. It may be preferable interpersonally to *lead* (in the sense of light-touch control) people to discharge the formal contract but where they don't follow

then management (in the sense of enforcing compliance) may be felt to be necessary. The governance of organisations, including HEIs, necessitates some sort of regulation and management control though a guiding/persuasive interpersonal leadership style may be preferred to make this more engaging and palatable, especially within a collegial academic culture (Dearlove, 1995).

It is possible to act as a guide for others whilst working in a non-managerial role and this fact can be used to underpin the idea that management and leadership are different and that managers are not necessarily (good) leaders. ' Managerial leadership' (Yukl, 1989; Holmberg and Tyrstrup, 2010) is a term that could be used to differentiate leadership undertaken by managers from leadership undertaken by others, however some scholars interpret the term as implying unhelpful 'managerialism' (Coleman and Earley, 2005). Talk of '(new) Managerialism' as a discourse of resistance to an ideology of management associated with the reduction of academic autonomy, increasing institutional management and the rise of academic capitalism is particularly apparent in the higher education literature (Holmes, 1993; Dearlove, 1998; Deem, 1998; Deem, 2001 and Davies and Thomas, 2002) and there continues to be debate concerning the usage of the term 'manager' for academics (Blenkinsopp and Stalker, 2004; Deem, 2006; Winter, 2009). Whether management and managers are viewed as necessary and supportive or as intrusive and over-controlling can be inferred to vary according to political standpoint, and personal and professional values and perspective.

My study concerns the **understanding of *managers* who lead** operating in middle to senior roles within the higher education institution and therefore are able to draw upon managerial authority to support their leadership activity. It is clear from the literature that a variety of understandings and definitions of leadership are available, in fact Grint (2005) asserts that leadership is an essentially contested concept. My literature reviews firstly survey a broad range of leadership theory and then issues for higher education so as to generate a framework for understanding the leadership of professional service managers in a particular setting, that of research-intensive universities. In highlighting this fact I am suggesting that the context within which leadership takes place is significant to its understanding and enactment.

### 1.3 Why is 'context' relevant?

According to Tourish (2014), understanding leadership in context is critical and the context of particular interest to me as a learning and development professional employed within a Russell Group university is that of UK higher education,

specifically research-intensive universities. Antonakis et al (2004) note that, "*The context in which leadership is enacted has not received much attention*..." (p.60) therefore, given the level of public and scholarly interest in leadership, as well as the vast sums devoted to leadership development, leadership in context remains an area worthy of investigation. Bryman et al (1996) point out that study of context can illuminate differences in leadership processes and results, while Porter and Mclaughlin (2006) suggest that seven contextual components are worthy of study: - culture/climate, goals/purposes, people/composition, processes, state/condition, structure and time. Antonakis et al (2004) offer a more diverse list of factors that includes national culture, hierarchical leader level, organisational characteristics, leader and/or follower gender and leadership mediated by electronic means. Other contextual factors that might be explored include the stage/age of development of the organisation (Greiner, 1998), organisational change (Kotter, 1995) and conditions of crisis (e.g. Hunt et al, 1999). This list of contextual factors signals the dynamic organisational complexity within which a leadership process is enacted and the related difficulty in judging how 'effective' a particular leader has been.

The notion of 'context' is problematic as it can be taken to mean a fixed or bounded setting within which the organisational action takes place – a theatre stage set for the performance by the individual leader and his/her 'followers'. This 'realist' notion of context can be regarded as solidifying, reifying or objectifying a state of affairs which is in the dynamic process of continuous change, negotiation and social construction between the organisational members themselves. The understanding of context can therefore be linked to broader philosophical developments in the field of social science. Delanty and Strydom (2003) summarise these developments in relation to four 'turns', the logical, the linguistic, the historico-cultural (contextual) and the knowledge (cognitive or epistemological) turn. Each turn can be regarded both as a focus of interest and set of paradigms that it is important to be cognisant of when considering leadership given the varying perspectives linking leadership to leaders, the perceptions of followers and social processes and practices.

Context is a flexible notion that suggests a circumscribed boundary to a site under consideration or investigation and composed of a number of dynamic features, processes, practices, situations or states. In Bourdieu's structurally inclined theoretical scheme 'field' as a dynamic historic and relational social space takes the role of context interacting with capital and habitus (Thomson, 2008), whereas Giddens talks more fluidly of space-time locales, regionalisation, 'gatherings' and presence (1984). Schatzki (2005) helpfully defines context as, "*an arena or set of*

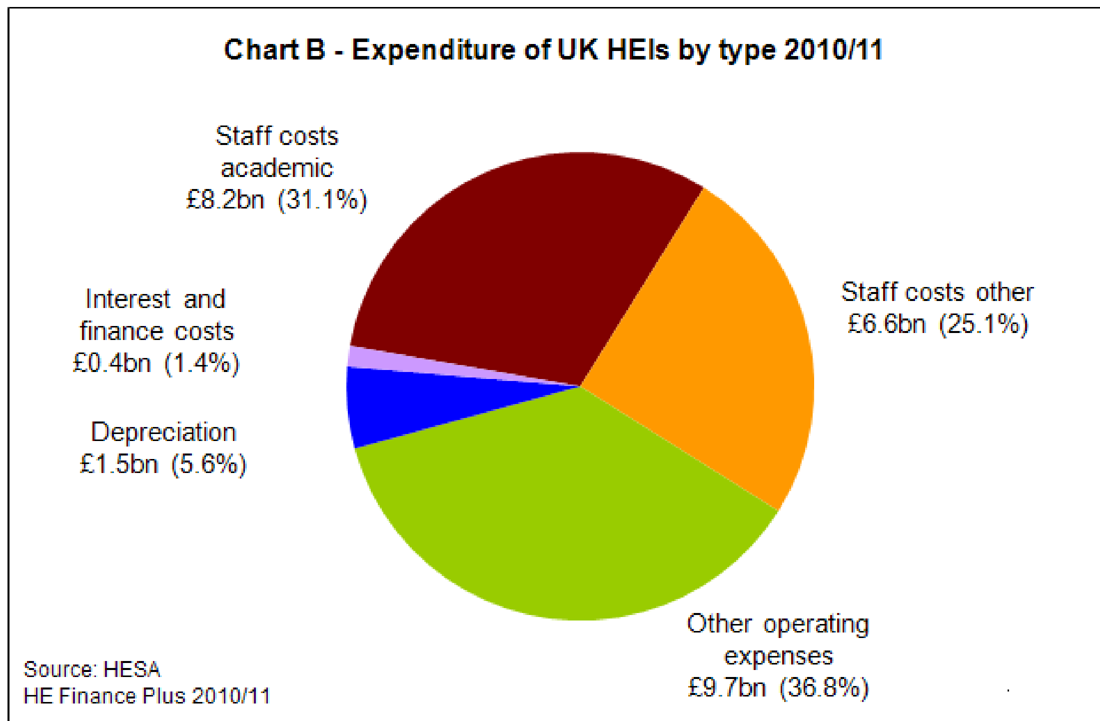
*phenomena that surrounds or* immerses something and enjoys special powers of determination with respect to it." (p.468) The analytical nature and scope of the context can be set differently depending upon the particular research objectives and in line with assumptions concerning the relative distinctiveness of particular settings, for example particular geographical regions, industrial sectors and historically situated cultures. In specifying a 'context' it is important to recognise that it is dynamic and will be subject to change and interactions with broader contexts.

In considering the interplay between the manager, their leadership and context I will draw on the structuration/practice theories of Bourdieu (1990 – field) and Giddens (1984 – locale/rules and resources), however as the focus of this study is on the *understanding of leadership by managers* the individual's context can be conceptualised as a sphere of awareness comprised of over-lapping and interacting factors such as the embodied experience and orientations (Bourdieu, 1977 – habitus) of each manager, their perceptions of significant work relationships/interactions and the challenges they encounter when undertaking their work in a UK research-intensive university setting. Beyond the changing individual perceptions and understandings of the manager is a dynamic socially constructed context that can analytically be considered as comprising local or close (team, school/department) and more distant (faculty/central) work settings, with the institution or organisation as a whole also existing within overlapping/intersecting contexts such as region, sector (higher education) and country.

### 1.4 Some contextual features of the field of higher education

The importance of the higher education sector within the UK can be evaluated in a number of ways including contribution to society, contributions to knowledge and, of course, contribution to the economy. Figure 1 (4) shows that the total income for UK HEIs in 2010/11 was £27.6billion with an equally impressive expenditure of £26.2 billion broken down as in the extracted pie chart below:

**Figure 1**: HESA- total expenditure of UK higher education institutions by type in 2010/2011




As the combined UK HEI staff costs amount to £14.8 billion, the ways and means by which leadership and management impact on staff effectiveness in higher education is obviously important. There is some evidence for the commonly held belief that leaders (Thomas, 1988), their self-efficacy (McCormick, 2001) and their leadership impact on organisational performance, although the contribution may be less than other environmental factors and subject to a time lag (Lieberson and O'Connor, 1972), and the impact of leadership style may be mediated by organisational culture (Ogbonna and Harris, 2000). Given that UK higher education institution's non-academic staff costs in 2010/2011 are recorded as being £6.6 billion then the leadership and management of the staff whose salaries comprise a major part of this cost is an important, and little considered, topic.

4 - March, 8, 2012: Press release 174- Finances of UK Higher Education Institutions 2010/11)

The UK higher education sector is comprised of a diverse range of 164 institutions having different histories, being of different sizes and offering a limited or more extensive range of courses and research activities. One differentiating factor amongst them is the range and impact of research undertaken this being a significant factor contributing to position in various league tables and the attraction of research funding. The Russell group (now having 24 institutional members) claims to represent, "*leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research*." (5) with the University of Manchester, for example, having a student community of over 38,000 and total staffing establishment of over 11,000. (6)

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) recognises two broad staff categories, academic and professional and support (HEFCE, 2012), with the number of employed professional and support staff now outweighing academics, although some scholars identify changes in the staffing roles and composition of UK HEIs and argue to extend the classification to include '3rd space professionals' (Whitchurch, 2008), or 'para-academics' (Macfarlane, 2011). Whitchurch and Gordon (2013) identify a number of issues impacting on UK higher education as a sector that require some kind of leadership and management response such as Government policy, market pressures and changing staff and student expectations. However, in this study I am particularly interested in how middle to senior professional service managers understand leadership and how they tackle the requirements of their role in the context of a *research-intensive university* operating in a changing UK higher education setting.

Jackson and Parry (2011) assert that, "*Context also affects why leadership is done and for what purposes.*" (p.68 ) Owing to the nature of their work role and contribution the functional purposes of professional service managers are oriented differently than that of academic managers/manager academics; for example whilst professional service managers are focused on the performance of organisational processes and effective utilisation of resources, academic managers are primarily concerned with organisational outputs in terms of student achievement and research performance, though professional service staff will be managed to support them in these aims.

5 - Russell group website – about us; 6.3.15. http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/about-russell-group/)

6- University of Manchester: Facts and Figures, 2014

Analytically, if we regard context as a boundary or field within which social processes and practices can be considered then the leadership of professional service managers can be seen to take place within over-lapping/intersecting contexts such the changing UK higher education as a whole, particular types of HEIs such as research-intensive universities and also within local organisational structures and sub-cultures. The sense that professional service managers make of these dynamic/intersecting contexts inevitably informs their understanding of leadership (Bloor and Dawson, 1994; Dulewicz and Higgs, 2005) and it is this understanding in a particular context (research-intensive university) at a given point in time (2012) that I investigate empirically in this study.

### 1.5 This study

This study contributes to knowledge in the under-researched area of professional service manager leadership within a research-intensive university environment (in the United Kingdom in 2012) from the perspective of such managers. Contextualising the study in this way signposts some of the ontological and epistemological issues that I believe are relevant to the study of leadership as an intentional process of influence (Yukl, 2002) in context (Osborn et al, 2002). Professional service staff comprise over half of the staff in UK higher education institutions (HEFCE, 2012, p.13) with the leadership by professional service managers potentially having a significant effect on organisational performance. My research question is:

**How do professional service (administrative) managers in higher education institutions understand leadership?**

The phrasing of the research question requires some explanation: professional service managers are frequently termed administrative managers primarily owing to the terminology of 'admin' or 'administration' being attached to roles that are 'non-academic'. A way in which these roles could be disaggregated would be to attach the title of professional service to those managers responsible for the delivery of some generic organisational function (HR, finance, IT) from administrative managers responsible for managing administrative staff generally supporting service delivery in faculty or schools, although Whitchurch (2008) suggests differentiating on the basis of academic credentials, institutional initiatives and quasi-academic functions. However, owing to the sample size and methodology applied here I have chosen to consider them as one heterogeneous group.

My perspective for understanding leadership is situated within an interpretivist/phenomenological paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Moran, 2000) in which human reality and understanding is subjective/intersubjective and socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 2009). Humans actively make sense (Weick,1995) of their lives and life world (Schutz – Gurwitsch, 1962) or situation, seeking to understand themselves existentially (who or what am I, what can I become – reflexively and relationally – Dreyfus, 2009) whilst also seeking to understand their situations operationally/performatively (how do I and how do I here) and their actions ethically (how should I) and their sensations emotionally and aesthetically (how do I feel, is this pleasing). Understanding is dynamic and projective (Heidegger - Cerbone, 2006) and always understanding of something in historical context (Gadamer, 2004) and, "*the meaning of a social fact must be seen in terms of the cognitive processes, definitions, tacit forms of understanding, and practical reasonings that are constitutive of it.*" (Delanty and Strydom, 2003, p. 87)

This stance sees the researcher as a craft worker and an active interpreter (Cunliffe, 2010) of reality but no less so are the engaged readers of the constructed text: "*What is to be interpreted in the text is a proposed world which I could inhabit and in which I could project my own innermost possibilities.*" (Ricoeur in Moran and Mooney, 2002, p.587) Therefore, arising from this position I propose that a significant value of the findings from research lies in their resonance with readers who, on the basis of their engagement with and reflection on the text, may develop their own understanding, rather than necessarily accept research findings as 'proof' however warranted – "*understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning.*" (Gadamer,2004. p.368). Thus engagement with the research process and the outcomes of research is not just an epistemological project but also a learning process and an ontological endeavour as it informs who or what I am and what I may become.

It is important to emphasise that this study is not about producing probabilistic knowledge claims generated from a statistically significant data sample that are generalizable to an ostensibly homogenous larger population. Rather, it presents my hermeneutic interpretation (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009) of the understanding of leadership by the targeted sample of twenty middle-to-senior professional service managers working in different roles in two research-intensive universities in the UK in 2012. The methodology employed and the findings/knowledge generated have merit from the perspective of certain commensurable philosophical positions and cannot

reasonably be defended against criticism that arises from within a different paradigm (Rorty, in Voparil and Bernstein, 2010).

My personal understanding of leadership is based on insights gained from ‘extended ethnographic participation’ (Rasche and Chia, 2009) including 12 years of work in a research-intensive HEI in the United Kingdom. I make this claim based on the special challenges associated with work in a HRD role that require continual and active reflection and sense-making concerning the organisation in order to be able to deliver the consultancy and learning interventions required. In addition I am able to draw on 46 years of experience of attempting to lead and influence people, 15 years of experience as a project and line manager as well as extensive and broad ranging reading of academic and practitioner literature that has helped to inform my practice as a manager, leader and HRD professional. This experience is inevitably limited, biased and prejudiced (Gadamer, 2004) but is informed by insights gained from positive and negative feedback on my actions, dialogue with others, engagement with ideas and reflexivity about these things.

## Chapter 2: A review of the leadership literature

### Preamble

The leadership literature is vast and the definitions of leadership contested. The review of the leadership literature presented in this chapter is aimed at outlining the theoretical landscape for leadership against which the understanding of leadership by my sample of professional service managers can be considered. Thus I commence with a broad overview of the leadership literatures so as to avoid prejudicing the results by selecting a theory or model early in the process. If I am to offer a narrative of the *understanding of leadership* I need to be able to define what 'leadership' is or is perceived to be, especially in the context in which the managers find themselves. Therefore, I begin by providing an overview of the development of leadership thinking and some themes of particular relevance to leadership by managers, for example the portrayed differences between leadership and management, and a leadership theory of particular interest in the educational literature – distributed leadership.

Leadership thinking has evolved beyond concern predominantly with the characteristics, attributes and behaviour of leaders (leader-centred or leader-centric) to encompass, the motivation and perceptions of 'followers' and the situation or organisational/cultural context within which the leadership process or practice takes place. However, the term 'leadership' is often used loosely and sometimes without a clear articulation of the definition or sense in which the term is being employed. Therefore, I test some of the conceptualisations of leadership using the logical philosophical principle of a definitional element being both necessary and sufficient (Baggini and Fosl, 2003). This exercise is designed to establish what core elements are required for a theoretically coherent definition of leadership against which the understandings of the professional service managers can be considered.

My underlying assumptions are that leadership as a process of influence does exist and that it is the intentional way in which the process occurs that differentiates it from other informal social processes. Intention implies one or more intenders and a sense of the directionality of influence, however within an organisational setting there are multiple intenders who might both seek to influence and in turn be influenced therefore leadership in context is in varying degrees both planned and emergent as well as centralised and distributed. This perspective aligns well with elements of the structuration and practice theories of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977).

This chapter is sub-divided into the following sections:

2.1 Leadership etymology

2.2 The development of leadership scholarship

2.3 Leader-centred models of leadership

2.4 De-centering the leader – followers

2.5 De-centreing the leader – leadership as relational, process and social construction

2.6 Leadership in context

*2.7* Leadership process - persuasive communication, symbolism and care

2.8 Leadership versus management

2.9 Distributing leadership – analytical framework, empowerment and decision-making or democratic ideal

2.10 Summary

## 2.1 Leadership etymology

The word leadership implies that it is an activity of some sort being undertaken by a leader with the Cambridge Dictionaries online (7) defining leadership in three ways relating to character, role or organisational position: 1) the set of characteristics that make a good leader, 2) the position or fact of being the leader, and 3) the person or people in charge of an organization.

Definition one is typical of the sense used in much traditional leadership literature and common usage of the term, with interpersonal leadership style (in former days, management style) an important aspect of how the leader's characteristics are manifested in behaviour and interactions with others. Definition two allows for a wide range of possibilities from leading (being in front) in a race or at the top of some league table to being the overt or covert leader of a gang or secretive organisation, but it leaves un-defined the process by which the fact of being leader occurs. Definition three, leadership in an organisational setting, has at times been termed 'headship' (Bresnen,1995) rather than leadership and is most often accomplished by senior managers or executives in senior management or leadership teams. The higher in the organisational hierarchy one sits potentially the more scope there is to impact on wider and more significant organisational decisions and therefore to be influential (Franklin, 1975; Bruch and Walter, 2007) and undertake organisational or strategic leadership (Boal and Hoojiberg, 2001; Vera and Crossan, 2004). A number of earlier leadership models focus on leader decision-making (Vroom and Jago, 1988; Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) but from the point of view of leadership/management style and consequent impact on, and reaction from, team members/direct reports in a group/team setting (Zaccaro et al, 2001). Leadership scholars can too easily conflate leadership as *interpersonal influence* with leadership as *decision-making* practice or managerial position/authority, especially when considering leadership by more senior organisational managers.

Therefore, being a 'leader' implies that he/she or they are persons to whom others defer, look up to or from whom they seek and/or receive direction or guidance. However, 'leadership' extends beyond the characteristics, role and position of a leader to the interactive and relational processes by which a leader leads – leadership requires people who are led, usually termed 'followers'.

7 - http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/leadership?q=leadership12.8.14

The analytic relationship of leader to follower is fixed (that is followers de facto follow a leader or leaders) but the actual relationship between people can change with a follower sometimes acting as leader, and one or more people jointly collaborating to give a lead. What is often over-looked is that in an organisational setting the directionality of formal leadership will vary from the point of view of position in a hierarchy with a mid-level manager acting as a leader to their team but acting as a follower in relation to their own line manager and as a leader or follower on particular issues or projects in relation to peers. Therefore, leadership as a process of influence is multi-directional and potentially complex given the dynamics of the interpersonal and inter-role relationships (Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Hosking, 1988; Knights and Wilmott, 1992; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Tourish, 2014)

**2.2 Development of leadership scholarship**

Given the plethora of leadership theories and research strands, periodically scholars take stock and bemoan (Yukl, 1989) or applaud (Avolio et al, 2009) the state of leadership research that they see at the time and there have been some recent attempts to integrate some of the various debated aspects of leadership (Chemers, 2000 – functional integration; Avolio 2007 – integrative theory building; Drath et al, 2008 - Integrative ontology; Kupers and Weibler, 2008 – inter-leadership; Fernandez et al, 2010 – integrated leadership and public sector performance). Arguably, theoretical fecundity around leadership is evidenced by the continuing volume of research, publication and debate but for practitioners it is the utility of knowledge generated that is of most interest with the pursuit of utility sometimes linked to fads and fashions (Birnbaum, 2000; Ogbonna and Harris, 2002; Miller et al, 2004) which in turn fuels the academic debate and stimulates further research and publications. Hunt and Dodge (2001) point out that there is a real danger that in the continual churn of leadership scholarship, academic amnesia may result in work of little additive value.

The historical development of leadership thinking and perspectives is frequently considered in the general management, organisational behaviour and leadership literature. Periodically summative reviews are conducted that summarise the state of the leadership field at that point in time (Chemers, 2000) and identify further areas for research (House and Aditya, 1997; Avolio et al, 2009); critique a particular leadership topic or theory (Bass, 1999 – transformational leadership; Brown and Trevino, 2006 – ethical leadership; Bolden, 2011 – distributed leadership; Gardner et al, 2011 – Authentic leadership); propose new theory (Antonakis and Atwater, 2002);

summarise and analyse contributions to a particular journal (Gardner et al, 2010 – The Leadership Quarterly; Bryman, 2011 – Leadership) and highlight research methodology (Bryman, 2004 – qualitative research) and perspectives (Yammarino et al, 2005 – levels of analysis). Given the vast range of contributions already available little point is served by re-visiting such reviews in detail here.

In the table below Antonakis, Ciancolo and Sternberg (2004) chart the typical categorisations and sequence of development of leadership thinking over the last 100 years:

**Figure 2**: Historical development of leadership schools (Antonakis et al, 2004)

What is interesting in the chart is the cumulative progression of the field (House and Aditya, 1997) with periodic renewed interest in particular themes/perspectives rather than their total replacement which suggests the possibility of returns to unfinished business for themes previously popular and that an integrated/holistic model of leadership must incorporate different aspects of leadership previously portrayed as paramount such as leader traits. What isn't clear in the chart is that the literature has expanded and diversified in tandem with broader philosophical debates concerning the nature of social reality (real or socially constructed), the manifestation or otherwise of social power (functional or critical) and the drivers for social action (agent or structure). The expansion of interest in leadership as a social process or practices rather than the leader as an individual is an example of this.

Antonakis (2011) defines traits as, "*individual characteristics that (a) are measurable, (b)vary across individuals, (c) exhibit temporal and situational stability, and (d) predict attitudes, decisions or behaviours and consequently outcomes*," (p.270) a definition that superficially is not dissimilar to Bourdieu's (1972) habitus (durable dispositions) which I will consider later. When we examine some of the traits we see that it is the enactment of the traits (and consequently the perceptions by people interacting with the trait holder/leader) that suggests effective leadership for example assertive, cooperative, dependable, dominant, energetic, persistent, self-confident, tolerant of stress (Yukl in Hersey and Blanchard, 1988, p.89) However, it has long been recognised that not all traits are necessarily positive ones and that possession of particular traits does not guarantee leadership success in all circumstances, (Vroom and Mann, 1960). Yukl's (2002) report of research by the Centre for Creative Leadership confirms that, "*Successful managers were very similar in some respects to the derailed managers…Every manager had both strengths and weaknesses…derailment often involved weak interpersonal skills*…" (p.182)

Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) note, "*Paradoxically, trait spotting is a contemporary perspective, and can be seen in many attempts to develop leadership 'competency models' (such as the transformational leadership behaviours…)*" (p. 657). One reason for this leader-centred (Jackson and Parry, 2011) interest in traits is the etymological connection already noted between leadership and leader that suggests that some focus on the leader within leadership is a logical necessity. However, a notable amount of recent leadership scholarship (arising after the publication of Antonakis et al's chart in 2004) seeks to de-centre the leader and adopts a social constructionist (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010) and/or critical (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012) perspective; focuses on leadership as relational (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Collinson, 2005) taking account of followers/'followership' (Reicher et al, 2005; Collinson, 2006), and with leadership viewed as a dialogical (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011) and discursive (Koivunen, 2007; Fairhurst, 2008) process (Tourish 2014). Drath et al (2008) propose a radical revision of leadership ontology away from the traditional tripod arrangement of leader, follower and common goal (Bennis, 2007) to that of direction, alignment and commitment, "*in which such activities as commanding and influencing are re-conceptualized as mutually constituted social achievements*…" (Drath et al, 2008:p.651) In de-individualising leadership there is a danger that unique qualities of the leadership process may be lost and the need for a theory of leadership obviated.

Definitions of leadership can only be framed on the basis of some implicit or explicit theory. To expose some of the variety, Yukl (2002) lists nine definitions and

observes that, "*most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization*." (p.2) I will now survey some of the literature in the field with Yukl's definition in mind and seek to test some of the theory to the extent that it encompasses aspects both necessary and sufficient (Baggini and Fosl, 2003) to such a definition.

**2.3 Leader-centred (or leader–focused) models of leadership**

Leader-centred leadership models, sometimes labelled 'great man' or heroic theories (Meindl et al, 1985), can be seen to develop from an initial focus on the embodied qualities of the leader (character/characteristics/traits), to prescribed behaviours or styles to be applied in all circumstances and to the behavioural style(s) adopted in particular circumstances, situations or contingencies and with individuals or followers having certain states of readiness or characteristics (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988). A change in interest away from the character and traits of the leader to leader behaviours was partly driven by scientific management interest in measuring and monitoring observable behaviour but was also underpinned by a human relations belief in the importance of people and a view that leadership could be learned not just biologically inherited (Brungardt, 1997), although Grey (2009) points out that this evolution was by no means as straight-forward as it is often portrayed. In the behavioural and situational management/leadership models (Ohio, Michigan, Likert, Blake and Mouton- Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) we find an implicit recognition of the importance of the interactions/relationship between the manager/leader and employees evidenced in the bi-variate models categorising the leaders focus on task and relationship/people. Models that incorporate degrees of involvement in decision-making (Lippitt and White, Fiedler, Tannenbaum and Schmidt, Hersey and Blanchard and Vroom and Jago –Huczynski and Buchanan, 2013) refer not only to the nature of the decisions to be made by the leader but to the kind of relationship between manager/leader and employees under different situations/contingencies, and the frequency with which the manager/leader relies on authority to impose decisions or enlists input and collaboration to agree decisions. Consistent preference for more or less authority can be considered a personality trait (Vroom and Mann, 1960) or habitual behaviour whereas the outcomes of the relationship in terms of perceived identity, trust and commitment (Brower et al, 2000) can be regarded as indicators of leadership effectiveness which arise out of the nature/style of the on-going interactions as perceived by 'followers'.

‘New leadership’ models (Bryman in Rickards, 2012) such as transformational and charismatic leadership are well researched leader-centred models examined in dozens of empirical studies conducted by the late 1990’s (Conger, 1999). There are several variants of transformational leadership with perhaps the best researched, differentiating transformational from transactional leadership, being that from Bass (Yukl, 1989) based on the work of Burns (Bass,1993) which evolved into the Full Range Leadership Theory (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership models focus on the leader’s relationship and interactions with followers (Bass - idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration) while House and Howell (1992) contend that charismatic leadership, “*emphasizes symbolic leader behaviour, visionary and inspirational ability, non-verbal communication, appeal to ideological values, intellectual stimulation of followers by the leader, and leader expectations for follower self-sacrifice and for performance beyond expectations.*” (p.82) Klein and House (1995) offer a situational/contingency version by arguing that charismatic leadership is a relationship involving, “*a leader who has charismatic qualities and those of his or her followers who are open to charisma, within a charisma-conducive environment.*” (p.183) In principle, both transformational and charismatic leadership can be used manipulatively by un-scrupulous leaders, a charge that Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) contest by differentiating ‘authentic’ from ‘pseudo’ transformational leadership. Yukl (1999) launches a broader assault on the conceptual weaknesses of both transformational and charismatic theories for over-emphasis on dyadic relationships and a number of conceptual ambiguities, for example how charismatic leadership is defined and how transformational leadership influence processes work.

The competency approach focuses on the leader and articulates skills, knowledge and behaviour in frameworks of assessable competencies of managerial utility in, for example, recruitment and selection, training course design and performance management. The focus on competencies has been criticised as a repeating refrain (Bolden and Gosling, 2006) that fails to recognise the complexities of leadership. Recent arguments in favour of emotional intelligence (EI) as a key (learnable) set of traits or competences for leaders (Goleman, 2000; Dulewicz and Higgs, 2003; Boyatzis, 2008; 2009), the leader’s mood (Goleman et al, 2001; Bono and Ilies, 2006; Johnson, 2009) and work to link EI to ideas of transformational leadership (Barling et al, 2000; Palmer et al, 2001; Gardner and Stough, 2002; Barbuto and Burbach, 2006) maintain the leader-centred perspective.  Whilst generally endorsed in the literature there are some dissenting voices who argue, for instance, that emotional intelligence

is not a valid concept as the construct is not an intelligence and is too vaguely defined to be useful (Locke, 2005) and that the way emotional intelligence is measured and the results used is questionable (Conte, 2005).

Where leadership scholars implicitly or explicitly accept individual agency then the existence of a leader (or perhaps a leader substitute – Kerr and Jermier, 1978 or virtual replacement or symbol (Boje and Rhodes, 2005)) in leadership as a process of intentional influence is logically necessary but not sufficient as the leadership process also entails those who are being influenced, the means by which the influence occurs and potential impact from the circumstances or changing context in which the influence takes place.

### 2.4 De-centreing the leader – followers

A body of scholarship has sought to de-centre the leader and emphasise the perceptions and contributions of, or the relation with, ‘followers’. Hollander (1992) amongst others (Meindl, 1985; Lord et al, 1999; Conger et al, 2000; Dvir et al, 2002) has argued that followers and ‘followership’ should be incorporated into any notion of leadership. Following Shamir (2007), Jackson and Parry (2011) list four perspectives on followers/followership – as recipients of leadership, as moderators of leadership, as substitutes for leadership and as constructors of leadership. The last category incorporates the attributional notion of leadership as ‘romance’ (Meindl et al 1985; Meindl, 1995; Shamir, 1992; Bresnen, 1995) and ideas of the formation of social identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Stets and Burke, 2000; Hogg, 2001; Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003) in considering the leader as a member of a group. Whilst the social process of identity formation may be a factor in perceptions of the leader and their effectiveness, adopting the logic of leadership as an intentional process initiated by a leader helps to avoid conflating it with other social processes.

To the extent that the leader purposefully manages social identity and group formation, then leadership can be regarded as taking place and where this doesn’t occur the leader may perceive the group as a potentially constraining contextual factor and act accordingly. The attributional quality of leadership (McElroy, 1982; Lord et al, 1984; Meindl et al 1985; Shamir, 1992; Martinko et al, 2007) is indisputably important as, logically, successful leadership is dependent upon a person (follower) being influenced. However, the perceptions by the leader of the reactions of those attempting to be influenced will form part of the decisional framework for subsequent influencing actions.

Should those being influenced deliberately manage their reactions with a view to influencing the leader then they are in fact undertaking leadership. So, although analytically leadership may be seen to emanate from a leader, influence in the on-going process of leadership is not necessarily uni-directional.

Spontaneous following may periodically pertain as an informal social process of 'attraction' (Hogg and Vaughn, 2002) but would be a constituent of leadership only when it arises from an intention to be seen to be attractive in order to influence and/or when the positive follower orientation is noticed by the leader and incorporated as a factor in a leadership bid. Knowledge sharing (Lee et al, 2010), perceptions of fairness (Pillai et al, 1999) and trust (Brower et al, 2000; Mollering, 2001; Burke et al, 2007) and the process of trust development (Khodyakov, 2007) are other factors in the leader-follower interactions or exchanges (Brower et al, 2000) and relationship in context (Burke et al, 2007) forming a component of the psychological contract between follower and leader and ultimately between follower and organisation (Robinson, 1996; Dirks et al, 2001).

In an hierarchical organisational setting talk of followers and followership tends to presume leadership by people higher in the hierarchy with more formal positional authority/power occasionally termed 'headship' (Kochan et al 1975; Bresnen, 1995) (but critiqued by, for example, Kerr and Jermier, 1978), which may fail to embrace different relationships in which intentional influence might take place (upwards, sideways) and interpersonal leadership in teams or groups and may ignore important issues of distance (Shamir, 1995; Antonakis and Atwater, 2002; Collinson, 2005) and multiple levels of analysis (Yammarino and Bass, 1990; Avolio and Bass, 1995; Oshagbemi and Gill, 2004; Chun et al, 2009).

Etymologically and in many leadership theories/models, leadership as a process of influence emanating from a leader requires followers, so not only do we need to consider the influencer (leader/leaders) but also the influenced ('followers', subordinates, team members, workers and also peers and hierarchical superiors and others). The inclusion of the perceptions of followers in the idea of leadership is necessary but not sufficient as there may also be a range of other situational or contextual factors that have a bearing on the operation of the leadership process at particular points in time.

## 2.5 De-centreing the leader – leadership as relational, process and 'social construction'

A broad stream of research categorised as 'leader member exchange' (LMX) focuses on the varying social interactions between leader and members, an issue incorporated in earlier model's such as Fiedler's (1966) contingency/least preferred co-worker model (Michaelsen, 1973). Graen and Uh-Bien (1995) map a four stage development of Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory initially focusing on leader-follower dyads and argue that it incorporates both leaders and followers but focuses on the relationship or social exchange process between the two whilst also taking account of exchanges at multi-levels, in effect taking account of context. Schriesheim et al (1999) see the development of LMX theory as much less clear cut differentiating LMX research into three streams of vertical dyad linkage (VDL), Leader Member Exchange (LMX) and Implicit Leadership (IL) theories while arguing for clearer theoretical definition, better measurement and consideration of multiple levels of analysis. Brower et al (2000) integrate trust as an important relational aspect of LMX theory whilst Hogg et al (2005) criticise LMX research that focuses on dyads and prefer to link LMX to social identity theory which treats leadership as an emergent group process rather than as an intentional process of influence.

Uhl-Bien (2006) proposes a relational leadership theory encompassing the 'social processes of leadership and organizing' that which differentiates from earlier approaches that incorporate relation-oriented behaviour (for example, LMX). The distinctive change she proposes is the adoption of a social constructionist stance that sees the social process of leadership as relational rather than as involving an 'entity'. A more radical relational construction of leadership is presented by Gemmill and Oakley (1992) who portray leadership as a reified and alienating myth the major function of which, "*is to preserve the existing social system and structure by attributing dysfunctions and difficulties within the system to the lack, or absence, of leadership.*" (p.118) More nuanced relational leadership is offered by Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) who argue for an everyday dialogic focus on leadership, echoing earlier calls from Nielsen (1990) in relation to ethics, Holman (2000) as skilled activity, and Beech (2008) and McKenna (2010) in respect of identity work.

Hosking (2011) also de-centres the leader by theorizing leadership as an organizing, "*relational process that is simultaneously social, cognitive and political.*" (p.456) This is a constitutive rather than a mediative view of leadership in which we see, "*leaders and leadership, science and scientists – indeed all identities and related forms of life-*

*as 'constituted' in relational processes.*" (p.458) This too is a social constructionist view of the *leadership process* that emerges from the interactions between leader and others and means that leadership can never be solely located in a leader but is always manifested by virtue of interactions with others. Drawing on a broad base of social constructionist literature, Carroll et al (2008) and Crevani et al (2010) argue for a focus on leadership practices with Crevani et al (2007) relating practices to interactions and identities although they don't articulate the version of practice theory on which they base their proposals.

More philosophically fine-tuned is Fairhurst and Grant's (2010) 'sailing guide' and Cunliffe's (2010) update of Morgan and Smircich's typology. Careful thought is required concerning the actual assumptions underpinning some of the most recent social constructionist leadership research to avoid the setting up of apparently incommensurable arguments, positions and dichotomies (Collinson, 2014) that arise from slightly different interpretations of what it means to be a 'social constructionist'. De-centreing the leader by adopting a social constructionist stance can relegate leadership to the status of a myth (Gemmill and Oakley, 1992) or fantasy (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006) or emphasise the nature of the relational process (Uhl-Bien, 2006) rather than entitative interaction (LMX theories). However, if we do cling to the notion that leadership exists as an interactional process involving knowledgeable agents then the roles of leader and follower remain necessary, as does the nature or style of the interaction or relationship process between them, but they may not be sufficient without consideration of the leadership process in context.

**2.6 Leadership in context**

Leaders, 'followers' (and others) and their relational interactions logically take place within 'contexts' and, in fact, can be perceived to constitute part of the context within which leadership as a process of intentional influence takes place. There is a long-standing recognition of the possibility of situational (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988; Graeff, 1983) and contingency factors (Fiedler, 1966; Yukl, 1971; Kerr et al, 1974; Ayman et al, 1995; House, 1996), in relation to the nature of the followers and their reactions to the leader/leader behaviour being operationally relevant to the process of leadership, although there is debate concerning the theoretical robustness of the models and the importance and operation of factors which they contain (for example, Fernandez and Vecchio, 1997; Graeff, 1997; Thompson and Vecchio, 2009 – situational leadership, and Ashour, 1973; Schriesheim et al, 1976; Tosi and Slocum, 1984 – contingency theory).

For ‘charismatic leadership’ Boas and Shamir (1999) identity a range of contextual issues that impact on leadership including crisis, organizational environment, organizational life-cycle, technology and tasks, structure and culture and mode of governance. Osborn et al (2002), “assume that volatility and complexity are keys to characterizing the context,” (p.802) whereas Liden and Antonakis (2009) point to national and organizational culture, team context and social networks, amongst others.

Over recent decades, interest in the context within which leadership takes place has grown, an early advocate being Pettigrew (1987), and with different scholars addressing contextual issues in relation to various leadership models (Conger and Kanungo, 1987 – charismatic; Pawar and Eastman, 1997 – transformational; Pillai and Meindl, 1998 – charisma; Cogliser and Schriesheim, 2000 – LMX; Antonakis et al, 2003 – full range leadership; Humphreys, 2005 – transformational and servant) as well as more general related factors (Dickson et al, 2003 – cross-cultural context; Liden and Antonakis, 2009 – psychological leadership research; Fairhurst, 2009 – discursive research; Hannah et al, 2009 – extreme contexts), and national culture (Dorfmann et al 1997 – Western and Asian countries; Shahin and Wright, 2004 – Eqyptian perspective; Aryee and Chen, 2006 – LMX in a Chinese context; Hale and Fields, 2007 servant leadership Ghana and the USA). Interest in context and the organisational distribution (Gronn, 2002) and application of leadership is relevant to scholarly concerns about multiple levels of analysis/management (Avolio and Bass, 1995; Waldman and Yammarino, 1999; Yammarino et al 2005) and leader distance (Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999; Antonakis and Atwater, 2002).

Discussion of context can be analytical, from the point of view of setting parameters for the scope of an investigation or discussion, but can also be ontological when perceived as enduring ‘real’ forces and structures that persist over time (dialectical materialism) or more flexible/fluid social constructions that form a life-world (Schutz in Gurwitsch, 1962), social field (Bourdieu, 1983) or site (Schatzki, 2003). Schatzki differentiates between individualist perspectives and societist ones with his ‘site ontology’, which is inherently contextual, and seeks to, “*forge a path between individualism and hitherto dominant societisms.*” (p.181). Endrissat and Arx (2013) argue that, “*the relationship between leadership and context is recursive: leadership is produced by, but also produces the context to which it refers*.” (p. 279) Interest in the impact that leaders have on organisations and their cultures is long-standing (Denison and Mishra, 1995; Schein, 1996; Yukl, 2002; Vera and Crossan, 2004), however the social constructionist standpoint more recently adopted by leadership

scholars casts this in a new dialectical and co-created light (Collinson, 2005; Fairhurst and Grant, 2010; Collinson 2014; Tourish, 2014).

An assumption embedded within many leadership models (for example, transformational leadership or aspects thereof, Bass, 1999 and Den Hartog et al, 1999) is that leadership, to a greater or lesser degree, is generic and therefore applicable across cultures and contexts with Hofstede's (1980) work, and the more recent GLOBE research (House et al, 2002), being significant studies aimed at examining this. The manufacturing dominance of Japanese companies in the 1980's stimulated considerable interest in issues of organisational culture (Pascale and Athos, 1981), 'excellence' (Peters and Waterman, 1982) and how this impacts on organisational performance. When considering leadership across cultures, within a given time frame, it is possible to consider some factors as changeable and others as prototypical with national culture, for example, as relatively fixed (Hofstede, 1984). Multi-national companies have long had to contend with some of the ramifications of operating across different geographical territories and cultures (Sullivan and Peterson, 1982; Goss et al, 1993). Globalisation and becoming meta-national (Doz et al, 2001), along with post-modern identity politics, are further leadership challenges placing a premium on learning (Bass, 2000; Vera and Crossan, 2004; Berson et al, 2006), sense-making and the management of meaning (Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Boyce, 1995; Lamertz, 2002) within dynamic and changing contexts.

To the extent that humans across the globe have a desire to be treated respectfully and personably then some common attributions of what 'followers' perceive to be effective/good/fair leaders may be expected, indeed Campbell (2006) insists that there are global and timeless leadership competencies such as empowerment, personal energy and multi-cultural awareness. On the other hand there are notable differences in purpose, values, culture, structure, systems, processes and politics in different organisations and countries (Wilkins, Ouchi, 1983; Hofstede, 1994; Schein, 1996; Deal and Kennedy, 2000; Ogbonna and Harris, 2000; House et al, 2002; Schein, 2010) that need to be understood, accounted for, and adapted to if the leadership process is to be effective/seen to be effective in context. In the diverse aspects of context we have yet another necessary but not sufficient in itself composite of factors that impact on leadership as we need to consider the nature of the interactions between leaders and followers in context.

## 2.7 Leadership process - persuasive communication, symbolism and care

Direct and mediated interactions between close and distant leaders and followers (space, emotion and time) are key elements in leadership as a process of influence. For physically dyadic and team relationships, face-to-face communications (Kirkman et al, 2004; Wilson et al, 2006; Purvanova and Bono, 2009), of varying frequencies and degrees of warmth, can take place whereas more distant relationships and strategically directed internal or external communications (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Zerfass and Huck, 2007) may be delivered through different channels/communication media (Hambley et al, 2007) including videos, blogs, mission statements, briefings and mediated via third parties (Hallahan et al, 2007). Symbolic practices and aesthetics (Hansen et al 2007), such as executive pay and special privileges such as protected car parking, office size and location along with corporate marketing materials and message generate perceptions/constructions of organisational identity (Howarth, 2011 in Hook, Ed; Lok and Wilmott, 2013) and values (Ciulla, 1999; Lord and Brown, 2001) supported by stories (Parry and Hansen, 2007) about leadership that are constructive of organisational culture – 'how things are done around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Leader actions and leadership practices that demonstrate care for employees, such as being available for discussion rather than always out at meetings, being prepared to listen rather than dictate and being sympathetic to requests for time off work to deal with personal issues are indicative of what organisational leaders individually and collectively value, and create perceptions of leadership style and organisational culture (Pillai et al, 1999; Schein, 2010). This caring relationship is suggested in a number of leadership models (Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006) but perhaps best aligns with ideas around servant leadership (Farling et al, 1999; Russell and Stone, 2002; Whetstone, 2002).

There is a clear differentiation in the general social science and leadership literature between the notion of language as communicative interaction between individuals (symbolic interactionist – Inglis and Thorpe, 2012) and language as constitutive of a socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Gergen, 1985; Searle, 1995) and constituted by discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1990; Fairclough, 2003). Following Alvesson and Karreman (2000), Fairhurst (2011) formulates two versions of discourse, small d and large D and she differentiates both from the more typical view of 'leadership psychologists' who, "*are enamoured with leadership actors' cognitive and affective orientations, while discursive approaches focus on the dynamics of their social interaction and Discursive socio-historical systems of thought focus on what leadership or management 'is' and how it is to be performed*." (p.498)

A key motivant for scholars to consider leadership discursively is the wish to de-centre the agency of the leader which Fairhurst (2011, in Bryman et al, Eds) describes as 'essentializing': "*To summarize, theories within leadership psychology tend to fix leadership in the person, the situation, or person-situation combinations. Discursive approaches to leadership research are less essentializing, preferring instead to focus on the situated and linguistic, cultural construction of leadership*." (p.499) This differentiation is only partially helpful as 'the situation' clearly involves other people and the relationships and interactions that the leader has with those other people and the linguistic and cultural environment in which a leader operates is also a 'situation'. The key difference is the extent to which the leader might be viewed to hold power and produce influence compared to the extent to which the leader is embedded in a power-laden discursive cultural context in which 'structures' and 'practices' constitute the leadership process rather than leader intentions and actions.

From the point of view of intentional influence, leadership techniques include rhetoric (Shamir, 1994; Den Hartog and Verburg, 1997; Emrich et al, 2001; Svedberg, 2004; Cuno, 2005; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005; Morrell, 2006; Bligh and Hess, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Sillince, 2007; Brown et al, 2012) persuasion and symbolism (Heracleous and Marshak, 2004; Boje and Rhodes, 2005) and impression management (Goffman, 1959; Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Bolino and Turnley, 2003; Shah and Mulla, 2013). Language can also be regarded as a vehicle for communicating/generating meaning (Smircich ad Morgan, 1982; Shamir, 2007; Clifton, 2012), sense-giving (Smerek, 2011; Sharma and Good, 2013) and sense-making (Watson, 1995; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Weick et al, 2005; Pye, 2005; Brown et al, 2008; Holt and Macpherson, 2010; Cunliffe and Coupland, 2011; MacLean et al, 2011). If language is regarded as socially constitutive then issues of power, control and identity (Hogg, 2001;Thomas and Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2008; Alvesson, 2010) arising from organisational discourses (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000; Fairhurst and Putnam, 2004; Ford, 2006; Prichard, 2006; Holmes et al, 2007; Koivunen, 2007; Kwon et al, 2009), institutionalisation (Biggart and Hamilton, 1987;Searle, 1995; Hensmans, 2003; Phillips et al, 2004; Battilana, 2006; Currie et al 2009; Sillince and Barker, 2012), and the possession and use of social capital (Coleman, 1998; Lin, 1999 and 2000; Burt, 2000; Battilana, 2006; Balkundi and Kilduff, 2006) come to the fore.

Whether we take language to be communicative and representational or constitutive and structural/contextual (or some mixture of the two – Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014) the methods/modes of interaction between leader and others are a necessary

but not sufficient aspect of leadership as an intentional process of influence. From the review so far a model can be constructed that encompasses the range of necessary and sufficient factors identified and is in keeping with Yukl's (2002) definition:

**Figure 3:** Summary model of a range of leadership interests and perspectives identified in the literature (author)

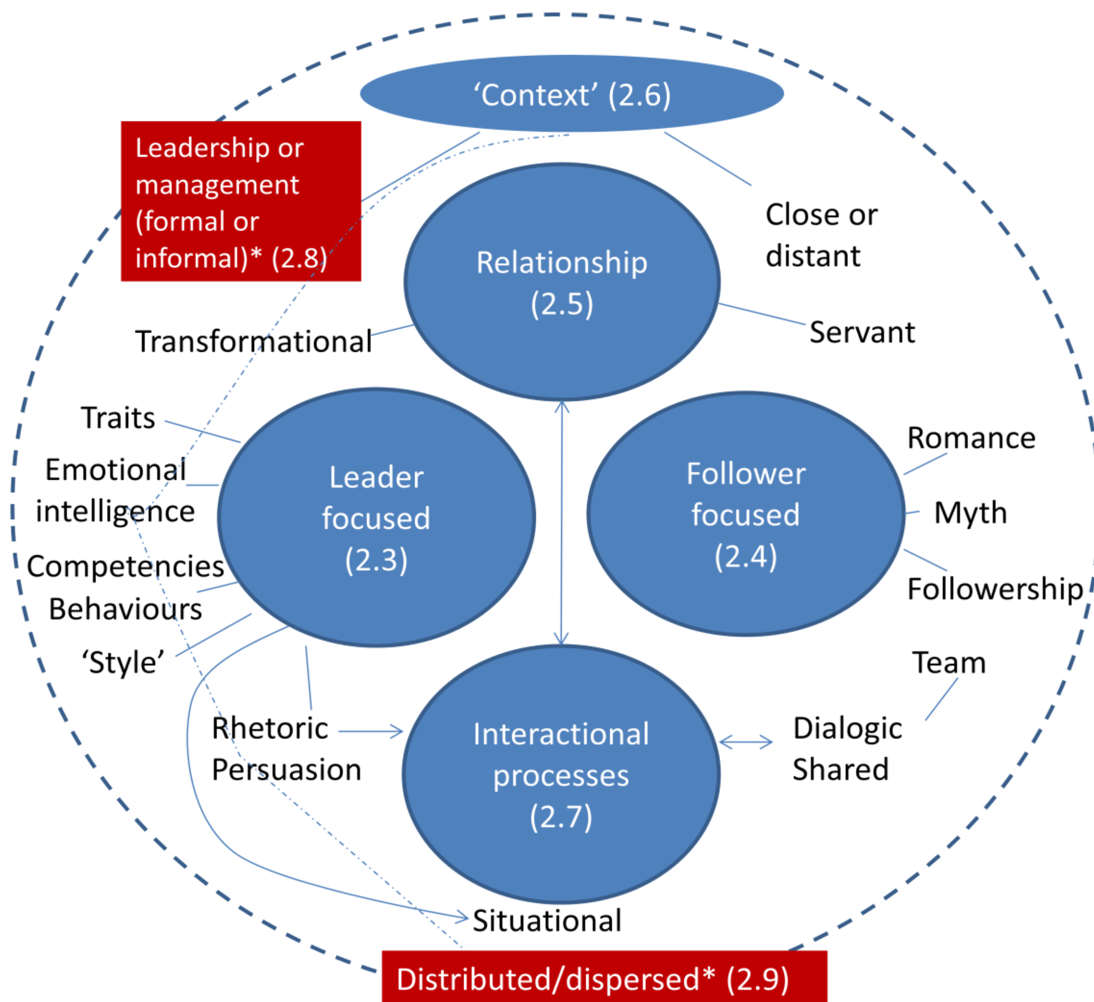



Figure three visually summarises many of the leadership interests and perspectives emerging from this review of the leadership literature. The traditional interest in the traits, behaviours, competencies, emotional intelligence and 'style' of the leader (leader-focused or leader-centred) was enhanced by interest in the perspectives of, interactions and relationship with followers, which in an organisational setting is most often the team of direct reports. Ideas around contingent or situational leadership although leader-focused are, in a sense, a bridge between the two concerns as they

recognise the need to take account of followers. The nature of the interactions between leader and followers informs perceptions of leader style and builds relationships of different kinds. ‘Close’ interpersonal (style, behaviour, some competencies) leadership between a given leader and their followers as a dyad or group can be contrasted with ‘distant’ organisational/strategic leadership that involves the setting up and utilisation of organisational structures and processes to underpin decisions taken and priorities (vision, mission, aims, objectives) decided. I will explore some of the debates around the differences between leadership and management and the nature of distributed or dispersed leadership in the next sections and I have included reference to them in Figure 3 as they are relevant to notions of context for a given leader and their followers. The more senior managers within the organisational hierarchy are clearly associated with the strategic leadership of the organisation as a whole, whereas leaders at all levels (even if not in formal management roles) can undertake leadership, with recent interest in how such leadership activity and processes might be distributed or configured.

The vocabulary chosen to describe these leadership processes and activities might emphasise psychological/cognitive or constructive elements (traits, behaviours, self-identity/efficacy) or socially constructed and recurring (social identity, structures, practices, routines, rituals) features. These complexities are often represented as dualisms prioritising the leader as an intentional agent or attempting to de-centre leadership from leader agency and emphasise emergent or distributed properties which, in the most extreme form, can portray leadership as a myth or fantasy. Critical issues of power as a relational property are more clearly depicted in recent leadership literature with more traditional discussion around power tending to treat it as a resource to be used instrumentally by leaders to implement change and achieve organisational objectives.

By reviewing the leadership literature in this way we can see that the apparently straightforward definition of leadership offered by Yukl (2002) masks considerable theoretical complexity and we can also see that consideration of leadership as an intentional process of influence encompasses perspectives that have often been seen to be incommensurable but which are necessarily complementary. If we accept that leadership exists we need to differentiate it from other organisational processes in such a way that research and discussion about leadership has meaning and potential utility. For managers, an important issue that may impact on both understanding and practice is the ostensive difference between leadership and management.

## 2.8 Leadership versus management

One of the popular, and often unhelpful, debates that have taken place over the last fifty years concerns the portrayed difference between leadership and management (Zaleznik, 1973; Bennis, 1989; Kotter, 1990). The debate has in part been fuelled by 'critical' concerns about power and 'managerialism', with managers and management being perceived as a mechanism of organisational control and representative of embedded power relations (Fulop and Linstead, 1999; Grey, 2009; Alvesson and Wilmott, 2012). Ironically, this aligns managerialist approaches aimed at increasing organisational performance by weeding out managers and management practices perceived to be too authority-based and transactional with more charismatic (Hunt, 1999), transformational (Bass, 1999), change-oriented (Kotter, 1995), participative (Vroom and Jago, 1988) and visionary approaches (Hunt et al, 1999) that lead to improved leadership/management of 'human resources'. The wording of Greenleaf's 'Servant leadership' implies service to others (Russell and Stone, 2002) and reinforces the idea of empowering rather than controlling team members/followers. Farling et al (1999) see that, "*Greenleaf's definition of servant leadership is very similar to Burn's definition of transformational leadership. Both Burns and Greenleaf focus on others in the leader-follower process*," (p.51) with Stone et al (2004) stating that, "*transformational leaders tend to focus more on organisational objectives while servant leaders focus more on the people who are followers*." (p. 349) Discourse concerning followers and followership within the literature has already been noted and when tied to ideas of changing power relationships and the way in which power/leadership is formally or analytically dispersed within an organisational context, it manifests itself as post-heroic 'shared leadership' (Crevani et al, 2007; Pearce et al, 2010) and 'distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2003; Lumby, 2013).

As previously noted, some definitions of leadership presume that followers must voluntarily agree to follow and/or that the objectives for the outcome of the leadership process are in some way agreed or mutual (Rost, 1995) or essentially moral or positive (Bass and Steidlemeier, 1999). This would automatically exclude from leadership relationships, processes and outcomes based on formal authority (management), coercion or threats (bullying or force and the use of some or all types of 'power') and subterfuge (manipulation or hypnotism). Other ideas of leadership (transformational – Bass, 1990) separate out relationships based on transactions in which willingness to follow is in some way dependent upon rewards or incentives (management, marketing). This is an important area for distinction that needs to be carefully examined when we are considering leadership of paid employees in

hierarchical organisations, for example UK higher education. The legally bounded and enforceable nature of paid employment constitutes a relationship in which managers, within legally regulated and socially acceptable parameters, have the right if necessary to insist that employees behave and perform in certain ways (Bell, 2001) or be subject to sanctions – in short, managers have the authority and 'right', and are expected, to manage. When considering leadership by managers it is important to acknowledge that positional power and formal authority are a constituent of, particularly line or hierarchical, relationships.

In a higher education setting the perception and actuality of being a manager may have different implications for professional service managers used to operating in a traditional line management relationship compared to academics temporarily managing their peers within a, more or less, collegial organisational structure, culture and processes that have an impact on how such management takes place. Scholarly attempts to explain leadership within an education (further and higher) setting have encompassed consideration of how leadership might be distributed (Bolden et al, 2009), blended (Collinson and Collinson, 2009), or hybrid-configured (Bolden and Petrov, 2014). The prominence of such discussions in relevant recent literature necessitates specific consideration here.

### 2.9 Distributing leadership – analytical framework, empowerment and decision-making or democratic ideal

The notion of distributed leadership has a particular affinity in educational circles as it resonates with humanistic intentions to develop students and also acts as a narrative of resistance against the centralisation of organisational management. I have therefore selected distributed leadership as the leadership model to focus on as a prelude to my consideration of the higher education context, however my review will be modest compared to the comprehensive one undertaken by Bolden (2011).

Distributed, or shared, leadership as a concept can be seen to arise from earlier human relations concerns around consideration for people, narratives of empowerment for its own sake, to facilitate decision-making and service delivery, or to increase the 'leadership' capacity within the organisation where leadership is seen as organisational asset perhaps linked to ideas of knowledge management and human capital.

More recent interest in distributed leadership arises from social constructionist and critical accounts of leadership such as relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006), in the

shift in focus away from individual leaders to the construction of leadership by 'followers' (Meindl, 1995) and critical leadership studies (Collinson, 2011) that challenge traditional assumptions about leadership and the relationship of dominance and control between leader and followers. Since the early 2000's the idea of 'distributed leadership' has become an increasingly considered concept, especially in educational circles, with Bush (2013) asserting that it, "*has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the 21st century.* " (p.543) However, Bolden (2011) suggests that, "*its popularity remains very much restricted to particular geographical and sector areas.*" (Bolden, 2011; p 256) In a detailed review of distributed leadership literature, Bolden (2011) charts the rising publication rates (from 1980 to 2009) of articles considering distributed, shared, collective, collaborative and emergent leadership and finds that whilst the vast majority of articles are published by US authors, distributed leadership (DL) is of much greater interest in the UK whilst shared leadership (SL) is more prevalent in the US and that, "68% of DL articles were published in education/educational management journals, compared with only 22% of SL articles." (p.255) The word 'distributed' suggests that 'leadership' is not located in one hierarchical level or structural location within an organisation or in one individual or one team.

The idea that 'leadership' is distributed is both obvious and problematic. It is obvious because whilst the *leadership of* organisations is associated primarily with senior managers/executives and boards formal *leadership in* organisations including team leadership, project leadership and people management/leadership (along with the vast array of people undertaking informal leadership from time to time) is necessarily distributed around the organisational locales formally depicted in the organisational structure diagram or chart. However, Harris (2008) differentiates between the *potential* for leadership and the extent to which, "*leadership is facilitated, orchestrated and supported.*" (p. 173) Some of the debate around distributed leadership goes beyond a functional view of leadership and assumes a critical stance calling for a democratic organisational ethos (Woods, 2004) in which the right to lead by one cadre or group is questioned. The concept is problematic when distributed leadership is portrayed as some new/improved form of leadership and when the type of 'distributed leadership' being considered is ill-defined thereby contributing to conceptual confusion. Alvesson and Spicer (2012) note the conceptual confusion associated with the word 'leadership' and assert that, "*the quest to find leadership that is distributed throughout the organization has only made matters worse. It means nearly anything and everything can be viewed as leadership.*" (p.369)

Northouse (2007) and Yukl (2002) mention distributed leadership not at all and Antonakis et al (2004) briefly mention it in relation to "*leadership as shared influence, and self-managing teams*" (pp.36-37). They do however, highlight a relatively early contribution to the debate from House and Aditya (1997) who consider distributed leadership in three forms – delegated leadership, co-leadership and collaborative leadership and ask, "*is distributed leadership more effective when it is consciously planned and formally implemented than when it emerges naturally and informally?*" (p.459). A dichotomy is evident here between the management notion that leadership can be formally structured and delegated and the idea that leadership is emergent from within a social group or organisation. Grint (2010) defines it as, "a form of collective leadership" (p.134) and in relation to two case studies (civil rights for Afro-Americans and Al-Qaida), Grint (2005) suggests that 'Distributive Leadership', "*can explain not just why democratic organizations are more successful but also the resilience of terrorist groups in the face of conventional democratic authorities.*" (p.4) Thus two further issues are brought to prominence, the first being the notion that democracy as a form of collective decision-making distributes the potential for leadership and regulates the process by which leadership is legitimised and the second highlighting the potential organisational benefits of decentralised cells/networks sharing a common ideology or vision in seeking to resist large scale 'democratic' forces and wage a campaign of terror against those with whom they disagree. Between House and Aditya (1997) and Grint (2005) we see two different foci on the distribution of leadership the first being technical/functional and the second also embracing critical concerns about power, process and legitimacy.

Rickards (2012) also sees distributed leadership as reframing the understanding of leadership, "*as a collective rather than an individual activity,*" (p.65) so rather than talk of distributed leadership perhaps Grint and Rickard's notion of collective leadership is more worthwhile? 'Collective leadership' implies mechanisms, processes or practices that facilitate organisational members working together to determine the direction of organisational travel and/or to achieve some goal, although as Denis, Lamothe and Langley (2001) indicate the collective leadership may be fragile. There are issues around how shared the goal is and whether it arises from some egalitarian process of decision-making (democratic) or through effective communication, persuasion and engagement from more vocal or powerful individuals (traditional person-centred leadership). Collective leadership in a higher education context could be taken to mean the process by which disparate staff groups, for

example academics and professional service staff or academics from different disciplinary areas and professional service (and 'third space') staff having different professional backgrounds, come together to agree and work towards organisational goals. Bolden et al (2008a) equate collective leadership with 'distributed' leadership and differentiate it from 'individual' leadership but suggest that universities need a 'blended' approach (Collinson and Collinson, 2009) involving both. Some notions of collective (distributed) leadership could open the leadership boundaries to encompass other stakeholders such as students, parents and wider society allowing dialogue amongst a wide range of voices to influence organisational values, goals and activities.

MacBeath (2003), in a school educational context, recognises the ambiguity and variety of meanings associated with the word 'leadership' and attempts to differentiate distributed/distributive leadership from other varieties with which it shares some connection or potential overlap such as dispersed, shared, invitational and collaborative leadership. Macbeath describes the terms in the following ways (my comments are in italics):

- Distributed –leadership roles are allocated by the most senior manager (head teacher) (*effectively the delegation of power/authority*)
- Distributive – the right for people to be involved in leadership is a cultural value or ethic (*a normative value about how organisations should be run – democratically*)
- Dispersion – leadership takes place in different points in the organisation, in a school setting therefore involving classroom teachers as well as in departments and senior teams (*widening participation in decision-making*)
- Shared – Either a cultural value of sharing leadership (and logically power) or as arising in and from collective action rather than from a single leader (*an ontological view that leadership emerges within and from collective action rather than an individual*)
- Invitational – sharing power and authority in a way which develops trust and respect (*a normative value about human relationships*)
- Collaborative – inter-agency work to achieve joint projects/create social capital building on the capacity and expertise that is beyond that of a single organisation or group (*a technical view that co-operation is an intrinsically beneficial aspect of inter-organisational activity*)

In these different but related terms again we see a differentiation between the planned delegation of power or extension of participation in decision-making as a management initiative (distributed/dispersed) and the sense that the right to participate in decision-making as trusted and respected organisational members (distributive and invitational) is part of the essence of leadership.

In addition, the notion of leadership as an emergent property of the collective action of groups rather than individuals (Rickards, 2012) is outlined.

Bennett et al's (2003) review of the distributed leadership literature for the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) uses what they consider to be the closely related keywords of delegated, democratic, dispersed and distributed to identify 80 sources for investigation and one of their conclusions has particular salience for my consideration of leadership in higher education: "*It is evident that the concept of distributed leadership has a variety of meanings, and that some of these meanings (explicitly or implicitly) resemble earlier notions such as collegiality. This prompts the question of whether there is a conception of distributed leadership which takes understanding of leadership further than a re-naming of previous ideas.*" (p.6) The issue of collegiality in higher education is explored in more detail elsewhere, however it is worth noting that Tapper and Palfreyman's (1998) examination of the concept of collegiality (arising from research at Oxford University) reveals tensions around the idea of "*collective government*" (p.145) under assault both from increasing centralisation of decision-making and the entrepreneurial activities of strong individuals: "*It raises questions about the intellectual integrity of departments, the role of academic leadership, the nature of academic hierarchy, and how resources should be distributed. Collegiality can be threatened as much by the market as by the state.*" (p.159) Whilst they refer to distributed resources rather than distributed leadership they address similar issues to those already identified especially in relation to the distribution of power through the organisational structure, academic values of shared decision-making and 'collective government' and the potential for strong individual leaders distributed across the organisation to seize the initiative.

Bennett et al (2003) go on to identify what they consider to be three distinctive elements of distributed leadership the first highlighting leadership as 'an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals'. (p.7) The extent to which this is distinctive of 'leadership' is questionable with considerable cross-over to issues of organisational culture (Schein, 2010), emergent strategy (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) and the nature of groups (in Hogg and Vaughn, 2002) with Bennett et al (2003) not being clear what they mean by leadership but possibly considering 'leadership' from the point of view of processes of decision-making, processes of influence or in terms of outcomes such as a sense of direction or ostensibly shared values. The second element that they suggest is distinctive is 'an openness of the boundaries of leadership' (p.7) and here their description implies they are considering leadership as the process of democratic decision-making which in an educational

setting would suggest an openness to contributions from teachers, students and perhaps parents and the wider community rather than restricting this to school managers/senior teachers/lecturers (Grint and MacBeath's 'distributive'). Their third element, "*entails the view that varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few*;" (p.7) this mundane observation is in keeping with a desire to embrace diversity and inclusiveness and build a "*mutually trusting and supportive culture*." (MacBeath's invitational and collaborative).

Woods (2004) (a co-author of Bennett's 2003 report) draws out what he sees as the distinctiveness and richness in educational institutions of democratic leadership in comparison with distributed leadership asserting that, "*Democratic leadership entails rights to meaningful participation and respect for and expectations toward everyone as ethical beings.*" (p. 4) Woods offers four inter-locking democratic rationalities that underpin democratic leadership these being, "*decisional (rights to participate and influence decision-making); discursive (possibilities for open dialogue); therapeutic (positive feelings from participation); and ethical (aspiration to truth)*." (p.5) Woods underlines the contrast he sees between democratic and distributed leadership emphasising the normative, oppositional and inherently autonomous nature of democratic leadership, as he sees it, in comparison with the analytical, neutral and instrumental/functional nature of distributed leadership. This differentiation resonates with the higher education debate concerning collegiality versus managerialism with 'distributed leadership' in this portrayal gravitating towards managerialism and the distribution of degrees of empowerment/leadership delegated and largely contained with the formal decision-making processes. Woods's (2004) idea of 'democratic leadership' aligns well with notions of collegiality and collective governance in which organisational members share rights to speak and meaningfully participate in organisational decision-making. Bligh et al (2006) prefer the term 'shared leadership' to describe a situation which emphasises horizontal/peer decision-making and influence (Macbeath's dispersed or shared) rather than top-down hierarchical decision-making/management: "*A prominent distinction between shared leadership and more traditional forms of leadership is that the influence processes involved may frequently include peer or lateral influence in addition to upward and downward hierarchical influence processes.*" (p.297) They see a driver for shared leadership as being the flattening of organisational hierarchies but, as already noted, a democratic values base and notions of academic collegiality can also underpin ideas of distributed leadership.

Mayrowetz (2008) makes sense of distributed leadership by identifying four principal meanings for the term, familiar to a large extent from the discussion so far, in scholarly work in the field of educational leadership:

- A theoretical lens for looking at the activity of leadership
- Distributed leadership for democracy
- Distributed leadership for efficiency and effectiveness
- Distributed leadership as human capacity building

Given the variety of meanings and definitional positions associated with the term 'distributed leadership', it seems reasonable to question whether it is worth using at all without first articulating the specific meaning we are applying in a given setting. In relation to the various terms associated with distributed/distributive leadership, Bolden (2011) contends that, "*providing a definitive definition would fail to capture the complexity and inherent paradoxes…within an inchoate field of study such as this*," (p.256). In support of this position Bolden cites Grint's (2005) assertion that leadership is an essentially contested concept and whilst given the nature of social science this may well be true, my view is that it is necessary to define your position clearly so that it may sensibly be contested. Bolden then goes on to align himself with Gronn's (2009) notion of 'hybrid configurations' of leadership. Gronn has been a key contributor to the debate around distributed leadership (along with for example Spillane et al, 2004), and at one time (Gronn, 2002) advocated distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. In his more recent work his thinking has evolved and he has now, "advanced an argument for configuration as the unit of leadership analysis."(Gronn, 2011, p.450) Bolden describes this as, "*moving beyond overly simplistic or aspirational views of DL which may help to shed light on the important balance between individual, collective and situational aspects of leadership practice and, importantly, when and why particular configurations are more effective and/or desirable than others.*" (p.264) Thus distributed leadership is portrayed as a modernised and emergent contingency theory in which particular arrangements of interactions between individuals, groups and situations (configurations) are more or less effective and/or desirable.

Returning specifically to UK higher education, Bolden et al's (2008b) empirical study is relevant finding a tendency for wide distribution of leadership and that, "*In all cases, a dynamic tension was experienced between the need for collegiality and managerialism, individual autonomy and collective engagement, leadership of the discipline and the institution, inclusivity and professionalization, and stability and change.*" (p.364) Using a five dimensional model (personal, social, structural,

contextual and developmental (time) as well as drawing upon Bourdieu's practice theory to structure the data analysis they conclude that leadership is widely distributed but, in fact 'hybrid' including both individualistic and collective approaches. We can thus view Bolden et al's (2008b) contribution as utilising the first of Mayrowetz's meanings for distributed leadership that is, a theoretical lens for looking at leadership activity, whilst calling for further research including, "*more in-depth ethnographic style investigations of power, politics and authority within and between universities*." (p.373)

Collinson and Collinson (2009) found similar tensions in their empirical study of Further Education Colleges determining that 'effective' leadership was 'blended' with respondents preferring, " *a consultative leadership style, they also valued leaders who were clear and decisive*." (p.369) For some scholars (Gronn, 2009, 2011; Collinson and Collinson, 2009) it seems that 'distributed leadership' has mutated into a blended, hybrid, configured theoretical lens that seeks to take account of the presence and impact of individual leaders and, "*holistic leadership units working in tandem,*" (Gronn, 2009, p.384) and, "*the inter-relatedness of leadership behaviours often assumed to be incompatible dichotomies*" (Collinson and Collinson, 2009, p.369). This genetic modification of 'distributed leadership' seems to be an attempt to reconcile conceptual difficulties that arise, at least in part, because a stable definition of leadership has not been adopted and because of a desire to de-centre leadership from formally appointed (senior) managers.

Lumby's (2013) criticism of distributed leadership goes beyond definitional concerns to political ones seeing distributed leadership as an insidious, "*theory and frequently prescribed practice which promotes a fantasy apolitical world in which more staff are supposedly empowered, have more control of their activity and have access to a wider range of possibilities*." (p.592) This echoes concerns noted earlier (Woods, 2004) but suggests that traditional power structures (in educational institutions) remain in force and democratic leadership, as envisaged by some scholars, remains a fantasy (much like leadership in general according to Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). Lumby's position perhaps helps us to understand the tensions identified in empirical research (Bolden et al, 2008b; Collinson and Collinson, 2009) in which the messy, political reality of organisational life fails to map easily onto particular leadership models (for example, distributed) requiring the invention of new terms (blended, hybrid) in an attempt to describe the situation.

Bolden (2011), agreeing with Youngs (2009) and Gordon (2010) does advocate a more critical perspective, "*which facilitates reflection on the purpose(s) and discursive mechanisms of leadership and an awareness of the dynamics of power and influence in shaping what happens within and outside organizations.*" (p. 263)

Scholarly discourse around distributed leadership (and its mutations) reflects current zeitgeist (Grint, 2011) and an academic focus on the relational, socially constructed, emergent elements of the leadership process rather than the leader him or herself. Distributed leadership can thus be employed as a theoretical lens (Mayrowetz, 2008) for 'leadership' (whether defined or not) and also as an argument for shared (devolved/delegated) decision-making (Bolden et al, 2009) and organisational democracy, especially within educational circles. A closely related argument within the higher educational literature is that advocating collegiality rather than managerialism, but the results from empirical studies reveal tensions in higher and further education including, for example, aspirations for a blend of both consultative and directive leadership (Collinson and Collinson, 2009) which necessarily undermine purist ideas of how 'leadership' (however defined) could or should be distributed.

In respect of higher education leadership in general, the leadership theory that seems most resonant with higher education, for structural and critical reasons, is distributed/hybrid/configured leadership (Bolden et al 2008; Bolden et al, 2009). Distributed leadership, when conceived of as shared or participative leadership, aligns with notions of collegial decision-making and dispersed, rather than centralised, decision-making. Research by Bolden et al (2012) highlights informal leadership roles and activities and interactions with the formal management/decision-making structure as hybrid configurations (Bolden, 2011). Organisational complexity, as a result of increasingly diverse functions, the balance between centralised and de-centralised functions and decision-making, parallel but intersecting line management structures for academics and administrative/professional support staff together with multiple matrix management arrangements, generates considerable challenges for professional service managers. In my view, this results in the need for a sound understanding of leadership and management in context and political sensitivity (Baddeley and James, 1987); patience regarding the speed of decision-making; tolerance of possible perceptions of subordinate status and the need to work in and through diverse formal and informal social networks.

### 2.10 Summary

The variety of understandings (models/theories) of leadership provided in the literature is extensive and potentially confusing. The evolution of leadership thinking has not led to previous ideas of leadership becoming extinct, rather as shown by Antonakis et al (2004) it has led to a diverse ecology of leadership scholarship in which models come in and out of prominence, perhaps as Grint (2011) suggests in relation to the zeitgeist of the time. Therefore, in considering how professional service managers in higher education understand leadership a significant question must be what kind of leadership (or perhaps management) is being understood. In this study I commence with two assumptions founded on the consideration of leadership literature outlined in this chapter: firstly, I accept that leadership as a process of intentional influence (Yukl, 2002) exists and secondly, I agree that the context (Liden and Antonakis, 2009) in which the intentional influence/leadership process takes place is potentially significant.

These assumptions are not without difficulty as not all scholars agree that leadership is an intentional process of influence, with some casting doubt on the nature of its existence at all (Gemmill and Oakley, 1992; Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). Philosophical challenges can be levelled at the idea of organisational context and its 'reality' in relation to the individually constructive and socially constructed mechanisms that give it meaning (Reed, 2006). Grint (2005) believes that leadership is an essentially contested concept, so pursuit of a definitive understanding of leadership may not be possible. Within the education sector talk of 'distributed leadership' has been noteworthy but, as already mentioned, this term can mean many different things and perhaps just makes understanding of leadership more difficult as Alvesson and Spicer (2012) suggest.

I will next consider the higher education context which, together with the review of leadership literature conducted in this chapter, provides a base for investigating the little considered area of the understanding of leadership by middle-to-senior professional service managers in higher education – specifically within two research-intensive universities in the United Kingdom in 2012.

## Chapter 3: The higher education context – issues for leadership and management

A practical understanding of leadership is necessarily contextual as it requires managers to consider how best to undertake leadership, not in the abstract, but in a particular site, situation or setting at a particular moment in time. *Understanding of leadership* is therefore the understanding of leadership *in context* and the challenge for professional service managers operating within UK higher education institutions is to understand how they must lead within their institution. In this section I set out a selection of important issues that constitute this changing setting. This chapter is divided into the following sections:

3.1 The changing state of higher education

3.2 The drive towards Mass Higher Education

3.3 Managerialism versus collegiality

3.4 Distinctive features of research-intensive universities

3.5 Universities as administered or managed institutions

3.6 Issues of identity

3.7 Summary of the contextual implications for understanding leadership and management

### 3.1 The changing state of higher education

The wider context and changes affecting higher education are well described in the literature covering such issues as new managerialism (for example, Deem, 1998), neo-liberalism (for example, Olssen, 2004), internationalisation (for example, Taylor, 2004) and/or globalisation (for example, Dale, 2005) and I do not intend to review them all in detail here. However, debates about managerialism/neo-liberalism are of direct relevance to conceptions of HEI purpose and culture and in turn the perceived role and contribution of professional service managers and staff and therefore warrant some attention in this study. Although ostensibly autonomous, UK universities are heavily influenced by different UK governments (Locke and Bennion, 2011) who have successively altered funding models and implemented direct or indirect control regimes such as the former Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

from 1986-2008 and it latest incarnation the Research Excellence Framework (REF); Teaching Quality Assessments conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA); through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) and Full Economic Costing (FEC) accounting methodologies and of course the HEFCE supported National Student Survey (commenced in 2005).

Just over a decade ago Scott (2001) portrayed the sector as in a state of both 'triumph and retreat', as some of the benefits of elite education (including a close relationship between teaching, research and scholarship) had been maintained whilst also moving to mass provision (with an age participation index of 33%, p.191). Scott observes a pluralistic sector made accountable by the proliferation of league tables, the emergence of vocal stakeholders and, "*The rise of consumerism, and the re-conceptualisation of higher education as a provider of 'academic services',*" (p199) a situation leading to the rise of the 'McUniversity' (Prichard and Wilmott, 1997). Thus institutional and academic autonomy is challenged by the need for compliance with a host of Government regulatory regimes, necessitating emphasis on the implementation of performance management processes (McCormack et al, 2013; Franco-Santos et al, 2012) and information systems which are largely delivered by an increasing, and increasingly diverse (Whitchurch and Gordon, 2011) body of professional, administrative, support service staff or 'third space' staff (Whitchurch, 2008).

Expansion of the number of universities combined with pressure to increase student numbers, and more recently widen participation (Jones and Thomas, 2005), has led to a fourfold growth in full-time student numbers with an increase from around 400,000 in 1970 to 1.6 million by 1997 (8), and a combined total of full and part-time students of 2,340,275 in 2012/2013 (9). Linked to internationally widespread ideologies of new public management (Bleiklie, 1998; Ferlie et al, 2008) and academic capitalism (Rhoades and Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter and Leslie, 2001), there have also been moves to stimulate increased entrepreneurial activity (Clark, 1998; Etzkowitz et al, 2000).

8 - http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/nr_017.htm

9 - https://www.hesa.ac.uk/

Government have sought to increase competition by increasing the burden of fees to individual students (and their families) with the hike in home under-graduate student fees to a current maximum of £9,000 per annum (10), while forcing universities to provide performance data in key information sets (KIS) (11) to stimulate applications for higher performing institutions, thereby increasing pressure across the sector to perform. In so doing students are re-cast more as consumers of an education service than as scholars and young citizens by emphasising the individual benefits that degrees can offer (Saunders, 2012).

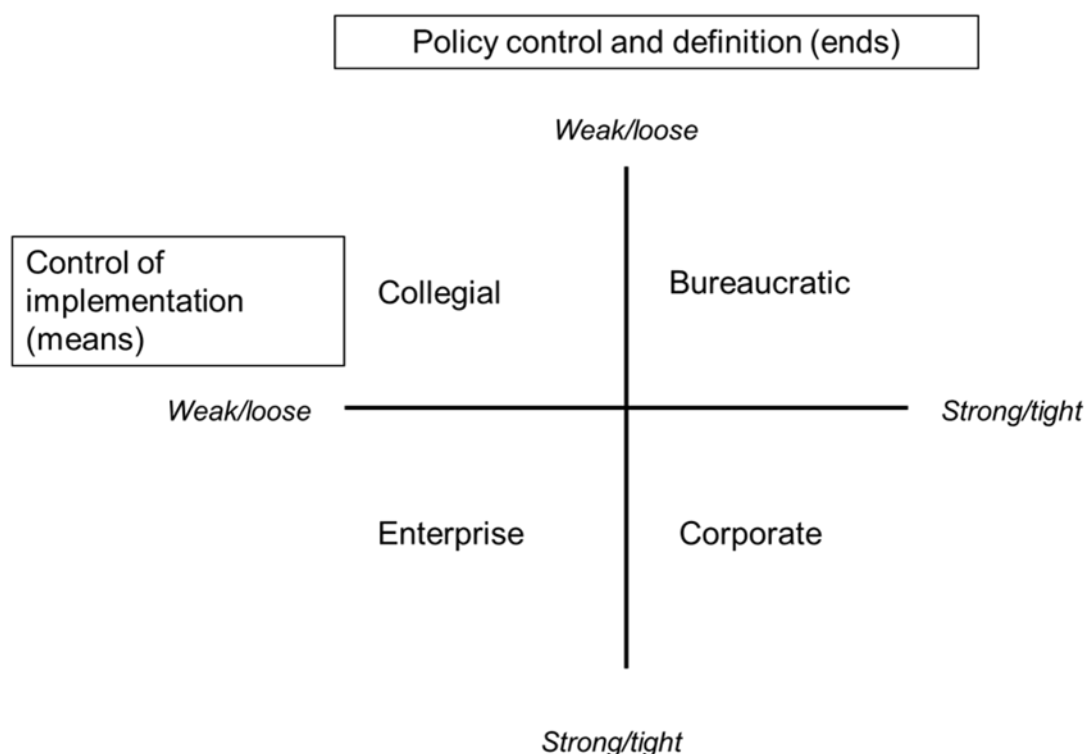
Other Government interventions have included changes to University Governance and management structures, for example those arising from the Jarratt Report-1985, the Dearing Report-1997 (Deem et al, 2007) and Lambert Review, 2003 (Buckland, 2004) which have contributed to debates around whether institutional power should be centralised or diffused (Shattock, 1999), the power and contribution of academics (Dearlove, 2002), as well as stimulating a range of structural, functional and cultural changes (Middlehurst, 2004) such as new developmental periphery functions. Summarising such issues for countries including the UK, Larsen et al (2009) identify four dilemmas for University governance:- representative democracy and organisational effectiveness, integrated or dual management structures, external and internal influence on decision-making and centralisation or decentralisation (or centralised decentralisation – Henkel, 1997). The way Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) respond to these dilemmas constitutes an emergent contextual challenge for both academic and professional service managers/leaders.

Pressure for changed Governance and increased management have impacted on HEIs in other ways including a drive to diversify funding sources and become more entrepreneurial (Clark, 1998; 2001). Henkel (2002) reports that, "*Institutions have almost all adopted management structures in line with the idea of the university as corporate enterprise, as against a collegium of academics or a professional bureaucracy.*" (p.139). A useful model setting out dual cultural characteristics of tightness of policy definition and tightness of the control of implementation with which universities may align or move towards is provided by McNay (1995):

10 - White Paper, June 2011 – Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System

11 - HEFCE, Unistats -http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/kis/

**Figure 4**: A typology of HEI culture, adapted from McNay, 1995




Mautner (2005) describes the changes in relation to the discourse of an entrepreneurial university as a corporate enterprise seeking commercial success within the marketplace. Entrepreneurialism is conceived of by Barnett (2005) in four forms – civic, hesitant, un-bridled and curtailed which represent strategic (soft/hard) choices for HEIs and their departments in relation to the degree of market control by the state. In contrast, Shattock (2008) sees the impact of the change from private to public governance between 1980 and 2006 (including the impact of new public management, Thatcherism and New Labour) not in market terms but in respect of a creeping bureaucratisation so that, "*The invisible, and perhaps the not so invisible, hand that guides policy will not be the market as some commentators fear but the hand of government and of centralised bureaucracy which regards the direction of higher education as part of a larger set of questions as to the affordability of public service provision.*" (p.200)

Scott (2002) describes two other phenomena impacting on the character of higher education – the change from modernity to post-modernity (linked to the rise of new public management) and changes in knowledge production leading to crises in professional authority and the dispersion away from universities of the capacity to undertake research leading to a situation for higher education that Scott describes as 'fascinatingly ambiguous'. (p.66) Scott (2005) also highlights the changing context

within which mass UK higher education is delivered seeing it in terms of markets rather than planned systems but arguing for 'soft diversity', "*in terms of more fluid structures, more flexible and adaptable institutional missions and (even) transgressive roles – for, example, between academic and administrative staff in higher education.*" (p. 73) The idea of a breakdown in the demarcation of work roles between academic and administrative/professional support staff is apparent in the work of Whitchurch (2008) – Third space professionals, and Macfarlane – para-academics (2011) with the possibility of related changes in staff identities.

In their review of the state of UK Higher Education (HE) in 2001, Warner and Palfreymen (Editors, 2001) list an eclectic 40 themes/key issues that had developed in the previous 25 years and which they predicted will influence UK higher education over the next 25 years such as 'massification', collegiality versus managerialism, research-intensive (elite) universities and universities as administered or managed institutions. I will focus on these issues as they reflect significant debates within the literature relevant to the HE organisational context, culture, leadership and management and also changes in the relative power, contribution and identity of academic and professional service leaders/managers and staff.

### 3.2 The drive towards Mass Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions can be said to demonstrate both longevity and resilience with some, for example Oxford and Cambridge, having existed continuously for over 800 years (Warner and Palfreyman, 2001). For much of this long history, Universities addressed the needs of the societal elite preparing the sons of the powerful and wealthy to assume roles befitting of their station in life (in the clergy, military, as rulers and in Government). Perkin (2007) points to the continuing contest within Europe between church and state as creating a space within which relatively autonomous and flexible academic institutions could develop and thrive. In Perkins's view, "*The history of higher education, therefore, is largely the history of the European University…*" (p.161) and he identifies five stages of development only the most recent one of which (elite to mass higher education, post 1945) I will consider aspects of here. Trow (2007) describes three forms of higher education – elite (up to 15% of the target population), Mass (between 16 and 50%) and Universal (over 50%) each carrying particular assumptions and having particular implications for students, institutional staff and the HEIs themselves. He notes the difficulty in accounting for the actual numbers of people exposed to higher education given the number of part-time and mature students as well as students who fail to complete a degree and

contends that, irrespective of the numbers, an orientation towards the values associated with elite education can still be found in institutions that are otherwise accommodating the needs of mass or even 'universal' higher education. Competing values about how HEIs should operate is an important issue to which I will return in relation to debates about managerialism and collegiality.

Mayhew et al (2004) identify two important periods of expansion in the 1960s, post the Robbins report, with an increase from 33 to 44 universities (some 'new' and some 'technological') and in the 1990's with the end of the binary divide of the former polytechnics and universities underpinning the rise of mass higher education in the UK. Linked to the expansion of universities and university places, Chowdury et al (2010) suggest that the participation rates of students aged between 17-30 between 1960 and 2000 showed an increase from 5% to around 35% which would accord with Trow's definition of 'mass' higher education, but this total figure masks the fact that participation rates are higher for students from a higher socio-economic background, with HEFCE (2014) reporting a difference of 30% on entry rates for 18 year olds. Drawing on data from UCAS, HEFCE report that in 2013, "the entry rate to UK universities and colleges for 18 year-olds living in England increased to 30.3 per cent – the highest level ever recorded." (p.9). Thus England remains significantly short of the 50%+ target that would constitute 'universal' higher education according to Trow.

The political desire to widen access to, and extend participation in, higher education can be seen as a driver towards the 'massification' of higher education and it can also be argued that the impetus is instrumental and directed towards generating the appropriate number of skilled people in the UK workforce in a post-industrial age (Mayhew et al, 2004) rather than a humanist mission for people to be better educated for their own sake. Scott (2002) too highlights the significant changes in size taking place between the publication of the Robbins -1963 and Dearing-1997 reports: "In 1963 there were just over 200,000 students, about 60 per cent of whom were studying in 25 universities. The average size of a university was just over 3000 students. Today there are almost two million students, 75 per cent of whom are studying in 93 universities – and the average size of a university is 16,000 students." (p.68). Increasing numbers of students and universities has implications for the organisation and management of universities and in relation to the expectations of outcomes by students, and by the Government as the most significant funder of the system.

Mayhew et al (2004) point out that one impact of the increase in student numbers (linked, of course, to Government policy) has been the gradual decline in the unit of resource, although this remains comparable with that of many other developed countries. The need to do more with less (resource) aligns with calls for better/stronger management and, along with the increased amount of work required to recruit and support growing numbers of students, increased numbers of administrative staff. Whilst the unit of resource may have declined the increasing size of the sector inevitably requires greater funding as a whole which has led to the imposition of control and inspection regimes by Government to better ascertain how the resources are being used. As Mayhew et al suggest this may indicate a lack of trust of the sector and/or as Lomas (2002) believes accord with demands for publicly funded organisations to be accountable for their outputs in terms of quality and value for money, both of which generate demands for greater organisational management and administration. Increased numbers of students and staff place greater demands on university facilities from student and staff accommodation to the number and size of lecture rooms, to the availability of car parking and social facilities all of which require administrative and managerial work. It is of no surprise then to realise that in 2010/2011 a greater number of professional and support staff ('administrative' staff) were employed in HEFCE funded HEIs than academic staff (151,655 compared to 122,750 – HEFCE, 2012, p.13).

The increased size of the student population has unavoidably impacted on the work, workload and professional identity of academic staff. Nixon (1996) draws a connection between the massive expansion of student numbers, the curriculum, teaching and assessment and changes in academic working conditions highlighting the conflicting pressure to operate as, "*a teacher, capable of developing and marking innovative programmes…*" and, "*as researcher, capable of attracting external funds within an increasingly competitive research culture*." (p.7) Nixon's depiction that, "*The academic workforce…now includes a plurality of occupational groups divided from one another by task, influence and seniority within the institution*," (p.8) could easily be applied to professional service/administrative staff, a point highlighted in a distinctive way by Whitchurch (2008). Within a research-intensive university the second aspect of academic identity, that of researcher (Locke and Bennion, 2011), is emphasised with the consequence that, "*career mobility, moreover, depends increasingly on the individual's reputation and influence outside their own institution*." (p.8) Herein lies a key difference between (some) academic staff and professional

support/administrative staff as the latter necessarily focus on the internal workings of the university and can make career progress within the institutional structure.

### 3.3 Managerialism versus collegiality

Two linked pressures – neo-liberalism/new public management leading to academic capitalism (Olssen and Peters, 2005) and Government pressures to reform Governance set out in the Dearing Committee -1997 and Lambert report - 2003 (Shattock, 2010), have impacted significantly on the staffing, activities and governance of UK HEIs and stimulated considerable debate around identities and a narrative of resistance against managerialism. A managerialist discourse presents hierarchical management and management processes as an ideology about the best way to govern, organise and run higher education institutions (HEIs) (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Deem et al (2007) define managerialism as, "a belief system that regards managing and management as being functionally and technically indispensable to the achievement of economic progress, technological development, and social order within any modern political economy," (p.6) whilst Trowler (2010), regards managerialism as an ideology of practices, "*oriented to efficiency and economy, market responsiveness and the control of employee behaviours towards these ends by managers.*" (p.198) Deem et al (2007) identify three phases of managerialism impacting on UK society and organisations – neo-corporatist in operation from the 1920s to 1970s; neo-liberal managerialism from the late 1970s and neo-technocratic managerialism from the late 1990's and the rule of the New Labour Government with these varieties of managerialism broadly relate to changes in the political consensus concerning the value of public service delivery and how public services should best be managed. Given the pervasiveness of managerialist beliefs, a challenge for both academic and professional service managers is whether and how they align themselves with this discourse.

Davies and Thomas (2002) find that, "*the culture of the university has become far more instrumental, individual and competitive, with the pressure to publish and generate income resulting in a self-protecting, self-serving, less collegiate and more 'divide and rule' atmosphere.*" (p.185) Chandler et al (2002) find examples of the application of a harsh management style leading to anxiety, stress and resistance to managerialism. However, Shattock (2003) (formerly a registrar at Warwick University) is much more comfortable with the idea of managing HEIs – "*In a competitive environment, management needs to be able to define success and ensure that performance is geared to achieving it.*" (p.3) But he cautions against, "*piecemeal*

*organisational change to solve one problem without reflecting on the wider implications and consequences for other aspects of organisation and management.*" (pp.73/74) and he also warns of the danger of focusing too much on individual targets and performance measures as, "*university performance needs to be viewed holistically*." (p.77)

Pitted against managerialism is the notion of collegiality with Clegg and McAuley (2005) positing that, "*The dominant framing in recent debates about management in higher education has been around the twin discourses of managerialism and collegiality.*" (p.19)

Ramsden (1998) is in Shattock's pro-management camp being suspicious of the calls for collegiality and its 'first cousins in the academic culture, autonomy and academic freedom' (p.23). Ramsden, and Dearlove (2002) in relation to speed of decision-making, sees collegiality as a disadvantage in the era of mass communication: "*It is a slow form of decision-making. It is intrinsically inward-looking. Its procedures are unwieldy. It exudes an air of protective self-interes*t."(p.23) Ramsden also links the dis-benefits of collegiality not only to their mismatch with the need for speedy decision-making and change in the more competitive modernised context but with the (somewhat stereotypical) inherent characteristics of academics: "*Academics tend towards criticism, scepticism, and sometimes destructive negativism. Collegiality allows these attitudes and behaviours free rein.*" (p.27) Indeed, Bolton (1996) asserts that, "*the natural state of academic groupings is individual and anarchic, such that requirements to take collective decisions, follow procedures and be assessed by external authorities (even by peers) is regarded with hostility*." (p.492)

However, 'Collegiality' is an ambiguous and multi-faceted term with Palfreyman (2001) proposing four different interpretations of what the term means including the physical location and interactions of academics; the democratic institutional rule of votes by academics; collegiality as college life within the various distinctive colleges and a related fourth one of purposeful organisational 'chunking' to facilitate colleges of a reasonable size to allow for enhanced social interaction/activities and appropriately sized tutorials. Offering a different view, Bryman (2007) notes that, "*the term is used in the literature in two distinct ways: sometimes it refers to a system of governance driven by consensual decision-making and on other occasions it refers to mutual supportiveness among staff.*" (p.702) Bryman's classification accords with the first two interpretations offered by Palfreyman but common use of the word 'college' refers to an institution of further or higher education so there is also a notion of a

collegial organisation as a *structural* feature of the institution in addition to collegiality as a *value* encompassing shared decision-making and mutual support.

Bryson (2004) relates declining collegiality to declining institutional commitment, which he also links to declining salaries, work intensification, casualization of employment and job insecurity and, of course, managerialism. Bryson's usage resonates with the second of Bryman's categories with collegiality being a supportive, communal value or identity. Watson (2000) regards some of the ideas of earlier university cultures of co-operation and collegiality as 'mythical' and with potential improvements to organisational culture arising from better management: " *First, while 'management' and 'managers' may sometimes be 'hard' it is naïve to call this pathology 'new'. It ignores a long line of baronial deans and heads of departments, as well as eccentric and ruthless heads of institutions. If anything, these individuals have been subject to new and timely discipline as a result of modern developments in governance and accountability*." (p. 8) Dearlove (2002) is equally critical of collegiality contending that academic collegial governance, "*is subversive of institutional leadership and is resentful of both lay and administrator involvement in the running of what are seen as 'their' universities*." (p.265)

More positively, Yokoyama (2006) sees collegiality as founded upon a value of academic trust between colleagues and locates the power of collegiality in the academic Department, and to some degree in the Senate, thereby linking collegiality as a value to its manifestation in both the organisation of work and decision-making. Kolsaker (2008) also relates collegiality to decision-making structures and suggests that, "Formal management models tend to be superimposed upon collegia, giving rise to complex, hybrid models of executive and committee systems." (p.515) The idea of hybridity has become more popular in relation to distributed or configurational leadership in higher education (Bolden et al, 2008b; Gronn, 2009; Bolden and Petrov, 2014) as well as roles (Whitchurch, 2008) and performance management approaches (Franco-Santos et al 2012).

Taking the middle ground, Middlehurst (1999) sees collegial relations as more nuanced and believes that, "there is nothing in the new realities facing higher education that would necessarily mean the end of collegial relationships," which she re-envisions as, "a broader set of loyalties and professional expectations, crossing traditional boundaries (that) may in future cross disciplinary boundaries, academic/administrative divides, country and sector boundaries." (p.323) This is an interesting attempt to dissolve the problem and is in keeping with a continued

academic focus on disciplinary activities which requires that people at least be aware of the work of fellow academics nationally and internationally which in some cases will mean active co-operation and joint research (an idea she further develops in relation to 'borderless education, Middlehurst – 2001; 2002).

The Governance and management pressures already noted can be seen as having tipped the balance in favour of managerialism, however, Allen (2003) suggests, along with Prichard and Wilmott (1997) that resistance is not necessarily futile and that collegiality yields positive benefits in relation to conflict reduction and the creation of a positive organizational climate.

As a whole the scholarly debates surrounding governance, managerialism and collegiality can be seen as a contest of values and beliefs concerning the power relationship between HEIs and Government and a reaction against externally imposed regimes that have led to increased internal management control (perceived as managerialism) over previously enjoyed academic autonomy (predominantly in pre-1992 institutions -Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998; Shattock, 2010). By virtue of the work they are required to do, professional service/administrative/support staff have to implement and control the management systems that are seen as managerialist by some academic staff. Therefore, in terms of leadership by professional service managers, resistance may be anticipated from academic managers in pre-1992/research-intensive universities who perceive professional services/administrative work as an imposition on their academic freedom and prefer the more minimal management control that perhaps pertained in the past.

### 3.4 **Distinctive features of research-intensive universities**

The respective balance and link between research and teaching generates an on-going debate which can be traced back to early conceptualisations of the purpose of universities, for example Von Humboldt's arguments for both research and teaching in the service of scholarship to be conducted independently of state interference (Elton, 2008). Within the United Kingdom, the recently expanded Russell Group of 24 universities represents the interests and views of research-led or research-intensive universities. Russell group members include the longest established, traditional universities in the UK - Cambridge, Edinburgh and Oxford as well as newcomers such as Manchester (established in 1824) and more recently, Exeter (1955). The Russell group offer a number of arguments in support of the benefits of 'research-led' teaching (12) including student access to leading academics (who are by implication leading researchers) and higher student wage premiums for those completing

Russell Group University degrees. A pedagogical argument is that research-led teaching is 'enquiry' or 'inquiry' based (Healey, 2005) (as opposed to didactic, knowledge based and instructional) with the Russell Group (13) claiming major economic benefits for the UK as a result of this teaching approach for example, in terms of income arising from overseas students who have been attracted to study in the UK. Whilst their research excellence and economic and physical assets positions Russell group universities very favourably, and in many ways as 'elite', under government pressure the mission of the research-intensive universities has been expanded to address issues of widening participation (Osborne, 2003) (13).

Differentiating some universities/HEIs as research-led or research-intensive naturally categorises others as more teaching-led or vocationally oriented and this is certainly the base that can be presumed for post-1992 universities who formally operated as Polytechnics (for example, Manchester Metropolitan University) and more recent Universities such as Bolton (founded in 2005 and formerly the Bolton Institute of Higher Education). The University Alliance represents 22 of 'the most innovative and entrepreneurial universities' (14). The alliance universities position themselves much more clearly as linked to science, industry and the professions and their claims for research contribution align with this industry partnership focus. A comparison of the strap lines for the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University delineates the difference in focus with the University of Manchester aiming to be one of the top 25 research universities in the world by 2020 and Manchester Metropolitan University claiming to be 'The University for World-class professionals'. Given the difference in focus between Russell Group and, for example, the University Alliance (15) universities we might reasonably expect differences in culture with a consequent impact on leadership and management.

12 – 2.5.14: http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/uploads/Learning-in-a-research-intensive-environment.pdf
13 - 2.5.14: http://russellgroup.ac.uk/key-facts-and-statistics/)
14- (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/wp/)
(https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/widening-participation-in-higher-education--4)
15 - 2.5.14: http://www.unialliance.ac.uk/member/).

Indeed, Gledhill (2001 in Warner and Palfreyman, Eds) notes two important cultural differences between more traditional and 'modern' universities: "*The modern universities' great strength lay in teaching and applied research. Although this was sometimes stigmatized by some of the older HEIs as a cover for not doing much 'academic' research*," (p.95) and that, "*Management is a term and concept which presented no threat to the modern universities. The older universities did not have managements; they had 'administrations'*." (p.99) Thus we see that assumptions about the pre-eminence of academic research and a general acceptance of, or resistance to, 'management' are potentially two important differentiating factors between research-intensive and more modern/recently founded teaching-focused universities.

Other important issues for research-intensive universities as reported by Shattock (2010) include the need for them to manage complex and fixed/short-term income streams and to ensure that a more significant part of the university funding base is not directly state provided. More traditional/research-intensive universities may also have a range of cultural and scientific assets, such as museums, both to manage and to fund creating further structural and managerial complexity. Shattock (2010) sees the 1980 government decision to allow universities to charge full cost fees to non-home and EU students as opening the door to marketization with the academic reputation of more elite research-intensive universities being an important competitive advantage in generating interest and applications from such students. The imposition of home student tuition fees of £1,000 in 1998 and their rise to £3,000 in 2004 and £9,000 in 2012 might be expected to exacerbate this situation. Together with competition for research grants, competition to attract high profile academic staff and competition to maintain and elevate institutional position in various league tables, a greater premium is now placed on the professionalism and managerial capability of both support service/administrative and academic staff (Wild and Wooldridge, 2009).

The pressure for universities to act entrepreneurially (Clark, 2004; Barnett, 2005) can be seen to apply to both research-intensive and teaching-focused universities resulting in efforts to generate different funding streams, for example from the exploitation of intellectual property, work in partnership with business, the sale of services (accommodation, car parking, conference facilities) (Russell Group, 2010 – Staying on top) and contributions from alumni. As a whole, research-intensive universities with their orientation towards overseas (none home/EU) un-capped fee paying students (Russell group submission to Government Review of Postgraduate provision, 2010), their elite reputations and international prestige are not only more

inclined but perhaps better able to act entrepreneurially, within the constraints of their more traditional values and administrative, rather than managerial, cultures. Taylor (2006) contends that, "*Research, therefore, does not lend itself to control and management.*" (p.10), but, paradoxically, the pressures already outlined mean that it needs to be managed but in an appropriate way. He characterises leading research universities as having (my comments in italics):

- "Presence of pure and applied research (*with world-leading pure research generating intellectual capital and applied research generating funds)*
- Delivery of research-led teaching (*generating academic tensions between the amount of time spent on each and the skills and effort required to do both well)*
- Breadth of academic disciplines *(underpinning a strong university able to hold academic ground across a wide range of disciplines and attract high quality academics, students and research funded projects)*
- High proportion of postgraduate research programmes *(generating a high quality academic environment and kudos for the institution and academic staff delivering post graduate level research, teaching and supervision)*
- High levels of external income (*necessary according to Shattock and more possible given the profile, assets and prestige of the research-intensive HEIs)*
- An international perspective *(important if world-leading research is an aspiration and also to hold your own in the international league tables of significant interest to high fee paying overseas students, potential funders and donors)*

(Taylor, 2006, p.12)

Taylor's research indicates that research-intensive universities in a number of countries (including the UK) feel it is important that research activity be managed but choose different ways to do this, partly in response to external drivers, such as the UK RAE/REF regime. In all cases research support offices have been established both to support and manage/co-ordinate the research activity and which, "stressed the professionalization of their research support services, able to ease the administrative burden for academic staff, but also to investigate new research developments." (p.23) The role and contribution of research support highlights two important issues both for academic and professional service identity, the first being the perceived balance of power between the academic and administrative staff groups in relation to the work done by each of these groups or even '3rd space' professionals (Whitchurch, 2008), and the second being the presumption that academic researchers whilst being 'supported' are also being managed and their research efforts to some degree directed by 'non-academic' staff.

Missing from Warner and Palfreyman's (2001) list, and the discussion concerning research-intensive universities so far, is the issue of the impact of new technology. The increasing power and presence of information and communication technologies has impacted on teaching and learning (VLEs, Blackboard being one example; blended learning; blogs), research (easy access to electronic journals) and administration (processing of student applications and records). Given the tension already noted between time and effort committed to research or teaching and the aspiration in research-intensive universities for teaching to be research informed then use of information technology, and any skills requirement/deficit, for both research and teaching is an issue. Lawton et al (2013) speculate on the impact of MOOCs to the year 2020 in their 'Horizon Scanning' report noting the preference of MOOCs providers to partner with top-ranked institutions and the developing trend to integrate MOOCs as taster courses for overseas students. They note the existing moves in libraries for services to be delivered on-line which may ultimately result in the disappearance of the need for a physical library presence. Therefore, as things stand, the greatest challenge from MOOCs appears to be for teaching-focused rather than research-intensive universities. Academics who prefer research rather than teaching may see the demands for on-line delivery of course material as an opportunity to divest themselves of onerous duties whilst others may be threatened by the managerialist demand to capture and share their intellectual capital in this way (Clegg et al, 2003).

Lockett et al (2003) investigate technology transfer and spin-out companies these being another aspect of academic capitalism or entrepreneurialism. Interestingly, their research elicited the view of business development officers, rather than academic staff, and they refer to a heavy reliance on industry liaison officers and the need to enhance external networks. Such activities represents a challenge for more traditional research-intensive university cultures, but also a potential benefit for the staff involved who, when granted equity, may share in the profits of the enterprise. Here again we see reference to non-academic roles which increasingly populate the university structure in order to deliver work linked to, but going beyond, that associated with traditional research and teaching.

This brief account has elicited some of the distinctive contextual issues impacting on research-intensive universities and, in turn, on the academic and professional service managers who work within them. Whilst 'distinctive' many of them are not exclusive and will affect more teaching-focused universities as well. The price of a higher degree of institutional autonomy is effort to diversify the funding base away from

over-reliance on Government along with increased competition for research funds, an inexorable pressure to be seen to perform well in various league tables, greater academic capitalism and casualization of the workforce. However, demands from Government, for example to be seen to widen participation, and the impact of technology have generated new forms of work and new 'non-academic' work roles which some have labelled '3rd space' (Whitchurch, 2008) or para-academic (Macfarlane, 2011). Increased organisational complexity, new types of service provision and the requirement to successfully compete in a global higher education marketplace have led to the need for greater leadership, management and professionalism from both academic and administrative/professional service staff.

### 3.5 Universities as administered or managed institutions

Debates concerning whether universities are administered, managed or led partly reflect discourse concerning the use and meaning of such terms and are also indicative of identity work and the changing balance of 'power' within the institutions themselves. The differentiation between the three terms maps reasonably well to Ansoff's (1965) tripartite classification of organisational decisions as administrative, operating and strategic with operating according with 'management' and strategic aligning to more visionary and strategic notions of leadership. Ansoff developed this model when 'management' was a politically acceptable word to use, especially in the business world and Ansoff contends that, "*The balance of management attention to strategic and operating decisions is ultimately determined by the firm's environment*." (p.28) Ansoff's general argument is that in the second half of the 20th century the more turbulent business environment necessitated equal attention to be paid to strategic and operating decisions. A more recent rendition of this argument would be a call for equal attention to be paid to leadership and management (Kotter, 1990). One decisional characteristic that Ansoff labels as administrative is, "*Organisation: structure of information, authority, and responsibility flows*," (p.27), which accords well with Weberian notions of organisational bureaucracy (Morrison, 2006). The idea of the administration and administrators processing information and upholding the bureaucratic structure resonates with traditional notions (at least in the UK) of the role and contribution of administrative staff. However, this subordinate role has been challenged by moves to professionalise administration (for example in the formation and work of the Association of University Administrators – "*Inspiring professionalism in higher education*") and by the changes and developments in university activities already outlined in which an array of support services, for example libraries, e-learning technologists, research support officers, business development and

internationalisation officers, alumni officers and so on, gain increased importance within the HEI and to a greater or lesser extent impinge on, inter-connect with, and cross-boundaries with academic work and decisions (Whitchurch, 2006).

To suggest that universities need administration, management and leadership would seem to be so obvious as to be un-contentious however, as has already been noted, there is published academic resistance to what is perceived to be ‘new managerialism’ as an ideology that reifies practices of control and academic capitalism (Trowler, 2010 in Moek et al). Trowler seeks to uncouple managerialism from ‘managerialists’ arguing that people may change their view concerning the ideology and that, “*We should not think of managers as a class, rather, as people who, like the rest of us, draw from alternative sets of resources at different times.*” (p.207) Here Trowler is principally referring to discursive resources and the capacity of discourse, linked to and embedded within social structures, to offer alternative accounts of organisational life and undermine the operation of managerialist ideology. Once again we see that the debate concerns issues of identity (manager rather than managerialist) and power. Post-1992 universities emerged from a local authority regime where management control was more prevalent and to which, as Gledhill (2001) notes, the concept and application of management presented no new threat. This is not so in the case of more traditional universities more acculturated to various forms of academic governance and ‘collegiality’.

By de-coupling managerialism from managers, Trowler avoids demonising people doing such work and opens a space between managerial work and managerialism as an ideology. In HEIs there are typically two cadres of people who might perform managerial work – administrative/professional service managers for whom management is likely to be in keeping with their professional values and ‘raison d’etre’ and academic managers (or manager academics, Deem, 2002; Winter, 2009) who may be reluctant to undertake such work. Hotho and Pollard (2007) seek to reconcile conflicting debates around academic middle managers by suggesting that different rationalities towards management can simultaneously exist: “*The concept of co-existing instrumental, value-bound, procedural, and mediating, rationalities can challenge – or at least complement- the prevailing reading of academic middle management practice as unwillingly reactive, subversively counter-active or tainted by managerialism,*” they state (2007, p. 598) In short, academic and other managers will not necessarily see the management role in the same way, with some being more managerialist than others. Therefore, one of the challenges for people operating as leaders or managers in HEIs is to effectively discern and understand the

diverse rationalities and values of the people with whom they are working and to seek to interact productively with them bearing these in mind.

More specific talk of management and managers requires definition of the level of manager or management under consideration, for example senior/executive/strategic, middle or first-line/supervisory/team leader (Oshagbemi and Gill, 2004), as the focus of activity and work challenges vary according to the level in the hierarchy and the extent of associated responsibility and authority. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) differentiate the challenges at different levels in terms of skills, suggesting a greater emphasis on technical skills at lower hierarchical levels and conceptual (organisational/strategic leadership) skills at higher levels, but with a strong requirement for human skills (interpersonal leadership) at all levels. The nature of the management responsibility within a large research-intensive HEI is linked to perspectives on the benefits of centralisation versus decentralisation (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998; Larsen et al, 2009) and how this impacts on collegial culture and decision-making; the paradoxes (Bargh et al, 2000) of the vice-chancellor acting as Chief Executive (Shattock, 1999) and how this impacts on organisational culture (McNay, 1995) and processes and the fixed term nature of appointment to academic management/leadership roles (Ackroy and Ackroyd, 1999) and what this means in terms of identity as an academic manager or manager academic (Clegg and McAulay, 2005; Deem and Brehony, 2005).

A particular difficulty arises at academic middle manager level (a flexible term but here referring to Head of Department roles) with Hellawell and Hancock (2001), Smith (2002), Bryman (2007) and Floyd and Dimmock (2011) drawing attention to pressures on heads of department often on fixed-term contracts to act collegially and represent disciplinary interests whilst also being expected to 'manage' on behalf of the organisation the colleagues to whose ranks they will be returning as peer. Bolden et al (2008b) outline some of the social, structural and contextual factors relevant to academic leadership and note that appointment to a management role offers a greater opportunity for organisational influence but also, "*a significant level of influence exerted by 'informal' leaders. Such individuals (including professors, course directors, personal assistants of previous holders of rotating posts) may well have a disproportionately large influence…*" (p.366) Academic careers are oriented primarily towards discipline relevant research and teaching with management and leadership being different/additional and sometimes temporary responsibilities. Professional service managers, often on open-ended contracts, are primarily focused

on the delivery of the services for which they are responsible and therefore subject to different work pressures than research active academics.

Position in a hierarchical structure clearly denotes superiority or inferiority in terms of responsibility, authority and pay with equal pay grade horizontally across the structure presumed to indicate a comparable level of responsibility, although specific duties and responsibilities will vary. Administrative and professional support service staff are used to working in such hierarchies and to accepting leadership linked to position. Academic structures may be flatter and accompanied by the presumption of a significant degree of staff autonomy and independence in many disciplinary areas so the role implications in terms of management, leadership and scholarship are in tension especially at the academic middle manager (Head of Discipline/Department) level (Parker, 2004; Hotho and Pollard, 2007). This can be contrasted with professional service middle managers whose role and hierarchical position should be clear but with tension arising from activity to link and co-ordinate, plan and allocate resources and manage group performance. (Kraut et al, 2005).

As Bolden et al (2012) note, academic leadership can be informal and leadership by Professors primarily intellectual, whereas academic management (as formal institutional duties) is undertaken by academics appointed to formal academic management roles from Deans, Heads of School and Heads of Department/Discipline (Henkel, 2002). Sitting alongside academic roles that have formal management responsibilities are roles that might also be termed 'Head of' for example, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies amongst others, which have a linking, co-ordination or advisory function perhaps without formal line management responsibilities for staff. At the intersection of academic and professional service management activity are support roles which have, in effect, a matrix management (Lawson, 1986) relationship with their academic Head and formal professional service manager, with such relationships further complicated by location in the formal structure, for example whether working at discipline, School, Faculty or the Centre level. Sy and Cote (2004) highlight a number of problems sometimes arising from the operation of matrix organisation structures including lack of clarity as to who is responsible for what, untimely decisions that may lack quality, and silo-thinking. In such situations whilst it may be specified from whom staff need to seek permission to take leave and so on, staff have a degree of choice as to who they regard as their manager and from whom they take leadership, with orientation and identity gravitating towards whoever is perceived to control resources or hold more power (Brown and Agnew, 1982).

The management of large HEIs is a complicated affair with a formal managerial structure for administrative/professional service staff running alongside, and intersecting with, that in place for academic staff and with both structures linked to various consultative and or decision-making fora involving staff, students and at higher levels lay members. Added complications include physical dispersal across several buildings or sites and 'serial re-organisations' (Shattock, 2010). I have no intention here of plotting these in any detail or debating the various merits of different arrangements but it is important to note the organisational complexity which can result in long lead-in times for certain decisions to be considered and taken as the issue is discussed in different fora. Therefore, a further challenge for leaders/managers working in large HEIs is to understand the managerial and decision-making structures and to have patience and tenacity in relation to decisions that need to be made and with Allen (2003) arguing for the benefits of decision-making within a higher education symbiotic community that rejects managerialism and management language but adopts some management values.

If someone is titled an 'administrator' or classified as a member of the 'support service' staff (professional or otherwise) the generally subordinate contribution and status of the person's role is apparent in the title. The work that such staff do is varied but includes administering organisational information and related activities and supporting academics in the discharge of their research and teaching roles. Academic staff will also have an allowance of time for administrative work related to their role in their workload allocation. For academic colleagues the amount of time afforded for research, teaching and administration in their local workload allocation processes or practices can be a source of contention. Barrett and Barrett (2007) found a range of approaches that they classify as informal, partial or comprehensive with degrees of concern about the application of each of these by academic staff who generally feel over-worked and suspicious concerning increased scrutiny of the work they do. On the face of it, delegating more administrative tasks to administrators or support staff seems like a boon for academics however, along with the delegation often goes control, for example in terms of student recruitment and admission (Hogan, 2011). Therefore, even in the case of administrative tasks professional identity and power issues emerge for both academic and professional service/administrative staff.

Hogan (2011) presents an analysis of the factors that have contributed to a significant growth in administrative expenditure, some of which have already been mentioned, including the development of new income streams, the cost of

compliance and regulation, increased complexity, the transfer of work from academic staff to administrators and the impact of new technology leading to an explosion of emails and the associated time spent trying to deal with them. Hogan (2011) challenges simplistic accounts of increased administrative costs as being a symptom of rampant managerialism and posits two 'golden rules' in relation to the perception of administration and administrative performance: "*The first is that in HEIs the assessment of administrative performance normally relates directly to the distance from the person expressing the opinion…The second is that there is always too much spend on administration, except when it concerns my own particular area or interest, when there is not enough.*" (p.12) Thus administrative/support staff can be pictured as enemies or allies depending upon their perceived remoteness from local interests and agendas.

As noted already discussions of governance orient on management issues, internally concerning the relative decision-making authority and power of central/faculty senior managers compared to Schools and Departments (Shattock, 2010) and externally in relation to the degree of institutional autonomy and Government control (Locke and Bennion, 2011). Debates around governance are indicative of concerns and contests about and power, control and identity (Middlehurst, 2004).

### 3.6 Issues of identity

Issues of professional identity have been much debated in the higher educational literature and are relevant to considerations of the values, status and role of academic staff (Henkel, 1997, 2002 and 2005; Harley, 2002), the conceptualisation of academic staff as managers (Blenkinsopp and Stalker, 2004; Preston and Price, 2012), the status and role of administrative/professional support staff (Whitchurch, 2004; 2006) and the recently differentiated 'third space' staff (Whitchurch, 2008). Bolden et al (2008b) recognise identity as a source of tension that, "*may arise from competing motivations and allegiances (including 'academic' versus 'manager', 'discipline' versus 'institution') and may inhibit the development of a sense of shared 'social identity' with other managers (both academic and administrative*)." (p.367)

Identity as a concept is contested with different perspectives according to disciplinary interest, philosophical standpoint and the delineation of identity from an individual or social perspective (Stets and Burke, 2000). Eysenk (1998), for example, lists symbolic interactionist role, social cognitive, social identity and identity process theories. Views of identity based upon the idea of 'mind' are open to charges of Cartesian dualism and where mind is regarded as a neuro-scientific epiphenomenon

of the functioning of the brain (Audi, 1999) to allegations of reductionism. Whatever the genetic contribution to an individual's identity, the work of developmental and child psychologists demonstrates how it changes over time (Montemayor and Eisen, 1977). The famous quote attributed to the Jesuit, Francis Xavier, 'Give me a child until the age of seven and I will give you the man', suggests the importance of early years socialisation and education in forming the core of later adult identity. For Bourdieu, this early socialisation in the family and school are crucial in establishing durable dispositions or habitus (Maton, 2008). Rather than identity, Markus and Wurf (1987) talk of self-concept which they describe as, "*a dynamic interpretative structure that mediates most significant intrapersonal processes (including information processing, affect and motivation) and a wide variety of interpersonal processes (including social perception; choice of situation, partner and interaction strategy; and reaction to feedback).*" (p.300) Stets and Burke (2000) focus on this interpretative structure which allows individuals to view themselves reflexively as an 'object' with particular distinctive characteristics.

The 'self' as an individual exists alongside and in relation to others. Social identity theory considers individual identity in relation to variously defined social groups (Hogg and Terry, 2000). A key mechanism for the establishment of social identity is that of 'self-categorization' differentiating oneself within an in-group (sociologist, engineer, manager, administrator) and bringing, "*self-perception and behaviour in line with the contextually relevant in-group prototype.*" (p.123) Hogg and Terry (2000) suggest that the sense of self arising from the organization or work group may be more important than that based on age ethnicity, gender and nationality with Van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) relating leadership effectiveness to leader proto-typicality and group-oriented behaviour. Ashforth and Mael (1989) define self-concept in relation to both personal and social identity and highlight the composite nature of social identity, encompassing identification to some degree with work roles, work group and the organisation. The process of social identification includes orientation towards the distinctiveness of the group's values and practices, for example within an academic discipline or profession; the prestige of the group, for example the perceived importance of research staff compared to teaching-only staff and the salience of out-groups, for example the perceived differences between academic and non-academic staff groups.

Inglis and Thorpe (2012) note that symbolic interactionists accept a dynamic view of identity: "*The self, then is a process and not a fixed or static structure.*" (p.113). This contrasts with a more traditional Marxist position, as described by Benton (1998) that

places considerable weight on social class as a determining factor of identity: "*Particular types of society give rise to a particular kind of identity and outlook…*" (p.197). Bottero (2010) classifies such views as 'positional' and critiques Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a dispositional account of identity that, "*emerges from the interrelations between habitus and field rather than from the intersubjective relationship between agents*." (p.5) The use of language in the construction of identity is another source of debate with identity politics (Macey, 2000) taking a structuralist position that discourse creates collective and individual identities of, "*ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation (that) have interests that are not or cannot be promoted or defended by broader agencies such as class or a constitutional state*." (p.197). In contrast, Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) propose that, "*Giddens, self-identity is conceptualized as a reflexively organized narrative, derived from participation in competing discourses and various experiences…*" (p.625) Tomkins and Eatough (2012) highlight the importance of lived experience as well as discourse and narrative, and in the field of identity studies point to the, "*increasing integration of communication, discourse, subjectivity and experience…and the interactive contingent qualities of identity construction, particularly within the context of resistance and control.*" (p.3)

Discourses of identity at the institutional level (academic freedom/collegiality) can be seen as political acts aimed at defending a certain view of the nature and values of higher education against the encroaching forces of neo-liberalism and managerialism, whilst at the professional level it can be seen as part of the on-going negotiated reactions to externally imposed changes, general societal and technological changes and the changing activities and status of staff groups and organisational members. Clegg (2008) typifies 'traditional academic identities' which she contends are under threat as, "*based on collegiality and the exercise of autonomy, which were emergent from traditional elite positions, and whose bearers were mostly, white, male and middle class.*" (p.331) Becher and Trowler (2001) and Harris (2005) refer to a number of factors including globalisation, massification, the regulatory state, pressures to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness and the marketization of knowledge as the broad 'neo-liberal' context for the operation of 'academic tribes and territories'. They see these as contributing to the 'de-professionalization' of academic life which, "*is clearly occurring while traditional ideas about the special status and knowledge claims of academics have rapidly become out-dated.*" (p.13)

The academic discipline appears as a key factor in the composition of academic identity. Becher and Parry (2005) see disciplines as having both a cognitive and social aspects that change over time and, "*indeed, resemble living organisms in being in a constant state of flux.*" (p.134) Whilst disciplinary boundaries change over time and can be seen differently in different institutions, "*we may appropriately conceive of disciplines as having recognizable identities and particular cultural attributes.*" (Becher and Trowler, 2001p.44) Socialisation within a discipline and relative status and contribution compared to other disciplines are important aspects of academic identity work (Henkel, 2005). Malcolm and Zukas (2009) find that academic identity construction is messy but primarily related to discipline rather than to the interrelated the activities of teaching or research and they challenge, "*managerialist fabrications such as the workload allocation model…*" as fragmenting academic experience and identity. Discipline is a frequently used way to consider collective academic practice, however 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is another more generalised notion that Wenger and Snyder (2000) define as, "*groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise…*" (p.139). Whilst aspects of this definition do accord with academic work, given the various ways in which 'communities of practice' can be conceived (Cox, 2005), and Kogan's (2000) view that the term 'community' has become so promiscuous as to become devoid of meaning, a focus on the idea of discipline seems more useful in respect of academic identity.

Kogan (2000) points to the mutual dependence between academics and institutions each contributing to the success and reputation of the other and leading to a certain balance of power between the two, not always evident in more polarised narratives concerning the march of managerialism (Deem and Brehony, 2005), although Harley et al (2004) note that the balance of power is not evenly distributed with 'less privileged' academic staff now facing, "*insecurity of employment, career blockages and increased competition... and…new distinctions between colleagues in terms of pay, status, and job specification."* (p.336) Archer (2008), drawing on Bourdieu, considers the contest within academia in respect of questions of authenticity and legitimacy, "*with individuals and groups competing to ensure that their particular interests, characteristics and identities are accorded recognition and value.*" (p.386)

This contest can be seen to operate not only in relation to different disciplinary areas but as a key element of the 'them and us' narratives (Dobson, 2000) in the relationship between and institutional contribution of academic and 'administrative' staff underpinned by such differences as title (administrative/support) and terms and conditions of service (with much greater flexibility for academic staff).

Many of the issues infusing the relationship between administrators and academics and their respective roles and identities are evident beyond the UK, for example in Australia with McInnis (1998) revealing the frustration of administrators with lack of acknowledgement of their contribution and their perception of the need for greater accountability for academics; Dobson (2000) noting the binary divide between 'them and us' for academics and administrators, Dobson and Conway (2003) vividly portraying this as 'fear and loathing' and Szekeres (2004) typifying administrators (Australia – general staff) as 'the invisible workers'. In the USA, Rosser (2000) identifies similar frustrations around recognition for mid-level administrators and in a Norwegian context Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) see the professionalization of administrative staff as a dominant development pattern.

In the United Kingdom, Whitchurch (2004) has been a strong advocate both for professional recognition for administrative staff seeing administrative managers as a critical link in institutional decision-making and proposing cross-boundary 'multi-professionals' (Whitchurch, 2006) who have emerged into a '3rd space' (Whitchurch, 2008) between traditional administrative and academic functions and roles. Whitchurch (2008) argues that, "*Third space, therefore, is characterised by mixed teams of staff who work on short-term projects such as bids for external funding and quality initiatives, as well as longer term projects…*" and that, "*a sense of belonging in a particular project or team, as opposed to a specific organisational or professional location, has implications for the credibility of individuals in their current roles and for their future career paths.*" (pp. 386,387). Whitchurch and Gordon (2010) provide further consideration of these themes in an almost futurological way drawing upon Price Waterhouse Coopers to speculate on the development of 'Blue World Corporate capitalism', 'Green world, social responsibility' and 'Orange world collaborative networks' (2010) and offering a number of suggestions of areas for institutions to review in the light of the diversifying workforce, such as governance and management practices, job descriptions, rewards and incentives, workload models and mentoring and coaching (2011).

Gordon (2003) emphasises increasing role differentiation and specialisation in both administrative and academic roles including the rise of teaching assistants and the blurring of teaching and learning roles owing to the introduction of new technologies. He also mentions the potential impact of a single salary spine, one HR issue of several that both Gordon and Whitchurch (2007) consider in relation to a diversifying workforce partly driven by government policy interventions and leading to mixed roles, further explored by Whitchurch and Gordon (2013) in respect of staffing models. Here they touch on flexibility and changing conditions of service and the use of part-time staff, the psychological contract, workload models and rewards and incentives offering three models – integrated, partnership and private sector.

These models, although teased out from modest empirical research, seem 'ideal' and any divergence in institutional approach towards the models likely to be limited by the national pay and bargaining framework.

Macfarlane (2011) offers the term 'para-academic' and mentions that, "The emergence of the para-academic is a trend that mirrors patterns that can be observed in other public sector and professional service-oriented occupations where specialist roles have been created based on a more limited set of skills and responsibilities." (pp.59, 60) Macfarlane sees the rise of para-academics as coming from two directions – the increasing number of administrative and professional support staff who undertake elements of academic work (pastoral, learning technologists) as well as the de-skilling of academic roles (quality assurance advisers, educational developers) and that, "…third space denotes the development of higher-level skills among professional support staff. Hence there are both negative and positive aspects of the emergence of para-academics." (p.66)

In different ways, Whitchurch, Gordon and Macfarlane all highlight some of the changing work demands and consequent staffing changes arising from the need to address specific government policies, increase management and professional services staff to cope with growing student numbers and market pressures and to re-apportion elements of traditional academic work in order that it be delivered in a more pressured and cost sensitive environment. This can be seen as exciting, threatening or merely inevitable depending upon your point of view.  What is most important for this study is that the various debates around academic and 'non-academic' identity form one element of the dynamically changing context in which professional service managers must both understand and undertake leadership.

### 3.7 Summary of the contextual implications for understanding leadership and management

The expansion of higher education has led to an increase in the number and range of professional service, para-academic (MacFarlane, 2011) or third space staff (Whitchurch, 2008) and consideration about professional identity and the diversity and contribution of staff previously termed administrators (Whitchurch, 2008; Whitchurch, 2010; Whitchurch and Gordon 2010; 2011). Whitchurch (2004) argues that 'administrative managers' are a critical link and have an increasingly significant role not just as impartial advisers but as contributors to the strategic direction of increasingly open institutions. Associated with the expansion of higher education are a range of Government interventions that have stimulated changes in organisational governance, structure and management and also debate about the nature of higher education as a public good or marketized service, challenging the notion of academic autonomy and collegiality with a discourse of managerialism (or management). Given the nature of their work administrative/professional service managers and staff can easily be associated with a managerialist agenda by academic staff resistant to real or perceived reductions in autonomy and increases in managerial control. Within a traditional academic institution, the label of 'administrator' or 'support service' staff member generates a lower status identity. This has been challenged to some extent by moves to professionalise the administrative role, by the increase and diversity of new cross-boundary, 'blended' (Whitchurch, 2008), quasi-academic roles and by the increasing demand for universities to be managed as a corporate enterprise (Henkel, 1997). These changes signal a potential increase in the institutional power of administrative/professional service managers.

Whilst there are commonalities and some convergence (Bargh et al, 2000) between pre and post-1992 universities (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998), their respective histories, cultures, locations and assets generate particular challenges, with research-intensive universities seeking prestige through research standing, citations, research income, high profile academic staff, and so on (Taylor, 2006). The tendency towards more traditional academic values and collegial decision-making and governance in research-intensive universities can result in greater complexity and slower decision-making (Dearlove, 1995; 2002). Understanding the decision-making and governance processes, and dealing with the frustrations that may arise as a consequence of how they operate, presents a challenge to professional service managers. As an academic institution, and cognisant of the supporting role of administrators and professional staff, the leadership of the university as and

corporate governance of the institution is primarily associated with senior academic roles (Bolden et al, 2008a – LFHE report). However, Whitchurch (2004, 2008) argues for the increasing importance of administrative managers and professional service staff proposing that the creation of new functions and work roles is leading to an opening up of the boundary between academic and non-academic staff such that a 3rd space is created.

Noticeable research effort has been invested in considering leadership (formal and informal) by academics, however little literature exists in respect of leadership by professional service/administrative managers in higher education institutions (HEIs). There are a number of ways of categorising HEIs a common one being the general institutional focus towards being research intensive or teaching led. My empirical study addresses this gap in the literature, however for reasons of both practicality and epistemology set out in Chapter 4, it is focused on the understanding of leadership by twenty middle and senior professional service managers in two research intensive HEIs. However, the particular contextual characteristics that pertain within research-intensive universities identified in this chapter, for example the institutional drive to demonstrate excellence in research, an orientation towards collegiality and tension with the managerial objectives of professional service managers, may well colour the managers' understanding of leadership thereby setting boundaries to any knowledge claims. Such a position is consistent with calls to take account of context in qualitative leadership research (Bryman et al, 1996; Conger, 1998) and the theoretical position emerging from the literature review (chapter 2; Figure 3) that understanding of the process of intentional leadership extends beyond the characteristics, traits, behaviours and competencies of a leader.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

The conduct and narration of research is founded upon assumptions or standpoints concerning the nature of reality (ontology) and what and how knowledge of it is generated (epistemology). Research credibility requires a coherent account of how the method and knowledge claims align with the philosophical position adopted. Therefore, in this chapter I provide a brief overview of general philosophical issues underpinning my chosen philosophical position and social ontology then explain how the selected method aligns with both my research strategy and the logic of my research question. Finally I set out details of the empirical study undertaken with the selected sample of professional service managers. This chapter is structured in the following sections:

4.1 General issues of ontology and epistemology

4.2 Social ontology – structuration theories

4.3 Research process, strategy and methods of data construction and analysis

4.4 Research strategy

4.5 Qualitative leadership research – support for and some difficulties

4.6 The interview as data collection/construction method

4.7 Sampling

4.8 Ethical issues in qualitative research

4.9 Some approaches for analysing qualitative data

4.10 Thematic analysis

4.11 The conduct of the empirical study

### 4.1 General issues of ontology and epistemology

Philosophy and the social sciences are redolent with discussion around various dichotomies – materialism versus idealism; subjectivity versus objectivity, empiricism versus rationalism, quantitative versus qualitative research and so on. The polarised positions represent schools of thought concerning the nature of being, existence or reality (ontology), what constitutes knowledge (epistemology) and ways of collecting the kind of data that reveal facts about both. Unfortunately, the philosophical debates are often couched in oppositional terms that suggest that the adoption of one position automatically excludes another. Taking a different view, Searle (1995) asserts that ontological realism is perfectly commensurable with conceptual relativity

describing the intellectual territory for such discussions as, "…*ancient battlegrounds, and the landscape is much scarred by epistemic wars*…" (p.172) In support of the idea of conceptual relativity Searle contends that, "*There is a simple but deep reason why truth and reality cannot coincide in a way that many philosophers think... The reason is this: All representation, and a fortiori all truthful representation, is always under certain aspects and not others. The aspectual character of all representations derives from such facts as that representation is always made from within a certain conceptual scheme and from a certain point of view*." (pp.175;176) As knowledge claims are developed from within a certain conceptual frame or standpoint it is important to articulate what that is so that the claims can be considered in relation to that particular conceptual frame as they may appear essentially flawed or nonsensical from others.

In addition to general ontology more specific ontologies can be considered, for example existential considerations of the nature of humans as beings, individualist versus collectivist notions of the existence of human societies, and, in the case of leadership, what it means for 'leadership' to exist/occur in particular settings. Crotty (1998) also notes some of the various debates that have taken place that associate a view that a physical world exists - realism (or what others would describe as physicalism), with a notion that the (social) world exists outside the minds of human beings - objectivism (or what others would describe as realism). He believes that ontology and epistemology are contiguous philosophical issues that tend to merge within a research project as, "each theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of understanding **what is** (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding **what it means to know** (epistemology)." (p.10) What constitutes knowledge (epistemology) and how contingent this is upon the state of humans as biological beings is debated and as Audi (ed.1999) states, "…*almost all the questions of general metaphysics are at least in part epistemological.*" (p.564)

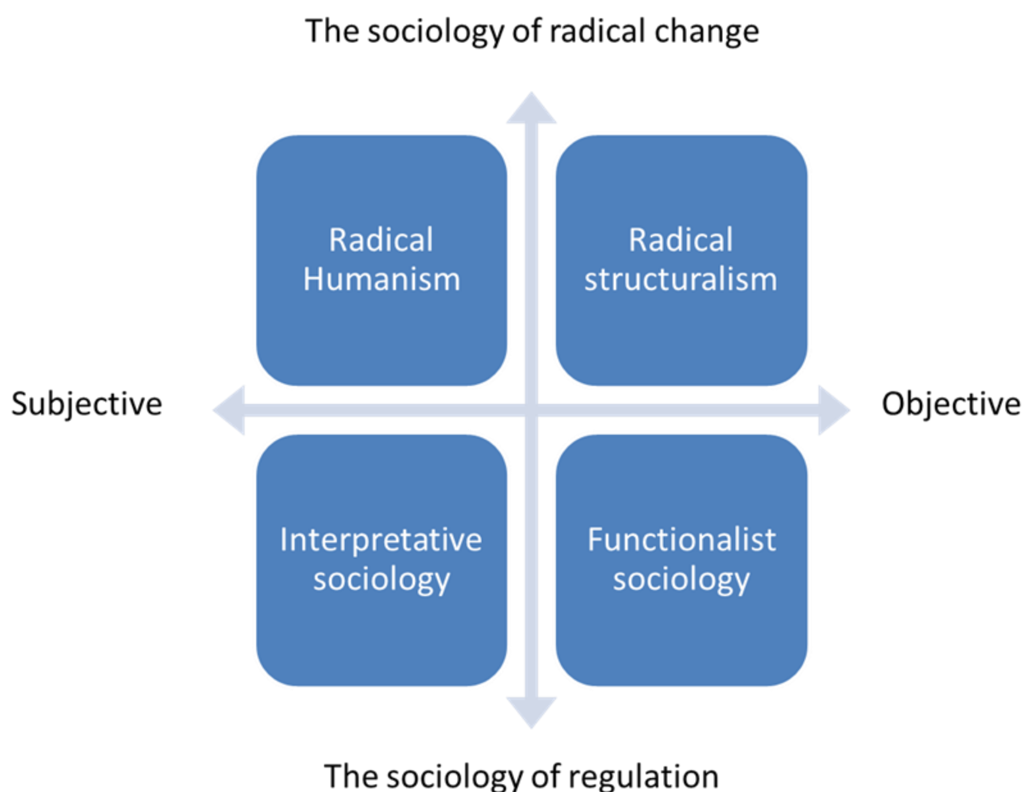
As Crotty notes, "*The existence of a world without a mind is conceivable. Meaning without a mind is not. Realism in ontology and constructionism in epistemology turn out to be quite compatible*." (p10/11). Owing to the limitations of **humans as beings** our knowledge of the world will always be coloured or limited by our humanness but extended beyond *individual* experience of the world by human communication and technology and also shaped and preserved by our socially constructed society and social means of knowledge accumulation and transmission (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Experientially, ontology and epistemology are entwined as, "*our experience properly described must acknowledge that it presents itself as experience of*

*engaging directly with the world*." (Moran, 2000, p.6) The nature of this experience is articulated by Heidegger as 'Dasein', "*recognising that humans are individual existing beings whose Being is an issue for them,*" (Moran, 2000, p.197) and holistically/dialectically by Merlau-Ponty: "*The reflex does not arise from objective stimuli, but moves back towards them, and invests them with a meaning which they do not possess taken singly as psychological agents, but only when taken as a situation.*" (Merlau-Ponty, in Moran and Mooney, 2002; p.429). For this meaning to become understanding Gadamer posits the dialectic of question and answer that is the achievement of language,"… understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning. Questioning opens up possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one's own thinking on the subject." (p.368) Conversations can be internal (self-dialogue) as well as external (dialogue with others) (Chalari, 2009) including engagement with texts allowing for understanding to be inspired both by self-reflection and engagement with the insights of others. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) this interpretive human dialogue as language, "is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations," (p.52) and, "My interaction with others in everyday life is, therefore, constantly affected by our common participation in the available stock of knowledge." (p.56)

Kenny (2010) comments on the development of epistemology in the twentieth century as moving from, "an initial concentration on the individual consciousness epistemologists moved towards an appreciation of the role of social communities in the build-up of the web of belief. Likewise they move from a concentration on the purely cognitive aspect of experience to an emphasis on its affective and practical element." (pp.882-883) So if we move away from the knowing beings of existential phenomenology towards the socially constructed web of belief or life-world in which they co-exist we encounter debates around Kuhnian anti-realist paradigm shifts, theses that Rouse (1981) suggests, "*can be generated from the more general ontological investigations in Heidegger's Sein und Zeit*." (p.270) Socially constructed knowledge that is historically and culturally situated (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) becomes the framework within which personal meaning and understanding is accomplished, with social reality (ontology) intersecting with human meaning, understanding and knowing (epistemology).

The variety of philosophical perspectives and positions can be confusing and Burrell and Morgan (1979) attempt to categorise those relevant to an understanding of social science on the basis of their dualistic orientation towards the acceptance and examination of the status quo or the politically motivated desire to criticise and generate radical change, and the focus on the presumed 'real', 'objective' and structural elements of society or the 'subjective', 'relative' and perspectival views of the world. Given its focus on the understanding of leadership by professional service managers this study is situated most clearly in the interpretative quadrant of Burrell and Morgan's diagram.

**Figure 5:** Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory. Burrell and Morgan, 1979.p.22




The terms social constructionism and constructivism are sometimes used interchangeably within the literature as well as being umbrella terms for a variety of more nuanced positions mapped in some detail by Fairhurst and Grant (2010) in their 'sailing guide'. Delanty and Strydom (2003) identify at least three kinds of what they classify as 'constructivism', and Cunliffe (2008a, in Thorpe and Holt) sub-categorises 'social constructionism' as social constructionism, social constructivism (or scientific constructivism) and radical constructivism.

The exact interpretation of social constructivism/constructionism clearly varies and I will not discuss these varieties here, although my research and practical interest in how leaders learn and understand leadership suggests a **constructivist** orientation (Petit and Huault, 2008) and my position is close to what Ford and Lawler (2007) describe as a combined **existentialist and constructionist** one. The point I wish to emphasise is that the potential dualism between constructionism and constructivism is dissolved if we take a reflective learning view (Jarvis, 2009) that human beings develop, learn and construct identities within an already existing social context and frameworks of knowledge and that making sense of/understanding the framework of beliefs or life-world and learning how to handle the challenges that it presents is an individually constructive act. The apparent dualism or dichotomy between active socially constructive individuals and a historically and culturally situated socially constructed social reality is in fact an inter-connected structurational dialectic.

Polarised ontological and epistemological positions have potential value for stimulating debate about how the world operates and how knowledge of processes such as leadership can be generated, however they run the danger of becoming ideological lenses that limit vision and restrict understanding, as appears to be the case with many models of leadership. Embracing a view of the world as duality, as a dialectic and involving dialogue offers a more holistic, dynamic and less reductionist account. The practice and structuration theories of Bourdieu and Giddens offer valuable insights for this standpoint and some of their more significant aspects that may facilitate understanding of leadership will now be considered.

### 4.2 Social ontology – structuration theories

In an attempt to avoid the dualistic tendencies which stress either social structure or individual agency scholars such as Bourdieu and Giddens have applied what has come to be known as 'structuration' or 'structurationist' theories (Elliot, 2009; Inglis and Thorpe, 2012) which in different ways attempt both to allow for greater or lesser degrees of individual action/agency and greater or lesser degrees of dispositional or situational constraint. According to Inglis and Thorpe (2012) this is accomplished by focusing on social practices: "*Practices are everyday activities that are routinized. 'Social structure' is just simply routine practices, and the memories in people's heads that allow them to keep doing those practices*…" (p.209) Social 'structures' are therefore the active practices of human agents that both generate and re-generate the practices over time.

From the point of view of an individual agent (subject) the practices can be seen as 'objective' by virtue of manifesting themselves outside of the rational intentions and actions of any particular individual i.e. in the collective practices of an institution/group/culture/organisation/society. Two key issues associated with accounts of 'practices' as the mechanism for the formation and continuation of social and organisational life are how the practices arise in the first place and how they are distributed and maintained over time. Nicolini (2013) argues that practices themselves are ontologically social entities or units of analysis, whereas they can equally be regarded as habitual social accomplishments that individually reflect the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) and collectively form the context/field within which leadership as process of intentional influence is enacted.

Bourdieu has achieved significant profile in social scientific academic circles including scholars of education and to a lesser extent educational leadership. Bourdieu's neo-Marxist (Morrison, 2006) position finds particular favour with scholars seeking to challenge the status quo and social disadvantage (social/cultural as well as capital/economic). The neo-Marxist position is evident when Bourdieu (1977) talks of 'class consciousness', "*that is, by the direct or indirect possession of a discourse capable of securing symbolic mastery of the practically mastered principles of the class habitus,*" and, "*the objective structures, that is, in the last analysis, by the economic bases of the social formation in question.*" (p. 83) Wacquant (1998) talks of Bourdieu's work as an activist science with a constant purpose, "*to make social science into an effective countervailing symbolic power and the midwife of social forces dedicated to social justice and civic morality.*" (p.217)Thus Bourdieu's radical/critical stance in which societal inequalities are challenged tends to find greater academic support for political reasons than does, for example, Giddens associated as he is in some quarters with the New Labour 'modernisation' project.

Partly due to Bourdieu's own interest in education (Homo academicus – 1988; Distinction – 1984), Bourdieu's conceptual scheme has found particular favour in educational scholarship as it has explanatory power in relation to social/cultural disadvantage and its impact on future life chances (Nash, 1990) as well as offering a critical relational frame for the understanding of educational policy (Maton, 2005) and practice and power (Heimans, 2012), institutional change (Kloot, 2009), educational research (Grenfell and James, 2004), education management (Gunter, 2002), educational leadership (Lingard and Christie, 2003) and higher education leadership (Bolden et al, 2008 a and b).

Three key concepts that Bourdieu employs are habitus, field and capital. Habitus (interacting with field(s)) is arguably the central principle explaining as it does how social practices are maintained through time. In his 'Outline of a Theory of Practice', Bourdieu (1977) refers to habitus in a number of ways including:

- "*The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions…"(p.72)*
- *"The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less "sensible" and "reasonable."" (p.79)*
- *"…a habitus, understood as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions…" (p.83*)

Therefore Bourdieu sees habitus as 'durable transposable dispositions' so inculcated into how an individual sees and interacts with the world as to seem sensible and reasonable without conscious consideration. However, Bourdieu also states that:

- "…*the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experience*…"(p.87)

Thus Bourdieu argues that habitus is developmental in relation to successive significant experiences commencing with the inculcation of habitus in the home and then transformed by schooling. But following this logic there is no reason why later significant experiences should not also further develop and re-frame habitus, for example, time spent at university, or in the Military or with a gang of football hooligans, in which case it can indeed be questioned how durable habitus might be for a particular person and exactly which experiences might cause habitus to change.

In Bourdieu's scheme habitus is a powerful concept but it is also problematic sounding not dissimilar to how many psychologists would describe an 'attitude': "…*lasting, general evaluations of socially significant objects (including people and issues.) Some theories also emphasise that attitudes are relatively enduring organisations of beliefs and behavioural tendencies towards social objects*," (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002, p.1919) and therefore subject to similar debates around the mechanism by, and the extent to which, an attitude can predict behaviour/activity. Bourdieu's habitus can also be seen as describing a kind of social stereo-typing in which individuals deemed to be in a given social class are regarded as durably

disposed to believe, think and act in a similar way. For educationalists, Bourdieu's thesis supports calls for interventions that widen participation and address poverty/structural inequality, but for leadership habitus is problematic. If people are as conditioned by early family and schooling experiences as Bourdieu contends, then how susceptible are they to influence and to being led whether from an individual leader or as a result of collective action? If we presume that leaders do leadership what kind of habitus pre-disposes certain people to assume leadership roles and relationally dispose others towards 'followership'?

Bourdieu's notions of field and capital are important for understanding how habitus manifests itself. Maton (2008) summarises the relationship between them as: "*practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital) within the current state of play of that social arena (field).*"(p.51) Moore (2008) suggests that, "*the acquisition of embodied cultural capital is identical to the formation of habitus, an integration of mind and body harmoniously adapted to specialized habitats (fields) and transposable beyond them*." (p.110)

Therefore, the notion of field is flexible and depicts a social space that can be occupied and contested by people possessing different degrees of capital. Thomson (2008) uses a number of metaphors such as football field and force-fields to suggest the dynamics at work within fields and Inglis and Thorpe (2012) highlight the largely unconscious feeling ('illusio') that people have that a particular game is worth playing. The flexibility of the term field and the social situations in which it can be applied is itself a potential problem with Thomson identifying four related issues: the problem of borders, the number of fields, effective change in a field and inter-field connections.

In 'Distinction' Bourdieu (1984) states that, "*The functional and structural homology which guarantees objective orchestration between the logic of the field of production and the logic of the field of consumption arises from the fact that all the specialized fields (haute couture or painting, theatre or literature) tend to be governed by the same logic, i.e. according to the volume of the specific capital that is possessed…*" (p.229) Thus there is an intimate connection between habitus, the social class that it regenerates and the capital its members are likely to possess and the flexible social field in which this operates. Thomson (2008) describes this relationship as, *"a dialectic through which specific practices produce and reproduce the social world that at the same time is making them*." (p.75) Owing to the unconscious pre-dispositions of the habitus and their self-replicating nature, reinforced by and reinforcing different

sorts of capital, it seems that individuals effectively sleep walk their way to and through the practices that they reproduce. Griller (1996) criticises this position as tautological: "*If we begin research from the premise that within a field there will be: positions in the social space, an homologous set of dispositions, habitus, which produce, through an interaction with the field, strategies geared to the pursuit of capital, power and dominance, what is left to study?*" (p.15)

The idea of the interaction of habitus and various social fields is useful in considering the ways in which social hierarchy and difference might be unconsciously reinforced and replicated over time and where the development of symbolic/cultural capital (which Moore, 2008 equates with habitus) underpins social status and position. However, it says little of the way in which individuals might seek actively to influence and change such situations. For Bourdieu, in relation to the interaction of habitus and field, Inglis and Thorpe (2012) explain that," *practices (ways of playing games) are generated in ways beyond the full conscious awareness of actors as they are produced by the habitus. But the person has a practical (semi-conscious) sense of how to play the games they play*." (p.217)

Inglis and Thorpe (2012) succinctly identify some of the key theoretical differences between Bourdieu and Giddens (that have implications for an understanding of leadership) with Bourdieu drawing on the work of Weber, Marx and Durkheim to consider issues of power and 'symbolic violence'/domination by social groups (class, gender, ethnicity) and using the notion of 'habitus' to explain how social practices are reproduced, and Giddens looking more towards ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and Wittgenstein to focus on knowledgeable individual agents and their efforts to enact practices the repetition of which gives rise to perceived 'structure'.

Giddens's (1984) structuration theory lacks the structural inter-connectedness evident in Bourdieu's theory of practice and emphasises the activity of knowledgeable agents rather than the embedded effects of habitus, capital and field. Giddens' attempt to reconcile views traditionally depicted as antithetical (collectivities versus the individual) can be seen as more theoretically ambiguous in which, "*social life appears far 'messier'…than in many theoretical works.* " (Cohen, 1998, p.281)

Giddens (1984) highlights the ability or 'power' of the agent to act and purposefully to make a difference: "*'intentional should be understood…as characterizing an act which the perpetrator knows, or believes, will have a particular quality or outcome and where such knowledge is utilized by the author of the act to achieve this quality*

*or outcome.*" (p.10). A similar idea to Bourdieu's semi-conscious game-playing is Giddens's (1984) 'practical consciousness', which he differentiates from discursive consciousness and the unconscious: "*Practical consciousness consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to 'go on' in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression.*" (p. xxiii) and whilst, "*Human agents or actors…have, as an inherent aspect of what they do, the capacity to understand what they do while they do it…their knowledgeability as agents – is largely carried out in practical consciousness.*" (pp. xxii,xxiii)

Trust and the related idea of ontological security are two other conceptions in Giddens's structuration theory that have relevance for leadership. Giddens (1984) locates the development of mechanisms to achieve interpersonal trust and the need for 'ontological security' in the, "predictable and caring routines established by parental figures." (p.50) Ontological security is, "*Confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity.*" (p. 375) Thus trust in others, commencing with trust in a parental figure, underpins a relational need that informs identity and reduces anxiety, a process that shares some similarity with Gemmill and Oakley's (1992) idea of leadership as a social myth.

Giddens shares another interest with Bourdieu in the way in which relations of power are manifested. Rather than symbolic capital, Giddens talks of 'structures of signification' which, "*always have to be grasped in connection with domination and legitimation.*" ((1984, p.31) However, Giddens outlines a mechanism by which the extent of domination, or in Bourdieu's terms symbolic violence, is moderated: "…*acquiescence would cover only a small and relatively marginal proportion of instances in which the conduct of one actor or aggregate of actors conforms to what others want, or what is in their interests….Power relations are often most profoundly embedded in modes of conduct which are taken for granted…*" (p.176)

A further point of contact is the interest of both scholars in 'reflexivity'. According to Elliot, "*Reflexivity, as we have seen, is regarded by Giddens as an essential aspect of all human activity.*" (2009, p.132), with Giddens differentiating between individual reflexivity, as an on-going process of self-reflection, and institutional reflexivity in which public debate gives rise to questioning of expert positions and scientific opinion or in Bourdieu's terms challenges to the application of symbolic capital. Deer (2008) points out that Bourdieu's position on reflexivity has developed over time but most importantly highlights methodological/epistemological issues relating to the status of

academic knowledge: "*It aims to make explicit the two-way relationship between the objective structures of the intellectual, academic and social-scientific fields and the incorporated structures (that is habitus) of those operating within these fields.*" (p.206) Here the questioning and challenge is directed towards being self-critical of the assumptions (and implicit power/authority) underpinning the narrative generated to explain one's own position and arguments.

Although there are points of contact and similarity in Bourdieu's and Giddens's accounts a dialectic is apparent with Bourdieu's theoretically integrated account veering towards social structure and Giddens's theoretically diffuse account emphasising individual agency. Synthesising aspects of both Bourdieu and Giddens' positions we can regard the leader as an individual agent as being constrained to some degree in their thoughts and actions by their respective habitus and capital in the field in which they are operating while also having the capacity to make choices about their actions in pursuit of intended goals, including the acquisition of capital, but not being able to guarantee the achievement of their goals or even set out in advance a comprehensive plan which will lead to the achievement of those goals.

Leadership, seen as an intentional process of influence, is therefore flexible and to a greater or lesser extent emergent as a consequence of the responses a leader receives, and perceives, in relation to actions they initiate in pursuit of their intended goals or objectives and the responses a leader intentionally makes to opportunities that arise. On a day-to-day basis a leader may be operating largely using practical consciousness, which can be regarded as the developing body of experience and knowledge underpinned by habitus that allows actions to be performed without undue attention, effort and reflection. At times of challenge or when intentional leadership is initiated then a higher level of self-consciousness is required which may manifest itself as discursive consciousness that, importantly, Giddens (1984) defines as: "*What actors are able to say, or to give verbal expressions to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action; awareness which has a discursive form.*" (p.274) The communicative requirements of leadership as a process of intentional influence elevates the notion of finely tuned discursive consciousness and Bourdieu's idea of linguistic capital (Silver, 2005) to a high level of significance for leadership effectiveness.

If we regard leadership in organisational settings/fields as a game then the players, for this study middle to senior professional service managers, need not only a sound feel for the game but a strong orientation to play and, to be effective, the mind-set,

skills and timing to play well. Choosing to enter the game without sufficient confidence and skill, or at an inappropriate time, is likely to undermine attempts at leadership. However, in an organisational setting a manager attempting leadership is also a follower in relation to their boss, a peer in relation to their grade band equals in the organisational structure and a manager/team leader in relation to their direct reports. Understanding of leadership by managers thus encompasses how they perceive their relationships and formal structural position in respect of any intentional influence they may seek to achieve. The research strategy selected needs to be appropriate to the task of generating an account of this understanding.

**4.3 Research process, strategy and methods of data construction and analysis**

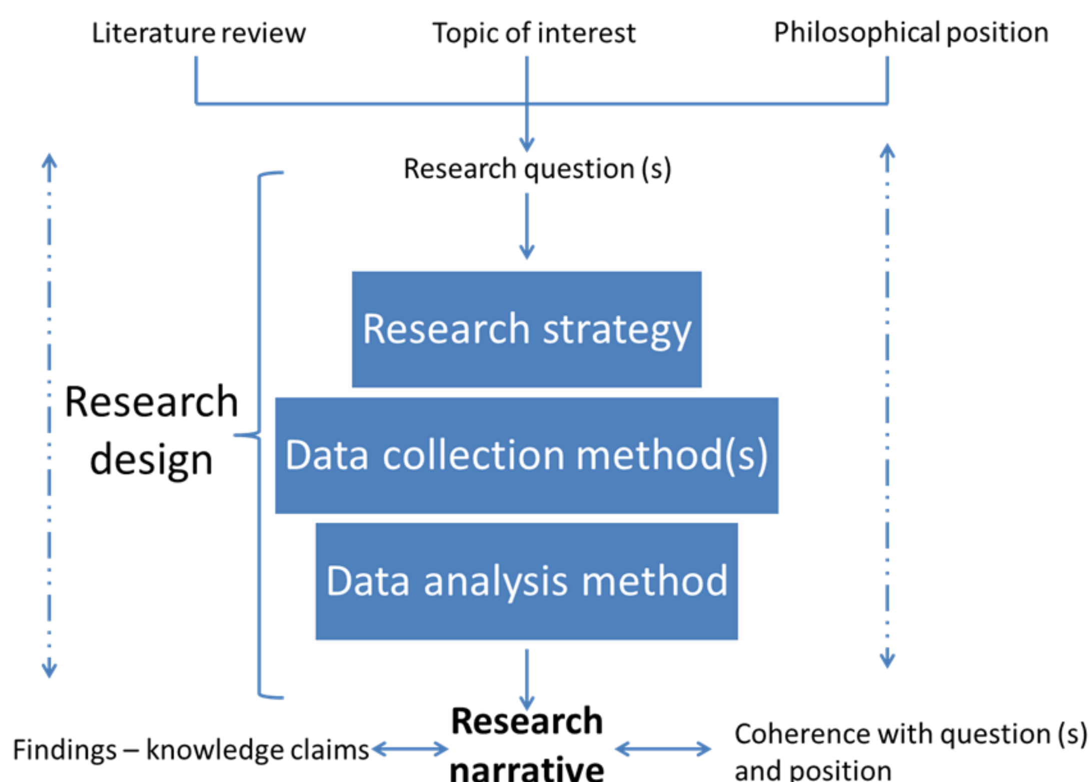
The design of a given piece of research is a compromise between any ideal approach to knowledge generation given limitless time and resources and the practicalities of delivering a feasible project within given parameters. As Thomas (2004) states, practical constraints are often unmentioned in research accounts but have a significant impact on the design and delivery of the research project. In funded research, outcomes and timescales are negotiated with the funding body and the research approach geared according to the limits of resources that have been granted. In doctoral research the outcomes are negotiated with responsible institutional academics taking account of degree regulations, ethical guidelines and the interests and mode of attendance/time availability of the student. It is obvious that the progress possible by a fully funded, full time doctoral student is tangibly different than that possible by a part-time student having to deliver the project over and above full-time work and other commitments. Whatever the duration and nature of the research journey all research is expected to conform to academically acceptable standards of conduct and presentation but the specific methodology employed is open to considerable debate as it will align with certain philosophical positions and not others. Whilst some research strategies (unethical, incoherent) are clearly wrong, what is 'right' can only reasonably be judged in relation to the philosophical position that is adopted/articulated.

Robson (2002) describes the research process using the prevalent assumption of a deductive approach in identifying five sequential elements: - purpose, theory, research questions, methods and sampling strategy. Thomas (2004) has a more enriched view suggesting that 'there is no one best way to do research' (p.4) and highlights common features of different approaches as including an empirical element using systematic and explicit methods the results of which are open to public

scrutiny. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) outline the inductive and iterative process of grounded theory which, through successive data collection and analysis until saturation, allows theory to emerge from the data, in contrast to a deductive approach in which data is collected to test a pre-determined hypothesis or theory.

Figure six below presents an overview of the research process as I envisage it for this study:

**Figure 6**: The empirical research process (author)




Scholars often use a broad brush dichotomy to categorise research approaches either as quantitative or qualitative with quantitative associated with a positivist/functionalist philosophical base and research methods that ***collect*** data susceptible to statistical analysis typical of much leadership research. The results generated from the research subjects are usually regarded as objective facts and the resulting knowledge 'scientific' owing to attempts made to eliminate subjectivity. Knowledge claims are considered to be testable according to the validity and reliability of the results. Qualitative research is often associated with an interpretive approach and postmodern sensibilities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.15). Research methods employed to ***construct*** the data tend to elicit richer details, sometimes from the respondents point of view, often utilising more extensive periods of

observation and involvement. Knowledge claims are made in relation to criteria such as credibility and dependability which underpin trustworthiness rather than proof (Klenke, 2008, p. 38).

**4.4 Research strategy**

Byrman and Bell (2003) classify quantitative and qualitative approaches collectively as *research strategies* whilst Klenke (2008) goes further stating that they are paradigms. They recognise that, "*The status of the distinction is ambiguous*," (p.25) and go on to tabulate the philosophical assumptions they associate with the two labels as shown in figure seven below:

**Figure 7**: Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies, Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.25

| | Quantitative | Qualitative |
|---|---|---|
| Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research | Deductive, testing of theory | Inductive, generation of theory |
| Epistemological orientation | Natural science model, in particular positivism | Interpretivism |
| Ontological orientation | Objectivism | Constructionism |

From the point of view of research methods the two broad approaches are not hermetically sealed with, for example, un-structured/semi-structured interviews perhaps being used in the early stages of a quantitative survey-based study to identify topics and develop questions and counting of the number of repetitions of themes within a text or transcript en route to theory development in a qualitative study. Mixed methods/mixed strategy studies may employ methods traditionally associated with both quantitative and qualitative research and Bryman and Bell (2003) conclude that, "*multi-strategy research, while offering great potential in many instances, is subject to similar constraints and considerations as research relying on a single method or research strategy.*" (p.493)

Another categorisation of research strategy is offered by Blaikie (2000) founded on what he argues are coherent ontological and epistemological assumptions that he acknowledges are, "*heuristic tools rather than descriptions of watertight categories that researchers occupy...*" (*p.100)*

**Figure 8**: The logic of four research strategies. Adapted from Blaikie, 2000, p.101

| | **Inductive** | **Deductive** | **Retroductive** | **Abductive** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aim | To establish universal generalisations to be used as pattern explanations | To test theories to eliminate false ones and corroborate the survivor | To discover underlying mechanisms to explain observed regularities | To describe and understand social life in terms of social actors' motives and accounts |
| From | Accumulate observations or data<br><br>Produce generalisations | Borrow or construct theory and express it as an argument<br>Deduce hypotheses | Document and model a regularity<br><br>Construct a hypothetical model of a mechanism | Discover everyday lay concepts, meanings and motives<br><br>Produce a technical account from lay accounts |
| To | Use these 'laws' as patterns to explain further observations | Test hypotheses by matching them with data | Find the real mechanism by observation and/or experiment | Develop a theory and test it iteratively |
| Broad Philosophical position | Positivism (Bacon, Mill, Durkheim) | Critical Rationalism (Popper) | Transcendental or scientific realism (Bhaskar and Harre) | Interpretivism (Weber,Schutz, Giddens) |

Missing from the categories is any obvious radical (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) or critical/emancipatory (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010) lens and there is a danger that scholars adopting the abductive approach which seeks to 'describe and understand social life in terms of social actors' motives and accounts' will be accused of being descriptive rather than analytical and being 'emotionalist' by merely reflecting respondent views (Silverman, 2001).

Of the four approaches set out in Blaikie's model the one that most aligns with my philosophical position is the Abductive strategy having interpretive roots and offering the opportunity to 'describe and understand' in this case leadership. Bryman and Bell (2003) suggest that a qualitative strategy best aligns with an interpretive epistemology and I will now consider some of the issues around qualitative research.

**4.5 Qualitative leadership research – support for and some difficulties**

Until relatively recently (the last twenty or so years) the majority of leadership research was leader-centred and naturally favoured psychologically oriented, quantitative, survey based research methods (for example, Lowe and Gardner, 2001). Klenke (2008) attributes this to the hegemony of positivism: "*Leadership research has been grounded in the objectivist, positivist, quantitative paradigm*," (p.3) and, "*This will continue to be the case as long as the widespread conviction persists that only quantitative data are ultimately valid and of high quality*." (p.5) However, Alvesson (1996) notes that, "*there has been a strong dissatisfaction with conventional approaches to leadership research which is dominated by positivistic and neo-positivistic assumptions and methods*" (p.455), and crystallises some of the concerns about 'The sad state of the art in Quantitative Leadership research' by asserting that, "*Thousands of studies have been conducted. The outcome of these enormous efforts has been meagre*." (p.457) Alvesson links the continued application of inappropriate methods to the adoption of an inappropriate paradigm and suggests embracing a new perspective rather than conducting yet more studies using the old approaches.

Morgan and Smircich (1980) see the differentiation of quantitative and qualitative research as, "*a somewhat crude and over-simplified dichotomization*," (p.491) and suggest that all research should reflexively examine the philosophical assumptions upon which it is based, the implication being that researchers should at least be transparent about their ontological and epistemological position. Bryman (1984), although sceptical about coherent links between method and epistemological position, is a notable advocate for qualitative leadership research arguing in Bryman et al (1996) that, "*While quantitative research will almost certainly continue to enjoy methodological hegemony within the field for many years, there is little doubt that qualitative research is beginning to make inroads into the field*." (p.353) Conger (1998) goes further by suggesting that qualitative research could be the cornerstone methodology for understanding leadership as multi-level, dynamic and with a symbolic component.

Bryman (2004) too proposes that scientific conservatism and belief in quantitative research rigour may be reasons why quantitative research remains ascendant but he does note an increasing volume of qualitative research since the 1990's. Of the range of qualitative methods that might be used, Bryman mentions that qualitative interviewing is the main method employed (56 of 66 articles reviewed, p.750) and notes the contribution that qualitative leadership research has made stating that," *qualitative research on leadership has greatly enhanced our appreciation of the significance of leaders as makers of meaning an aspect of leadership that is difficult to gain access to through quantitative investigations*." (p.762) He also suggests that leadership researchers should seek ways to make their findings more generalizable and cumulatively build upon earlier research (two arguments often used in relation to quantitative research).

Byrman's call for greater generalizability of qualitative research hints at the perceived lower status of some qualitative research that neither seeks nor claims to be generalizable in the usual quantitative probabilistic sense. Epistemologically, generalizability presumes that aspects of social reality are sufficiently consistent, stable and 'objective' such that occurrences described in one locality and time can be inferred to apply to another; when this situation is perceived to occur then knowledge is valid, as it reflects some 'truth' about the situation, and reliable when the findings can be repeated on a number of occasions. Summarizing a broad range of recent scholarship Delanty and Strydom (2003) outline a dozen arguments against such assumptions including views that knowledge is historically embedded, truth is relative, science is not neutral, theory is constitutive and knowledge is socially contextualised. Methodologically, qualitative research does not rely on the same large data sets (presumed to be necessary to argue for generalizability) as quantitative/neo-positivist research.

Given the traditional dominance of quantitative, positivist research the quality of which could be tested for validity and reliability, a major challenge for qualitative research is to establish similarly acceptable criteria. Klenke (2008) provides a list of quality criteria that might be employed to judge qualitative research:

**Figure 9**: Traditional and alternative criteria for judging qualitative research quality and rigour. Adapted from Klenke, 2008.p.40

| **Traditional criteria for judging quantitative research** | **Alternative criteria for judging qualitative research** |
|---|---|
| Internal validity | Credibility i.e. the extent to which the results are believable in the eyes of the participant |
| External validity | Transferability i.e. the extent to which the results may apply in other contexts |
| Reliability | Dependability i.e. the extent to which the results might be repeated/investigated by other researchers |
| Objectivity | *Confirmability i.e. the extent to which the results might be confirmed by others |

**There is a typological error in the published text – conformability should read confirmability*.

She refers here to 'credibility' as a kind of face validity in which participants involved in the research are able to verify the conclusions drawn, however credibility is naturally an issue for the academic community in terms of how they judge the research to have been conducted (and appears capable of being confirmed) and whether knowledge claims seem to be sensible in relation to the findings and possibly applicable in other settings (transferability). Other approaches to increase the potential dependability and confirmability of the research include triangulation and the use of mixed or varied methods. Amis and Silk (2008) label efforts to generate quality criteria for research that mirror post-positivist/foundational ones as quasi-foundationalism and argue for an even more radical and essentially relativist non-foundational approach: "*In ending any attempt to determine quality based on some methodological or post hoc criteria, judgements about the worth of a project become played out in a social context and intertwined with the exercise of power and utilization of political behaviour*." (p.473) Whilst I have some sympathy with their position the political realities of academic work and the on-going empiricist/positivist pressures means that even such quasi-foundational quality criteria are a step too far for some.

A further quality control on the production and reporting of qualitative research is research reflexivity. Following the linguistic turn, considerations around discourse and narrative as research subjects need also to apply to the product of research as a narrative meant to persuade particular audiences of its value and contribution to knowledge. As Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) point out: "*The research process constitutes a (re)construction of the social reality in which researchers both interact with the agents researched and, actively interpreting, continually create images for themselves and for others: images which selectively highlight certain claims*…" (p.10)

The acknowledgement of the active role of the researcher in creating research results, rather than discovering facts in the data, inevitably leads to calls for researcher self-reflection and reflexivity. Pillow (2003) contends that: "*Reflexivity is invoked in almost every qualitative research book or article…One of the most noticeable trends to come out of a use of reflexivity is increased attention to researcher subjectivity in the research process – a focus on how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis*…" (p. 176) If claims to generalizability and the creation of representative social facts are eschewed then different arguments have to be mustered to support the judgements or 'warranted assertions' (Dewey - Levi, 2010) presented. These can include arguments about the methodology employed to check or verify the data (triangulation, multiple-rater agreement, respondent validation) and the criteria invoked to judge the research outputs, for example credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Klenke, 2008).

Of the qualitative methods that might be used Bryman (2006) notes that the semi-structured interview is by far the most popular. Such a method accords with my interpretive perspective and research question therefore it is worth considering some of the ramifications of choosing the interview as a data collection/construction method.

### 4.6 The interview as data collection/construction method

Bryman and Bell (2003) note that, "*The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research."* (p.141) and relate this to the flexibility of the method. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) concur about the popularity of the method for a variety of purposes including social science, however they rightly caution against assumptions that the data collected from interviews is trustworthy and accurate (p.63).

Three general categories of interview are commonly described, these being structured, semi-structured and un-structured, although May (2001) proposes that group interviews constitute a fourth. Structured interviews are most commonly employed in quantitative/survey research studies where specific data are collected against pre-determined categories in a standard sequence with interviewers following a pre-determined script with little flexibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). A practical advantage is that time taken to complete the interview questions can be established and time required to complete a set number of interviews accurately estimated.

Semi-structured interviews utilise a coherent framework and a set of core questions (or interview guide - Bryman, 2008) but with the latitude for the researcher to employ them flexibly and ask additional questions to follow-up points of interest. There is likely to be some variability in time taken to conduct each interview which can make scheduling more problematic.

Un-structured interviews afford the maximum flexibility for the interviewee to talk around themes raised by the researcher but also reduces to a minimum any pre-imposed structure and control by the researcher. This can result in very variable durations and content of conversations with different individuals leading to difficulties in planning interview schedules and subsequent data analysis. However an advantage that Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note is the greater breadth of data that can be collected using unstructured interviews (which they classify as traditional/ethnographic, oral history, creative interviewing and postmodern).

Whilst popular, the utilisation of interviews as a method is not without problems. Thomas (2004) draws attention to interviewer bias which he typifies as, "*distortions introduced into the respondents' answers and behaviour as a result of the interviewer's characteristics, attitudes and behaviour*." (p.166) Gender is one important factor (especially from a feminist perspective) and Thomas (2004) notes age, ethnicity and social status as others. Silverman (2001, p.113/114) poses three relevant practical questions - what status do you attach to your data? Is your analytic position appropriate to your practical concerns? and do interview data really help in addressing your research topic? In respect of analytic position, Silverman (2001) proposes three categories of interview – positivist, attempting to ascertain facts about the real world; emotionalist, seeking to elicit the authentic voice of the subject and how they see the world and constructionist in which how the interviewee creates meaning is of primary interest. However, the Heideggerian phenomenological perspective offered by Lowes and Prowse (2001) extends this categorisation to include a fourth position where the interview text results from a co-created subjective/inter-subjective process.

Alvesson (2011,B) (drawing in part on Silverman) typifies three positions – *neo-positivist* in which the interviewer seeks to generate un-biased representations of reality from respondents; *romanticist* in which through generating rapport and trust with participants the inner understanding of participants may be realised and finally *localist* in which people are, "*producing situated accounts, drawing upon cultural resources in order to produce morally adequate accounts*." (p.19) Alvesson

recognises the possibility of mixed positions being adopted (romanticist/localist) and a key point is the need to challenge assumptions concerning the status of knowledge arising from interviews. May (2001, p.142) states that, "*Interviews are used as a resource for understanding how individuals make sense of their social world and act within it...*", a position which aligns best with Silverman's constructionist category and Alvesson's romanticism. Silverman goes further and differentiates two positions that might be adopted by interviewers in the way they regard the data generated via the interview – *externalist*, in which the reports are treated as reporting external realities and *internalist* in which reports are situated narratives. In considering the interview situation itself, Cassell (2005) conceives of both the interviewer and interviewee engaging in the construction of identities to reduce the ambiguity of the interview situation and concludes that, "*the interview is actually an interpretive process, the aim of which is to jointly and actively, construct meaning.*" (p. 176) Sims (2008) likens the interview to a theatrical performance implying contamination of responses as the interviewee plays a part and that, "the data should be seen as a product of this relationship, not as having emanated solely from the interviewee." (p.110)

In setting up interviews issues around sampling, ethics, question technique, bias and the truthfulness and accuracy of interviewee responses to questions are all of importance but in different ways depending upon the theoretical position adopted. Ethical issues such as confidentiality are common to the different interview approaches, however an interview conducted from a positivist position would seek to control sampling and questioning with a view to gathering data that can be grouped and analysed statistically/treated as 'objective facts', whereas the co-constructed qualitative interview as described by Cassell (2005) would be less concerned with pre-imposed structure and more interested in the analysis of the constructed interview text.

Cassell's position aligns best with the approach taken in this study which in Alvesson's (2011, b) terms is 'romantic' and 'local' in that I assume (within certain limits and constraints, for example, an interviewee's tendency to interpret the world in particular ways) that responses to questions are genuine efforts to provide information that the interviewee believes to be truthful, explanatory and meaningful within the life-world they are inhabiting. I also assume that the responses reflect not some unambiguous objective reality but the interviewee's emotional/cognitive interpretation of what they have experienced. A second level of interpretation occurs when the researcher interrogates the interview transcripts and seeks to generate

meaning from them in connection with the research question(s). Rather than being some flaw in the research process that invalidates the knowledge generated this ‘double hermeneutic’ merely reflects the mechanism by which social reality is constructed. In fact there is a third level of interpretation undertaken by anyone who reads the research account as they seek to understand and make sense of what is reported – a triple hermeneutic, although Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) associate the existence of a triple hermeneutic with the application of critical theory to the research process.

There are different ways in which the interview or discussion may be recorded including post-interview recollection and note making; contemporaneous note taking; audio recording followed by later review and note making; audio recording followed by transcription and examination/analysis of the text; video recording (if interviewing face to face or via video conference) followed by review and analysis. Each has practical strengths and weaknesses, but a strength for audio or video recording is that a record is generated which can be repeatedly interrogated by the researcher and anyone who wishes to challenge what was purportedly said or how it has been reported. Least time consuming for the researcher is contemporaneous note taking, however this further splits the concentration during the dialogue and may impact on the quality of the discussion as well as the quality and accuracy of the notes. Unless the researcher is skilled in short-hand and can take quite detailed notes of what is said inevitably there is a real-time editing process going on as the researcher summarises the notes. So we see that analysis is, to some extent, taking place even as the interview/discussions progresses which has methodological implications in respect of the extent to which any pre-suppositions the interviewer has are colouring and shaping the notes. It needs to be acknowledged that some pre-suppositions are unavoidable as they inform the phrasing of the interview questions employed and the overall structure of the conversation as directed by the interviewer.

For certain investigations, especially if the correlation between spoken response and what is suggested by physical position and body language is important, video recording may be the preferred option. However it is the most difficult to set up requiring an appropriately lit room; video camera, microphone and tripod and possibly operator(s) and the most intrusive, with interviewees potentially nervous about how they will look on camera and the security, and confidentiality in the use, of the video material collected. The most practical approach tends to be audio recording (subject to agreement of the interviewee) with later analysis by listening and note

taking, or transcribing and then reviewing the transcript. Poland (1995) expresses the concern that transcripts should be close to 'verbatim' but notes that the emotional and tonal content of the conversation is unlikely to be captured. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) and Tilley (2003) argue that transcription itself is interpretive and theory laden, whereas Hammersley (2010) believes that concerns about the degree to which transcriptions are constructed need to be kept in balance. Detailed transcription of speech patterns, silences, intonation and so on is only necessary for certain types of research, conversation analysis for example. Producing the transcript can take a considerable amount of time unless you have, or can employ, the skills of a touch typist. May (2001, p.138) suggests eight or nine hours for the researcher to fully transcribe a one hour tape but in my experience this is an under-estimate.

So far I have talked about some of the issues of interviewing in general but there are specific ones to be considered in relation to the research question(s). Unless un-structured interviews are to be used with few trigger questions to orient the discussion then care must be given to the structure of the actual interview questions and the way they are sequenced or scheduled as the phrasing of the questions and the order in which they are asked will trigger potentially emotion-laden reflections from the interviewee which have to be accounted for during the analysis. The specific sample of people chosen to interview is also an issue particularly in relation to knowledge claims made following analysis of the data from the particular sample. If generalizability is not a primary concern, as in phenomenological interviewing when the understandings and meanings of each individual are most important (Smith, 1996; Larkin et al, 2006), then the nature of the sample may be less of an issue. I will now consider a number of issues relating to sampling to argue in support of the approach taken in this study.

### 4.7 Sampling

Sampling is a contentious issue and a key point of challenge to the research process and results depending upon the epistemological paradigm adopted. In quantitative studies aimed at claiming generalizable theories, larger statistically significant samples are required to support such knowledge claims. Small scale qualitative studies serve the purpose of elucidating theoretical issues best then investigated using more 'scientific' methods. Luborsky and Rubenstein (1995) propose that, "*It is perhaps the case that sampling is linked, in American culture, to democratic ideals and notions of inclusion and representation.*" (p. 95) Given the academic dominance of US journals it can be inferred that a general orientation towards larger probabilistic

samples is pervasive within academia with an accompanying demand to justify the knowledge claims arising from qualitative research using small samples. Luborsky and Rubenstein (1995) go on to point out that, "*Rough 'rules of thumb' exist but these derive from three sources: traditions within social science research studies of all kinds, common-sense ideas about how many will be enough, and practical concerns about how many people can be interviewed and analysed in the light of financial and personnel resources. In practice from 12 to 26 people in each study cell seems just about right to most authors.*" (p.105)

This number generally accords with Marshall's (1996) experience: "New themes stopped emerging after about 15 interviews and an acceptable interpretive framework was constructed after 24 interviews…" (p. 524) Marshall also clarifies a key point of contention between research from different traditions: "*Sampling for qualitative research is an area of considerable confusion for researchers experienced in the hypothetico-deductive model. This largely relates to misunderstanding about the aims of the qualitative approach where improved understanding of complex human issues is more important than generalizability of results.*" (p. 524)

Guest et al (2006) review the topic of sample size and in their study to answer the question, 'How many interviews are enough?' and conclude that, "*data saturation had, for the most part, occurred by the time we had analysed twelve interviews*." (p.74) Francis et al (2010) point out that there is no agreed definition of data saturation (a concept strongly associated with the constant comparison method of grounded theory – Holton, 2007) and seek to derive principles for determining data saturation in qualitative theory-based content analysis studies. Largely in agreement with Guest et al (2006), they too find that data saturation is achieved from the analysis of thirteen interviews. Morse (2007) argues against accumulating large amounts of, particularly sub-standard, data suggesting that, "*Excessive data is an impediment to analysis, and the investigator will be swamped…*" (p.234)

Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argue positively for small sample interview-based research arguing for a dialogue between researcher and interviewee that stimulates interviewee reflection taking the view that each interview is in fact an instance or case in itself rather than a sample of a broader set of individuals. On this basis one case (interview) may be sufficient to illuminate important points, an argument also posited by Smith (2004) in relation to studies undertaken using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Rather than data saturation, Smith (2004) and Larkin et al (2006) argue for small samples based on the idiographic,

phenomenological perspective adopted in IPA which emphasises detailed understanding of interviewee's understanding of situations and events that, "*typically involves a highly intensive and detailed analysis of the accounts produced by a comparatively small number of participants*." (p.103) Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) compare the approaches of phenomenology, discourse analysis and grounded theory and suggest that: "*Typical sample sizes for phenomenological studies range from 1 to 10 persons…it is possible to use a single person's narrative and compare it with written documents…typical grounded theory studies report sample sizes ranging from 10 to 60 persons*." (p.1375)

The National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)'s response to the question of how many qualitative interviews is enough is set out in a report of various expert views compiled by Baker and Edwards (2012). The offering from Wolcott (pp.3,4) is worth repeating here:

"*That is, of course, a perennial question if not a great one. The answer, as with all things qualitative, is 'it depends'. It depends on your resources, how important the question is to the research, and even to how many respondents are enough to satisfy committee members for a dissertation. For many qualitative studies one respondent is all you need – your person of interest. But in general the old rule seems to hold that you keep asking as long as you are getting different answers, and that is a reminder that with our little samples we can't establish frequencies but we should be able to find the range of responses. Whatever the way the question is handled, the best answer is to report fully how it was resolved*."

So, according to a number of scholars over a twenty year time period, from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and with different research interests there is no specific sample size required to generate worthwhile knowledge using a qualitative research methodology. However the sample size selected should be explained and should be reasonable in relation to the time and resources available, the research question and the epistemic background for the study, with the results then being potentially credible to people from a similar epistemic background but open to challenge and rejection from scholars operating with different philosophical assumptions.

The nature, as well as the size, of the sample selected is clearly an important issue. Thomas (2004) differentiates two broad types of approach – probability methods, including simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling, and non-probability methods including quota sampling, availability/convenience sampling, purposive sampling and theoretical

sampling. Thomas contends that, "*The general aim of probability sampling is to obtain a subset of a population that is representative of it.", and, "...in practice, studies drawing on data from random samples are the exception rather than the rule in management research…Non-random samples are often the only practical alternative.*" (pp.106-107). So, studies aiming to claim representativeness (and generalizability) may well adopt probability sampling and it is important to realise that the practicalities of conducting the research generate constraints which may orient the study towards non-probabilistic sampling strategies. Bryman (2008) agrees that if generalizability is important then probability sampling is likely to be more compelling: "*This might occur with audiences for one's work for whom generalizability in the traditional sense of the word is important.*" (p.375) This implies that the intended audience for the work, rather than just epistemology or research method, is a potential driver for sampling strategy and size.

Of the non-probability sampling methods the one most open to challenge is convenience sampling which as Thomas (2004) suggests, "*Sometimes this is just a respectable sounding term meaning that your sample includes anyone you could get!*" (p.108) The quota selected in quota sampling is supposed to represent the relevant features of the wider group under study but as both Thomas and May (2001) point out is open to unconscious and convenience bias. Silverman (2001) mentions that the terms theoretical and purposive sampling are sometimes used synonymously whereas other authors trace the more common use of the term theoretical sampling to Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory (Thomas, 2004, Bryman, 2008). Bryant and Charmaz's (2007) definition is helpful here: "*Theoretical sampling: a type of grounded theory sampling in which the researcher aims to develop the properties of his or her developing categories or theory, not to sample randomly selected populations or to sample representative distributions of a particular population.*" (p.611) In grounded theory then, the sample evolves as the study progresses with researchers hunting the sample on the basis of categories or theory developed from the initial sample, that must have been identified or selected in line with some purpose.

May (2001) points out that purposive sampling is selective and made in relation to known characteristics of the people sampled and that, "*Numbers may often be small here and once again the 'fit for purpose' defence of the method may be deployed.*" (p.95) Bryman (2008) notes that the strategic selection is, "*so that those sampled are relevant to the research question that is being posed…Because it is a non-probability sampling approach, purposive sampling does not allow the researcher to generalize to a population.*" (p.415)

However, as Thomas (2004) points out, "*It is also important to note that random sampling does not guarantee a sample's representativeness*." (p.109)

Bryman's argument that purposive sampling does not allow knowledge generated to be generalized is based on a presumption of the need for any sample to be statistically representative of the wider group or population to support any knowledge claims. What most scholars fail to mention is that such generalizability is limited and may actually only be representative of a given group or population at a given point in time. The statistical methods employed during data analysis allow claims to be made at various levels of confidence, so whilst generalizable they are probabilistic at a group/population level rather than definitive for any individual member of the group or population. In contrast, a strength of purposive sampling is that it, "*allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested*." (Silverman, 2001, p.250) Thus if we identify a defined population and undertake a purposive sample aimed at illuminating key features of the population that the purposive sample represents, we should at least be able to claim that the results are indicative of what might be occurring in the broader group/population. We cannot claim that the results will necessarily apply to all other members of the group, but then neither can large scale random sampling. If the group under investigation has features which can reasonably be seem to have some commonality (if not complete homogeneity) we can infer, taking account of Luborsky and Rubenstein (1995), Marshall (1996) and Guest et al (2006), that if the sample size is somewhere between 13 and 20+ we will have accumulated sufficient data for key factors/categories/themes to be identified that should also be found across the larger group/population. Morse (2007) underpins this argument in asserting that, "*This inherent bias in qualitative research is an incredibly important factor. It means that the use of randomly selected samples may impede and invalidate inquiry, for they cannot be guaranteed to be the 'best cases'. Qualitative samples should always include processes of purposeful selection according to specific parameters identified in the study*…" (p.234)

### 4.8 Ethics in qualitative research

Professional research methodology requires consideration of the ethical dimension in compliance with relevant legislation, university policy, discipline codes of conduct and social convention. Thomas (2004), Bryman and Bell (2003) and Bryman (2008) identify four overlapping ethical principles that need to be appropriately applied in social and management research – the avoidance of harm to participants, the achievement of informed consent, the protection of privacy and avoidance of any deception. For May (2001), the genealogy of such principles can be traced back to Kantian ethical theory and he concludes that, "*overall, rigid inflexible sets of ethical rules for social research (deontology) could leave us with undesirable consequences*." (p.61).

Whether informed by principled or consequentialist rationale there are practical reasons why researchers must attend to ethical issues including the generation of greater confidence from research participants and sponsors in the early stages of the research and the avoidance later of institutional sanctions and possible legal penalties. Bryman (2008) observes that the realities of research mean that whilst grossly inappropriate activities can be identified and avoided some of the finer details may be ethically blurred and that, "*there is sometimes a clash between the ethically desirable and the practical*." (p.129)

For Blaikie (2000) the principal ethical issues in most social research relate to the treatment of the research participants specifically in respect of the detail of information provided concerning the research process and outcomes and how due confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. However, as both Bryman (2008) and Blaikie (2000) note there are sometimes tensions between strict adherence to ethical practices and the practical conduct of the research. Thomas (2004) highlights two general strategies to resolve conflicts of interest, either to put the interests of the research participants or subjects first (arguably an ethical principle stance) or to prioritize the perceived contribution to knowledge and argue that the ends justify the means (a consequentialist approach). In this study, an important ethical issue is the preservation of interviewee anonymity as there are potentially negative consequences on the data quality if the managers are not convinced that what is said will remain anonymous and on the managers' organisational standing if personal identity can be discerned in the report of any results.

In respect of research ethics Bryman and Bell (2003) note that, "*the main elements in the debates do not seem to move forward a great deal.*" (p.536) Arguably there are two main factors that generate the need for heightened consideration of the ethical elements of a research project – the nature of the research methodology adopted, for example participant observation (especially if it entails covert elements) and the type of research participants, for example children or vulnerable adults. Quantitative methods, for example surveys, often analyse and abstract the data in such a way that the contribution of particular individuals is obscured thereby maintaining privacy and obviating the possibility of harm to individual respondents. Qualitative methods may require much more intimate contact with smaller numbers of research participants and the collection, analysis and presentation of 'richer' data thereby generating more fertile conditions for ethical problems, such as the inadvertent deception of participants, invasions of privacy and loss of participant anonymity.

Bryman and Bell (2003) comment on particular difficulties in maintaining anonymity when reporting results involving small numbers of respondents and also too clearly identifying the site of the research, for example a particular university, which may allow the identities of participants to be inferred from the verbatim accounts reported. Thomas (2004) points to the need to undertake multiple levels of redaction of identifiers, for example the name and job title of participants, when reporting verbatim data in order to attempt to preserve anonymity and thereby restrict potential harm.

There is a consensus amongst scholars (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Bryman, 2008; May, 2001 and Thomas 2004) that ethical issues cannot be avoided in social research, therefore they need to be managed in a way that minimises harm to research participants and reduces the possibility of reputational damage to sponsoring organisations and the researchers themselves. Cognisance of relevant ethical codes when designing the research, scrutiny of the research project by ethics committees, taking account of advice from supervisors and experienced researchers, providing accurate and appropriate information to research participants and gaining their informed consent and also care in collecting and reporting data are measures that minimize potential ethical difficulties.

### 4.9 Some approaches for analysing qualitative data

Analysis of the data (recorded/constructed for example in the interview transcripts) needs to be undertaken using a technique in keeping with the philosophical position adopted and research strategy employed. Bryman (2008) lists four *approaches* (the

first two of which he denotes as *strategies*): analytic induction, grounded theory, narrative analysis and secondary analysis of qualitative data. In comparison, Klenke (2008) talks of qualitative *traditions* – case study, content analysis, qualitative interviewing and mixed methods, and underutilised methods including grounded theory, ethnography, historiometry, phenomenology and narrative analysis. This suggests both a loose use of the term analysis and a conceptualisation of analysis as intimately linked to the method employed.

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) thoroughly interweave discussion of analytical approach with philosophy and method considering for example, data-oriented methods, various forms of hermeneutics and a range of critical approaches leading to a reflexive methodology involving reflexive interpretation. Their points concerning researcher reflexivity about constructed data are important as due reflexivity potentially reduces the risk of researcher bias, referred to earlier by Thomas (2004).

Bryman and Bell (2003) (and Silverman, 2001) classify content analysis as a quantitative analytical technique: "*An approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable manner.*" (p.195) The idea of counting and applying pre-determined categories appears to differentiate content analysis from qualitative approaches however, without applying some kind of pre-existing frame it is not possible to discern fragments of text that might constitute a code and it is clear that counting features prominently in other techniques such as grounded theory, so the distinction is not clear. Bryman (2008) implies that this is a weakness in saying that, "*It is almost impossible to devise coding manuals that do not entail some interpretation on the part of coders*." (p.291) Here he is talking of inter-coder reliability as interpretation is at the core of any analysis.

Bryman and Bell (2003) also indicate that coding is a crucial stage in content analysis that involves designing a coding schedule and a coding manual both of which allow for consistency of coding for single and multiple coders but with potential pitfalls including the discreteness of dimensions, how exclusive and exhaustive are the categories and clarity concerning the unit of analysis. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) find evidence of the use of qualitative content analysis (in nursing research) and identify a range of important concepts that inform how the analysis is undertaken including unit or level of analysis, a focus on manifest (what the text says) or latent (interpretation of meaning) content and the meaning, content or coding unit being,

"*the constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning*." (p.106) Codes are organised in content areas (that highlight a specific explicit area with little interpretation), a category (being a content group that shares a commonality) and themes that they consider to be, "*a thread of an underlying meaning through condensed meaning units, codes or categories, on an interpretative level*." (p.107). Graneheim and Lundman (2004) therefore construct their coding hierarchy based on degrees of commonality and more significantly on degrees of researcher interpretation.

Some of the apparent difference between and distinctiveness of the various approaches masks what is at heart a common hermeneutic process, that of interpreting the data so that meaning is constructed. Depending upon the strategy, and at different points in the process, data categories will specified or identified and the data set coded against those categories. The categories may be linked to broader themes which in turn will link to an over-arching theoretically informed research narrative. The interpretive process necessarily entails an element of pre-judgment/pre-conception as some frame is required in order to differentiate the categories and recognise discrete elements of the data for coding. Data elements that may be sufficiently distinctive to attract coding include significant words, phrases, metaphors and other figures of speech, discourses and stories with recurrence of elements across the data set informing the identification of broader themes, as well as in some types of analysis being used to justify generalisability on the basis of frequency or prevalence. The iterative organisation of the results then informs the research narrative in the discussion and conclusions which constitute the knowledge findings/claims as outcomes of the project.

Therefore, in order to understand and analyse any text, active engagement with, and interpretation of, the text is required whether this is regarded formally as hermeneutical or not. The metaphor of a lens is often applied to the examination of data from particular positions (for example, Cresswell and Miller, 2000) and from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective (Laverty, 2008) the researcher can be regarded as the lens. Therefore, no matter what the content of the original text, the interpretive presence of the researcher must be recognised as, "*Qualitative analysis is inherently subjective because the researcher is the instrument for analysis*." (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007).

There are a range of techniques that can be applied to the *analysis of the content of textual data* including, for example, thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis and content analysis (Bryman, 2008) to which might also be added conversation analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, narrative analysis and grounded theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Vaismoradi et al (2013) find similar goals and approaches in several qualitative research methods including content and thematic analysis. They argue for differentiation between the two viewing the most significant differences as being in the level of interpretation of the text and amount of counting undertaken. Whilst the vocabulary of different qualitative approaches is sometimes different reflecting the logic of the approach, for example data saturation in grounded theory, the general pattern of the process is often rather similar. The table in figure ten provides a comparison of six steps listed for three qualitative analysis approaches - grounded theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) and thematic analysis to show similarities and differences:

**Figure 10**: A comparison of the steps in three qualitative research methods

| | **Grounded theory**<br>**Adapted from Bryman (2008)** | **IPA**<br>**Smith et al (2009)** | **Thematic analysis**<br>**Braun and Clarke, (2006)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Coding | Reading and re-reading | Familiarizing yourself with your data |
| 2 | Categories | Initial noting | Generating initial codes |
| 3 | Saturate categories | Developing emergent themes | Searching for themes |
| 4 | Explore relationships between categories | Searching for connections across emergent themes | Reviewing themes |
| 5 | Test hypotheses | Moving to the next case | Defining and naming themes |
| 6 | Formal theory | Looking for patterns across cases | Producing the report |

As analytical processes there are many similarities between IPA and Grounded theory though also some notable differences, for example a focus on rich interpretation of a few accounts relating to an important life-experience (IPA) as opposed to theoretical sampling and data collection on as many instances as needed

to achieve data saturation (grounded theory) (Baker et al, 1992; Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Owing to the idiographic nature of the IPA approach an extended individual narrative needs to be constructed for each interviewee before thematic analysis commences which generates large amounts of descriptive text. A practical solution to this problem is to conduct and report on only a few interviews (Smith, 2004) however, this begs a question concerning the generalizability of the findings.

There are also obvious similarities between IPA and thematic analysis but Braun and Clarke (2006) contrast their notion of thematic analysis with both IPA and grounded theory arguing that, unlike thematic analysis, both are theoretically bounded. However, there must be a point during the analysis when some theory, even if implicit, is applied. The key issue, as they too point out, is the congruence between the philosophical standpoint and the method.
The final step (6) of the three analytical processes best delineates the difference between them with grounded theory specifically seeking to generate new theory of abstract conceptual generality (Glaser, 2007), IPA seeking to understand patterns of individual experience that can be linked to existing theory (Smith et al, 2009) and thematic analysis developing themes from the source data that might flexibly be related to a range of focal theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

For this study, data analysis using grounded theory is rejected on the basis that the theoretical sampling strategy does not accord with the purposive one actually adopted. After trialling, IPA, although fully in keeping with philosophical position and research strategy, is rejected on account of the voluminous, descriptive analysis required before general themes are identified. Thematic analysis conforms to the more-or-less standard way of analysing qualitative, textual data but is sufficiently flexible to embrace the complex conceptual framework emerging from the review of leadership literature and the ontological social duality evident in the intersecting structuration/practice theories of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977).

**4.10 Thematic analysis**

Sandelowski and Leeman (2012) suggest that, "*The identification of themes is foundational to qualitative research of all kinds,*" (p.1407) but whilst thematic analysis of some sort may be common it is not necessarily clear what thematic analysis is. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that thematic analysis is, "*poorly demarcated and*

*rarely acknowledged, yet widely used,*" (p.77) and Bryman (2008) comments that thematic analysis, "*is not an approach to analysis that has an identifiable heritage or that has been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques*." (p.554).

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as, "*a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.*" (p.79) Unlike grounded theory where data saturation is used to justify claims, Braun and Clarke suggest that numerical prevalence of a theme or code is only one indicator of importance with main issue being, "*whether it captures something important in relation to the overall*." (p.82) In support of his argument for saliency analysis, Buetow (2010) disagrees with Braun and Clarke in asserting that, "*Thematic analysis ignores codes that do not recur yet may nonetheless be important*. " (p.123) As thematic analysis is not founded on a particular theoretical framework it can be applied from a number of different theoretical positions, although, "*A good thematic analysis will make this transparent.*" (Braun and Clarke,p.81) They question the rhetoric of claims about the importance of themes based on frequency and offer a number of options as to how the analysis might be conducted including using an inductive or deductive approach to theme identification and a semantic or latent (or manifest and latent – Graneheim and Lundman, 2004) approach to thematic interpretation. Braun and Clarke (2006) define latent analysis as going," *beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies*…" (p.84)

In their six step process (noted in figure nine), Braun and Clarke (2006) differentiate between codes and themes with codes being basic elements of interest to the analyst and themes being broader units of analysis that are interpreted in relation to an emerging conceptual framework or concept map (reminiscent of grounded theory). Ryan and Bernard, (2003) suggest that, "*themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions founds in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds and objects. You know you have found a theme when you can answer the question, what is this expression an example of?*" (p.87) They suggest a number of ways of identifying themes of various sizes in the text including repetitions, indigenous typologies, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material to which might also be added narratives. Bradley et al (2007) seem to differentiate thematic analysis from work to construct taxonomies and theory, however given the flexibility of the thematic analytical approach and the need to organise the themes according to

some framework or other there is no reason why a taxonomy of identified themes could not be articulated or themes linked to relevant theory.

Attride-Stirling (2001) advocates the development of concept maps (which she terms thematic networks) as a visual way of organising the information once the initial detailed coding has been completed. Ryan and Bernard (2003b, in Denzin and Lincoln) suggest that coding is 'the heart and soul' of text analysis and offer similar sequence of steps to Braun and Clarke's for undertaking what they term coding rather than thematic analysis. They point out that themes can be 'fuzzy' and whilst some will have been identified during the literature review (and therefore have informed the design of the study and the research question) others will be induced from the text. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) apply a combined deductive/inductive approach to a study in part to exemplify the application of Schutzian social phenomenological framework for achieving rigour whilst allowing for the subjective meanings of the 'actor's to be reported. So, thematic analysis is a flexible and fuzzy approach to analysing the content of text by identifying and coding elements that aggregate to broader conceptual themes and which can incorporate deductive and inductive interpretation.

However, in keeping with other analytical approaches such as IPA (Larkin et al, 2006; Smith 2011), Braun and Clark (2006) suggest that active engagement with, and repeated reading of, the text is essential: "*It is vital that you immerse yourself in the data to the extent that you are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content*." (p.87) This exhortation for data immersion echoes the grounded theory sentiment of 'theoretical saturation' achieved through the process of constant comparison (Holton, 2007, in Bryant and Charmaz). Such detailed engagement suggests that deep thought has been given to the interrogation and interpretation of the text and construction of codes and themes and, therefore, the research process has been rigorous implying validity as a consequence of the craftsmanship of the research(er) (Kvale,1995). Whether implied or stated this deep involvement with the text is a way of supporting claims for the validity of the findings alongside arguments concerning the sample size and selection and prevalence (counting) of the themes that have been identified/constructed.

The flexibility and fuzziness of thematic analysis, and it's similarity of process with other approaches to qualitative inquiry, leaves it's use open to criticism from scholars who perceive that meaningful results can only be achieved through the application of a particular systematic or 'scientific' method. As Bryman (2008) notes a range of

analytical techniques (examination of key words, metaphors and other figures of speech, stories or narratives) can be employed to identify themes within the thematic analysis but will require an explanation of why those particular techniques have been used. Analysis at the latent level allows for a deeper or more critical analysis of the data revealing implicit conceptualisations and ideologies. Thematic analysis as an interpretive process is not wedded to a particular philosophical position or theory and can therefore be applied effectively in this study investigating the understanding of leadership by professional service managers from an interpretive (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), and constructivist (Petit and Huault, 2008) standpoint, using a broadly abductive strategy (Blaikie, 2000) and applying a structurationist (Elliot,2009; Inglis and Thorpe, 2012) focal theory.

**4.11 The conduct of the empirical study**

The final shape of the empirical study is in keeping with the methodological standpoint already outlined and emerged following negotiations with academic supervisors also taking account of practical constraints of access and time availability. Given the arguments made earlier for the importance of context in the understanding of leadership one research approach that could've been undertaken is that of a case study. Serious consideration was given to this and some initial data collection, for example a number of strategy and policy documents, prior to the final decision to focus on the emergence of understanding of leadership based on the interview responses of the managers. As all managers interviewed worked in (two) research-intensive universities the analysis can be regarded as reflective of the kinds of understandings that may arise in such a context.

Some research elements envisaged at the start of the data collection/construction process and mentioned to participants in the briefing note (Appendix 4) were shelved largely for practical and pragmatic reasons, for example discussions with the pilot interviewee suggested that research participants were highly unlikely to have the time to comment upon interview transcripts and complete critical incident logs. As the interviews and the project as a whole took much longer to complete than originally envisaged the ideas sharing workshop was also suspended. Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts remains as the essential component of this particular research project.

The research question was eventually phrased as:

- **"How do professional service (administrative) managers in higher education understand leadership?"**

17 core interview questions (appendix 2) were developed to generate responses relevant to aspects of how the managers understood leadership, for example in relation to working within a higher education institution and how they believed different people would judge their effectiveness. They were sequenced with the intention of first stimulating general recollection and reflection concerning their management career, then quite specific consideration of relevant issues and finally concluding with general thoughts on the difference between leadership and management and capturing or confirming final thoughts on any of the topics discussed. In adopting a qualitative approach (4.5) using semi-structured interviews (4.6) as the data *construction* method (Silverman, 2001) it is important to recognise that the interviewee responses are to a certain extent being thematically pre-categorised as, for example, asking questions about challenges faced will stimulate responses about the experience of and understanding of challenges which then informs data analysis and reporting. The interviews were conducted with a purposive sample (4.7) of twenty middle and senior professional service managers in two (ten each) research-intensive universities. The two universities were selected from amongst the twenty or so possible on the basis of ease of access geographically (which helped contain research costs) and as facilitated by supportive contacts in each university. This sampling approach offered the possibility of identifying any nuanced contextual differences between the two HEIs but also limited the general focus of the findings to traditional, research-led universities.

Preparation for data collection, including identification of the two universities to be approached and agreement with supervisors of the schedule of interview questions took place in 2011. Primarily for reasons of practicality, it was determined to be un-feasible to interview managers across the full range of hierarchical levels and functional or academic areas and this sample therefore limits the variety of understandings presented here. Given the final sample of managers the understandings reported are for middle-to-senior managers operating in central, faculty and school roles in research-intensive universities in the UK in 2012.

A purposive attempt (partially successful) was made to role match interviewees in each of the universities, however the initial sample had to be modified when some of the preferred interviewees expressed the wish not to be involved in the research. I was able to contact a number of the interviewees directly and enlisted the support of a colleague to approach interviewees in a university with which I was relatively unfamiliar. Both samples represent a small percentage (less than 10%) of the middle-to-senior managerial population in each institution. The relatively small sample is sufficient to address the research question given the philosophical standpoint adopted, analytical method employed and restriction of generalizability claims. To facilitate recruitment an information note (shown in Appendix 1) was circulated on my behalf by my contact in university B to targeted interviewees not all of whom agreed to take part in the study.

An important ethical consideration was to maintain the anonymity of the managers, all of whom had significant managerial roles within the two institutions and this was achieved by obscuring the identity of the interviewees by referring to them in the analysis using an alphabetical designation (from A to T), rather than specific role, for example Director of IT services. A further device employed was to use common role terminology across both institutions, for example referring to all staff as professional service staff (although the terminology in one HEI was professional *support* service). As gender issues were not a key feature of this investigation there is also a limited attempt to phrase the analysis in a non-specific way, although initial attempts to remove all references to gender (initially no reference to he/she, him/her) during the analysis proved unhelpfully awkward and was dropped. Only one interviewee spoke English as a second language and in order to obscure that person's identity I have anglicised any direct quotes from in transcript in order to preserve anonymity.

All managers were informed in advance of the purpose of the interview (both verbally and in writing – appendix 4) but as several of the managers knew the researcher in some capacity or another it was an ethical priority to ensure that any information provided was restricted solely to the research project and not otherwise specifically referred to especially to people who might be able to infer the identity of the interviewee. This was especially important in respect of those managers who were prepared to make potentially controversial comments about themselves, others and their organisations. As adults and experienced managers all interviewees were in a position to self-reflexively edit their responses to questions as they felt necessary, however having been assured of confidentiality and anonymity they may have been encouraged to speak more frankly than usual.

A further ethical and analytical consideration was to consciously manage potential researcher bias in the data analysis especially for those interviewees personally known to the researcher and/or expressing views towards which the researcher might be sympathetic or antagonistic. This required adopting a consistently professional but friendly approach during all interviews and seeking to interpret the data and narrate the results in a measured and appropriate way.

The final sample of managers shown in table one below thus represents a convenience-informed purposive sample:

**Table 1**: Job role and structural location of the twenty interviewees

| Role | Location | Hierarchical level | Number interviewed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chief Operating officer** | Centre | 1 | 1 |
| Directors of functional service (IT, Change, residential and commercial services, student recruitment, finance | Centre | 2 | 6 |
| Head of functional service (planning, teaching and learning, staff training, organisational development) | Centre | 2/3 | 4 |
| Head of Faculty administration | Faculty | 2 | 3 |
| Head of School administration/school management | School | 3 | 5 |
| Project manager/co-ordinator | School | 4 | 1 |
| **Total** | | | 20 |

** *Significant efforts have been made in this thesis to maintain the anonymity of interviewees many of whom continue to work in the same roles in the two universities. Given that each organisation only has one Chief Operating officer anyone seeking to determine details of the responses from the one I interviewed would have, at most, a 50% chance of being right*

The tables below provide suitably anonymous general role and experience data in relation to the 20 people interviewed:

Tables 2a (and 2b): Biographical data tables for interviewees – universities A and B

| Person $ | Gender | Level | Role base | Years in HE | Years in current role | Approx. no of management roles during career | Main sector experience | Interview length (rounded minutes) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1a | F | 3 | School | 26 | 6 | 4 | HE | 38 |
| 2a | F | 3 | School | 23 | 5 | 5 | HE | 60 |
| 3a | M | 2 | Centre | 27 | 8 | 3 | HE | 58 |
| 4a | M | 2 | Centre | 8 | 1 | 6 | Private | 61 |
| 5a | F | 2/3 | Centre | 17 | 5 | 3 | HE | 31 |
| 6a | M | 3 | Centre | 18 | 9 | 5 | Civil Service/HE | 75 |
| 7a | F | 2 | Faculty | 16 | 2 | 4 | HE | 42 |
| 8a | F | 3 | School | 25 | 8 | 4 | HE | 65 |
| 9a | M | 2 | Faculty | 11 | 2 | 4 | HE | 42 |
| 10a | M | 1 | Centre | 4.5 | 1 | 9 | Private | 65 |
| Avg. | | | | 17.5 | 4.7 | 4.7 | | 53.7 |

Average interview length – female = 47 mins; average interview length male = 60 mins

Table 2B

| Person | Gender | Level | Role base | Years in HE | Years in current role | Approx. no of management roles during career | Main sector experience | Interview length |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1b | F | 2 | Centre | 4 | 4 | 5 | Private/ Police | 33 |
| 2b | F | 4 | School | 3 | 0.5 | 4 | Finance/ | 37 |
| 3b | F | 3 | Centre | 3 | 3 | 5 | Civil service/ freelance/FE | 90 |
| 4b | F | 2 | Centre | 12 | 4 | 6 | Private Local Auth HE | 64 |
| 5b | F | 2 | Centre | 9 | 9 | 3 | Civil service/ Private | 36 |
| 6b | F | 3 | School | 23 | 2 | 4 | HE | 43 |
| 7b | M | 2 | Centre | 4 | 2.5 | 7 | Private | 52 |
| 8b | M | 2 | Centre | 5 | 2.5 | 10 | Private | 128 |
| 9b | F | 3 | School | 1.5 | 1.5 | 4 | Local Auth | 60 |
| 10b | M | 2 | Faculty | 12 | 2.5 | 3 | Private/HE | 56 |
| Avg. | | | | 7.7 | 3.2 | 5.1 | | 60 |

Average interview length – female = 52 mins; average interview length male = 79 mins. (for males excluding the exceptional interview = 54 mins.)

*$ Please note that a further attempt is made to obscure identity by referring to managers alphabetically when presenting results rather than using the 1 to 10 listing as shown here*

Based on this particular sample, what is interesting, and potentially significant if replicated across the target universities as a whole, is the difference in average length of time working within higher education; for the managers in university (A) this was 17.5 years compared to 7.7 years for managers in University (B). There is also a greater diversity of work experience amongst this sample of managers in University B. Both the acculturation effect of long experience in higher education and the lack of diversity of sector background could potentially impact on the understanding of leadership in university A. On the other hand the aggregated many years of experience (175.5 for university A and 76.5 for University B giving a combined total of 252 years) could strengthen confidence in their accounts of the understanding of leadership in a higher education setting. The sample is reasonably balanced between central (11) and faculty/school operational roles (9) but with a preponderance of mainly central second tier roles (10).

There is a need for alertness in terms of the possible impact of my gender (male) on female interviewees; the most notable indicator of a possible effect being that 25% of interviews with female managers lasted less than 40 minutes with non under 40 minutes for men. This reduction in interview times may reduce the data richness and inadvertently highlight male rather than female understandings of leadership. All but one of the respondents were white European so nothing can be inferred from this study that addresses issues of ethnicity and any possible impact on leadership/management within (research-intensive, UK) higher education institutions

Interviews commenced with a pilot in early December 2011 to test the interview questions and how well the question sequence facilitated discussion. Feedback on the interview questions and schedule from the first interviewee was:

(The questions are*)" Fine, flow fine; good to have before-hand – they can make a few notes. You might get different perspective from managers in different roles – a lot on (my area) in this. Probably say less. Could you lessen the number into themes? It looks a lot? The background; current challenges; in the wider sector; you and your own team; Effectiveness- you and your own team; then about your own personal development; where you think you could go in the future. If they had the categories you could ask the questions. They're fine."*

The schedule of interview questions is shown in appendix 2. The interview questions were carefully written to reflect the research question and also to stimulate discussion and generate flow during the interview. An estimate of 1 hour per interview as an average was made and interviewees advised accordingly. In fact, the

shortest interview recorded was around 31 minutes with the longest being an exceptional 128 minutes (the average across the group being around 57 minutes). A very high-quality recording device (Roland Edirol recorder) was used which resulted in clearly audible mp3 files.

To allow time for the transcription and analysis of the pilot interview, the remaining interviews were initially scheduled to take place between February and May 2012, however owing to re-scheduling of appointments by one or two interviewees the final interview was conducted in September 2012. I personally transcribed the pilot interview (around 20 hours) to commence detailed engagement with the data and undertake test coding - an extract from the test coding is shown in appendix 3. This was a useful exercise as it exposed some of the problems of attempting to transcribe and code the interview. Taking account of the broad definition of leadership as an intentional process of influence (Yukl, 2002), I test coded the pilot interview in relation to perceived influencing strategy and influencing tactic or technique. I subsequently rejected this approach as I felt that too fixed and restrictive a template was being imposed on the data.

The second and three other interviews that I transcribed (five or 25% in total) provided strong insight into the difficulties of undertaking transcription and the time required to do this (not being a touch typist). Fortunately, my line manager made funds available to enable the remaining 15 interviews to be professionally transcribed. The transcription service provider indicated a range of charges for different degrees of detail of transcription, with greater cost for para-vocalisation of text. Given my experience of transcription to that point (May, 2012) and my intended analytical approach, I decided that this level of detail was not required thereby limiting the cost incurred by the university. For the twenty interviews as a whole over 370 pages (184,752 words) of interview transcripts were produced.

All interviews were conducted in private offices (in just one case after negotiation following an initial conversation with the interviewee in a café) with minimal interruptions. In two cases a small amount of the interview data was lost owing to battery exhaustion temporarily interrupting the recording. Recording resumed after battery replacement.

Colleagues who agreed to be interviewed were briefed concerning the purpose of the interview and assured of confidentiality in respect of any information provided. A briefing note was written and made available to all potential interviewees in the second institution (See Appendix 4). When asked for further details during interviews

the names of the participating HEIs were shared but assurances were given that details concerning individual interviews would remain confidential. Given the ease with which people who might access this thesis could identify particular respondents based on their job title and life history, in the interests of confidentiality efforts have been made to minimise and obscure such traceable biographical information.

Following completion of the final interview and transcript, comprehensive analysis of the full twenty transcripts took place initially by line-by-line examination of transcripts, the underlining of interesting statements and making comments in the margins. Then, each individual transcript was re-examined and concept maps drawn up by hand to visually organise and code responses by each individual to the interview questions; an example of this produced using 'mind-genius' mind-mapping software is shown in appendix 5. This approach to concept mapping is not the one advocated by Attride-Stirling (2001) as it was intended to illuminate issues rather than organise already identified codes and formed part of the repeated and detailed engagement with the textual data as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Following the line-by-line examination and production of concept maps, a considerable amount of work was initially devoted to identifying themes by undertaking a detailed descriptive analysis of each individual transcript (using an idiographic approach related to IPA –Smith, 2004). Unfortunately, this work proved redundant as it was not possible (for me) to economically and convincingly organise the data. Finally a thematic analysis was undertaken. To ensure that the thematic analysis was demonstrably rigorous and comprehensive three analytic techniques, including detailed examination of specific responses to key interview questions, were applied to the data so that triangulation (Bryman and Bell, 2003) on the most important themes could be accomplished. This multi-technique approach is in keeping with Bryman's (2008) view of thematic analysis and has the value of reducing any 'fuzziness' in the thematic analysis by drawing on a number of recognised techniques, some particularly appropriate to illuminating understanding.

The thematic analysis of the data focuses primarily on the manager's implicit and explicit understanding of leadership and their own effectiveness, in the context of their role, location in the organisational structure and work within a research-intensive higher education institution. Though less detailed the observations of this sample of managers concerning their own development and their beliefs about the effective development of others is interesting, especially from a professional HRD perspective.

To undertake steps two to four of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analytical process, two primary analytical techniques were used - a key word analysis (a form of qualitative content analysis) that Byrman (2008) suggests, "can then be used as a springboard for a more thematic analysis." (p.281) and a narrative or story analysis that Polkinghorne (1995) proposes is a kind of, "*discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes,*" (p.5). In this project I am not show-casing a particular technique or trying to make strong epistemological claims about its value, I am simply utilising the techniques to draw out themes that elaborate the understanding of leadership by the professional service managers. In converging on these themes using two techniques my aim is to surmount the limitations of any one technique. This approach is not a mixed-methods one in the way that Bryman (2008) describes it generating data from both quantitative and qualitative approaches, although there are elements of counting to demonstrate close inspection of the text and identify patterns of repetition rather than make numerically supported knowledge claims. It does address two elements of mixed-methods research identified by Bryman (2008), those of triangulation and completeness.

Whilst unusual, the logic for this approach to thematic analysis is, I argue, sound: if thematic analysis is a flexible process/method not linked to a specific theory or epistemology then the primary challenge in its use is devising codes and categories then generating and organising themes. At heart, the process of coding and theme generation is an interpretive one in which elements of the text are perceived to have some significance and are gradually organised into a coherent conceptual scheme. In using three complementary techniques I am able to generate more complete thematic results drawing on the flexibility of the thematic analysis method but demonstrating rigour rather than fuzziness (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

## Chapter 5: Results

In this chapter I set out the results of the detailed thematic analyses of the interview transcripts of twenty professional service managers using three analytical approaches including the identification and thematic analysis of key words, the identification and thematic analysis of stories and thematic analysis of responses to specific interview questions. Although three analytical tasks were completed for reasons of economy of presentation and avoidance of unnecessary duplication, only two (key word and story) are shown in detail in this chapter as they reveal the most significant themes arising from this study. The results address the research question primarily by illuminating the understanding of leadership by the managers in the context in which they find themselves, that of *research-intensive* universities in the United Kingdom in 2012.

Besides identifying general themes emerging across the sample of managers as a whole, I also profile individual issues and differences that potentially have great significance for the effectiveness and development needs of some of the managers and, by implication, other managers who may have similar modes of understanding. Gender-related leadership issues, although worthy of future investigation are not specifically investigated in this study. During the course of data construction the similarities between responses from interviewees in the two HEIs proved more compelling than the differences, therefore no attempt is made to provide separate analyses for each institution. It is important to emphasise the extent to which the results of this study can be generalised is limited, on the one hand by the contextual nature of the study and on the other according to philosophical position adopted. The results of the study are best regarded as typifying a range of possible understandings of leadership by professional service managers in research-intensive universities however some elements will have resonance for managers in other settings.

The results presented encompass two levels of analysis that might variously be termed semantic and latent (Braun and Clarke, 2006), manifest and latent (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004), or explicit and implicit and envisaged as a double or triple hermeneutic in Alvesson and Skoldberg's sense (2009). For example, the *key word analysis* commences by identifying words in the interviewee account and responses to interview questions that appear to have particular salience either to the individual or in relation to a more general understanding of leadership. The words are treated as codes linked to themes of understanding important for one or more individuals. Tabulating the words both signifies their importance thematically for a

number of the interviewees but also de-contextualises them (Bryman, 2008) thereby eradicating nuances of meaning for a particular individual. This meaning is restored by providing and commenting on verbatim extracts that exemplify the interpreted meaning of the word in context sometimes for a particular individual and at other times for a number of interviewees. The analytical narrative is sometimes cued by a manifest or explicit understanding of the word and sometimes by a latent or implicit reading of meaning. The results chapter is divided into the following sections:

5.1 Key word analysis

- 5.1.1 Culture
- 5.1.2 Management
- 5.1.3 Structure
- 5.1.4 Role
- 5.1.5 Relationships
- 5.1.6 Interactions
- 5.1.7 Leadership

5.2 Story/narrative analysis

5.3 Individual distinctiveness and difference

5.4 Responses to specific interview questions

## 5.1 Key word analysis

The key word analysis undertaken is a qualitative or interpretive content analysis (Bryman, 2008). The selection of the key words is a double hermeneutic process that accepts the discursive consciousness of the interviewees as they formulate responses to questions (Giddens, 1984) and the reflexive sense-making (Weick, 1995) of both the interviewees and researcher initially during the interview and subsequently (by the researcher) as the key words are identified during the analysis. The forty-one key words, the analysis of which is tabulated in appendix six, were identified following repeated reading of each of the interview transcripts. As transcripts were interrogated words of particular significance to one or more interviewees were noted and became codes eventually clustered as a theme. The primary sense of 'key words' here is in relation to a word, sometimes repeated, that in its use unlocks significant elements of the understanding of leadership in context by the professional service managers. For example, **person Q** referred to 'mandation' a number of times in relation to the culture and management practices of higher education:

*"In this sector the level of mandation is less. There's less things that are mandated, and there seems to be an option for people not to do things when actually sensibly they should be doing things."*

Particularly noteworthy in the extract above is person Q's perception that people have an option as to whether to follow management direction and that this sometimes isn't sensible. This suggests a possible barrier to management in research-intensive universities as well as a source of frustration for professional service managers. 'Mandation' and related words – mandate, mandatory, becomes an analytical code with which to check the accounts from other interviewees. For mandation/mandate or mandatory only two other interviewees used the word, persons B and L. **Person B's** usage of 'mandation' echoes the sense of mandatory for person Q:

*"I think, I think …….. what we're not very good at doing, about doing, is telling people that certain things are absolutely mandatory – we are rubbish at that! And even when we do tell people things <u>are</u> mandatory they just ignore them, they don't turn up for things! And that actually happens at every single level."*

We can also note the observation that managers tend not to tell people that something is mandatory, that is they have no choice but to comply with, and even when this happens the instruction is ignored 'at every single level'. The lack of ability to direct or mandate action may arise as a socially constructing/constructive dialectic between managers and staff with managers being so used to their instructions being ignored that they hesitate to issue directions which in turn suggests to staff that following any direction is an option as there may be no consequence or follow-up if they choose not to. The sense of frustration is apparent as 'we are rubbish at that!' is stated and a direct instance of where instructions are not followed is given in relation to not turning up for things.

From a critical perspective these statements can be seen as reflective as a discourse of managerialism (Deem and Brehony, 2005) managerial legitimation (Giddens, 1984) or a habitus of management control (Bourdieu, 1977) practiced by professional service managers. They can also be interpreted as indicative of a perceived lack of managerial power (Hogg, 2001) and an implied aspiration to increase it, which if successful would enhance the power and status of professional service managers relative to their own staff and perhaps academics (Watson, 2008). The key point is that, certainly at the implicit level, a variety of research narratives can be derived from the same source data to profile a particular theoretical position. Whilst I

recognise and will comment on issues of power and politics, my narrative is fundamentally interpretive rather than critical or radical (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Therefore, although the word mandation (and its relatives, for example mandatory) is only used by three respondents, and predominantly by person Q, it is significant thematically as it exemplifies a state of affairs that may exist more generally, and in fact be corroborated or reinforced by other elements of the analysis.

For each key word identified the number of mentions and the people who used the word in their responses to my interview questions was noted, the results of which are presented in the table in appendix six. This procedure stands in danger of being seen as too quantitative given the interpretive/qualitative nature of this study, however it specifically makes transparent some of the issues of 'quasi-quantification' raised by Bryman (2008). The average number of mentions per interviewee gives an indication of prevalence of usage, however the numerical prevalence does not necessarily equate with the conceptual importance of the term either for the particular individuals or for the theoretical understanding of leadership for this group as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Words of special significance to particular individuals are highlighted in bold in the word analysis table in Appendix six. Although each word (and its relatives) is an indicator of ideas and issues of potential importance the meaning in use of a particular word is to a greater or lesser degree lost out of context of the text in which it is located. An attempt has been made to redress this deficiency by the use of verbatim quotes when considering the thematic diagram (figure10) that was developed. The analytical value of key words used in this way is analogous to a treasure hunter being drawn towards a shiny object on the beach, then having to dig down and around the area to establish what the object actually is and what value it may have.

The forty-one key words identified tended to emerge naturally during repeated reading of the interview transcripts although consideration of issues relating to **role** were stimulated by questions 1,2,3,9 and 12, reflections around **leadership** and **management** were triggered by questions 1,3,8,9,13,14,15,16,17 and an invitation to consider the way or working in, and by implication the **culture** of, higher education by questions 4,5,8 and 15. No specific questions about organisational **structure** were posed but consideration of r**elationships** and nature of **interactions** was triggered by questions 7, 9, 10. Therefore, important elements of the key word analysis

depicted in figure 11 were, to some extent, pre-configured by the phrasing of the interview questions that were formulated in line with the researcher's theoretical framework arising from the review of leadership literature presented in chapter three and in part from the researcher's own prior experiences as a manager and employee working within a UK HEI.

The detailed word analysis table was completed initially by underlining what appeared to be significant words in the printed interview transcripts and then checking the frequency of occurrence and the sense of their usage in context through word searches across the transcripts as a whole and re-reading of each text. It became apparent that the sense of use of certain words could logically be related to others. Mandation/mandatory (and the phrase/word combination 'command and control') could conceptually be linked to *management practice* and expectations (of control) but this view formed a noteworthy aspect of some of the managers understanding of **university culture** and, as such, a potential factor in how leadership by professional service managers might be understood. Following repeated reading of and engagement with the text, seven inter-related clusters emerged that I labelled culture, structure, leadership, management, role, relationship and interactions, although as noted above, to some extent, this was pre-determined by the phrasing of the interview questions that, in turn, were linked to the research question and themes identified in the review of leadership literature, for example perspectives on the differences between leadership and management.

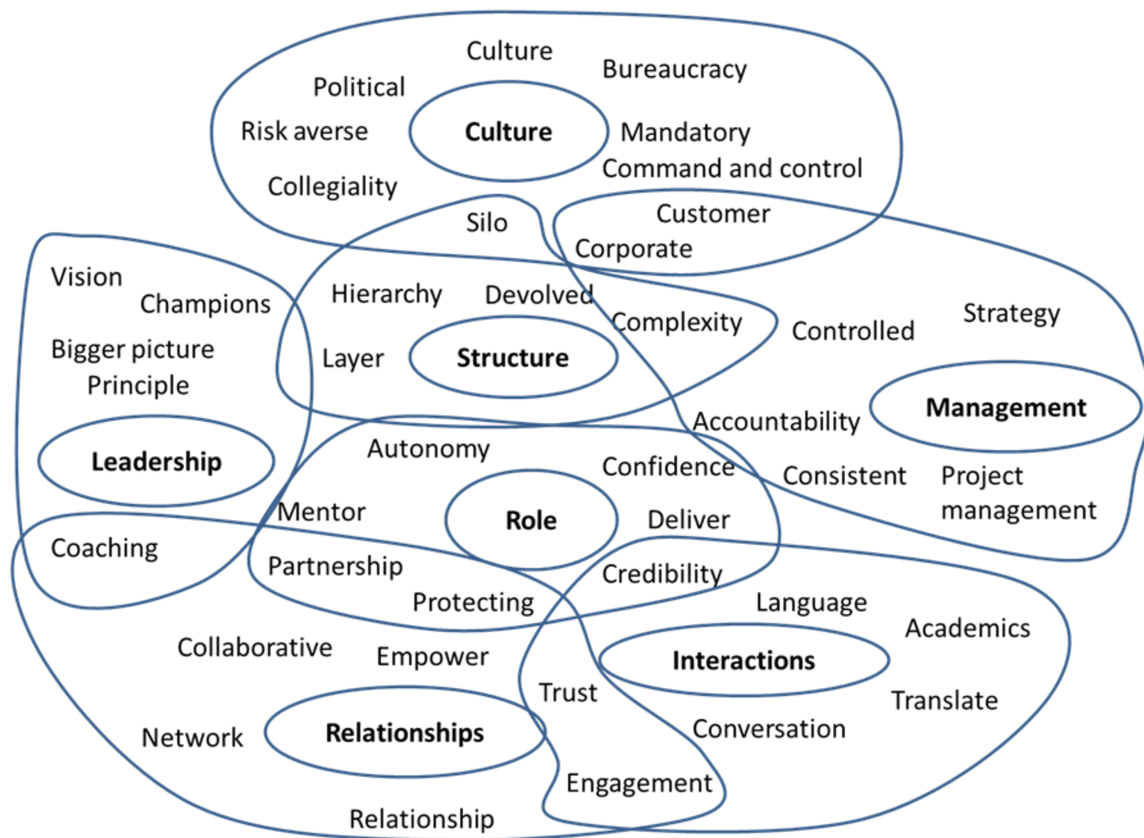
The identification of topics of interest commenced most notably with researcher transcription of the pilot and then initial interviews. For the pilot interview an analytical template was initially used (appendix 3), however this was subsequently rejected as it over-constrained the analysis. The time-consuming nature of transcription and repeated listening to the audio file allowed for a number of issues to be brought into focus. Once all transcriptions had been assembled then notes were made on the transcripts as they were read and re-read and interview questions response concept maps developed for each of the transcripts (example in appendix 5) as a way of discerning broad themes. This extensive foundation work illuminated words suitable for the key word analysis and stories for story/narrative analysis.

What was interesting and fundamentally informed the analysis was the similarity of issues emerging from the managers in the two different HEIs. Primarily for this reason, but also in recognition of the relatively modest total sample size, I took the

decision to analyse the data as a whole rather than segment it for each of the two universities.

The broad, inter-connected themes were formulated in relation to the various individual words that sensibly related to each other, for example – conversations, language and translate (translation) link to accounts of how some of the managers felt that they needed to effectively communicate or interact with others and, in turn, this can be linked to a theme of relationships which can be related to autonomy, accountability, collaborative, collegiality, credibility and so on. The venn-style diagram in figure eleven below depicts the broad categories and word inter-relationships that were eventually interpreted:

Figure 11: A venn-style thematic diagram developed from the key word analysis (author)




The diagram is a double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1984) analytical construction that is both a visual summary and an organising device for reporting the analysis and is presented here rather than at the end of this section as a visual aid to following the research narrative. To simplify the presentation some arbitrary decisions have been taken to profile a particular word in one cluster rather than another, for example if the

verb 'mentoring' had been used rather than the noun 'mentor', then this could have been placed in the leadership cluster and vice versa for coaching. Alternatively, the boundary line for the leadership cluster could've been drawn around the word 'mentor' thereby highlighting this in the diagram as an aspect of leadership more strongly than the tangential position that has been adopted. Whilst necessarily 'imperfect' the diagram serves a useful purpose in helping to present key themes emerging from a large quantity of data, although other approaches and presentations are possible.

I will now consider each of the word clusters in turn and explicate the linkage of a particular word to the broader themes, for example culture, by the use of verbatim quotes from the interviewees and brief comments thereon. I make relevant analytical comments in relation to each word and word cluster but I reserve more detailed theoretical comment for the subsequent conclusions and discussion chapter.

### 5.1.1 Culture

Explication of the culture cluster is particularly interesting for understanding leadership as culture is sometimes described as 'the way we get things done around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). From a structurational perspective culture can be regarded as endemic rules, routines and practices (Giddens, 1984) that delineate the local organisational field (Bourdieu, 1990) in which the management/leadership game is to be played. The word cluster (culture, bureaucracy, mandatory, command and control, customer, corporate, silo, collegiality, risk averse and political) contains a number of negative terms that denote criticism of the organisational culture and practices. At the explicit level, bureaucracy is (usually) used negatively but some of the various senses in which the interviewees used the word bureaucracy reveal other important issues and show links to other thematic clusters:

**Person L**

*"I shouldn't say this. I think there is a layer of bureaucracy, but I think additional to what you would normally see outside, which means that change is slower I think. But I think that has to be done. It's there for a reason. It's grown up around us for a reason. But whether that should be seen as a reason for not changing is another thing, if you get what I mean."*

Here person L asserts that the university bureaucracy is there 'for a reason' but is greater in extent than that found in other organisations, described as an additional layer; although there for a reason it is seen as a barrier to change that should not necessarily be accepted. Implicit in this comment is a certain understanding of

organisational culture (McNay, 1995) and consequent implications about how to get the job done.

**Person F**

*"I guess one of the reflections I have though, is that admin people easily fall back on the bureaucracy, I guess by the very nature of admin people and rely on a bureaucracy to actually persuade and cajole, rather than themselves."*

Person F's observation is that in the hands of admin staff bureaucracy is used as a tool to 'persuade and cajole'. He contrasts this with the use of 'self' to persuade, implying that persuasion should be interpersonal rather than drawing upon a managerial resource, typical of the non-coercive understanding of leadership in many leadership models. However, the thrust of person F's reflection about bureaucracy is in general opposition to the implication of the perceived lack of ability to mandate (person Q) suggesting a tension in how different professional service managers perceive the tools and requirements of their managerial role and leadership approach.

**Person G**

*"So, you know, there's bureaucracy and rules but most of us can find a route to try and get to the end point. When you're working centrally and you're trying to work across a massive organisation, those differentials are very hard to deal with. And so setting up policy that will suit everyone in an organisation is immensely difficult, because you've got people who say that doesn't work for me, you know, and it's not a kind of everyone goes by the rulebook here, that's not the culture that we work in."*

Person G's ambiguous relationship with bureaucracy, by implication linked to organisational size and structure, indicates that she can 'find a route' to get things done but sees some difficulty with the people who don't follow the rule book/policy. Her point links to person Q and B's point about lack of ability to ensure that requirements are mandatory. The difficulty in setting up a policy that will suit everyone can be inferred as relating here to organisational size and the diversity that this brings supplemented by the culture of not following the rulebook. Mention of working centrally suggests that the people responsible for trying to ensure consistency of policy and policy application across the university will experience major difficulty, a point that potentially has a clear bearing on the understanding of leadership by centrally located managers, especially in functional roles with policy setting and oversight responsibilities.

**Person R**

*"I mean it is hugely different, but most of the universities in the Russell Group are very traditional universities and certainly I find the bureaucracy, the governance, the need for papers up here to be at times difficult to deal with.*
*You know, we write papers for the sheer pleasure of writing them on occasions and we take them to meetings, because the boss tells you he needs a paper to go to this meeting..."*

Person R perceives the bureaucracy as arising from the traditional and research-intensive nature of Russell group universities the result of which is inefficient decision-making with the writing and tabling of unnecessary papers the demand for which can be 'difficult to deal with'. The writing and tabling of multiple papers can be seen as both managerially inefficient and also as politically necessary, in the first instance as a way to placate the boss.

**Person T**

*"I mean I could answer the question in another way which is to relieve the academics from any of the necessary, but burdensome bureaucracy around an organisation. And you talk to any academic and they'll say, 'I didn't become an academic to have to worry about how many zeros there were at the bottom of this account,' and this and that, and okay that's fine, but to run an organisation you have to have that."*

Person T also sees bureaucracy as a key part of organisational management but suggests that professional service staff are there to relieve academics of what he believes they see as a burden. There is implicit criticism of academics who don't like management in this statement as it argued to be needed to 'run an organisation'. The positioning of professional staff as administrative helpers for academics could imply a subservient or customer/provider relationship with different implications for identity (Hogg and Terry, 2000) as a consequence.

So, from these five extracts we can see that the word 'bureaucracy' reflects a range of meanings and issues including:

- Person L – greater than elsewhere; a barrier to change but shouldn't be
- Person F – a tool used by administrative staff to persuade and cajole – interpersonal leadership is better
- Person G – generated as a result of the size and organisational structure; ways can be found around it, but other people shouldn't do
- Person R – linked to Russell group traditional, research-intensive culture; results in inefficient decision-making and superfluous paper writing
- Person T – a necessary burden that professional service staff should relieve academics of as the administrative subordinates or service providers

There is rich detail underpinning the selection of particular words for analysis with the primary difficulty being how best to economically report the detail and map the various conceptual links. At many points the narrative can be rotated or re-oriented to tell stories of managerial control and managerialism and of conflicted socially constructed identities, rather than those of managers trying to undertake leadership in what to them at times appears to be a challenging research-intensive university setting. As already noted, I will periodically highlight such issues but my main narrative will be around the apparent understanding of leadership by the managers themselves in accord with the research question.

At a more general thematic level, the interviewee accounts of organisational culture tended to highlight differences between the managers' current organisation and previous ones in which they had worked contrasting the bureaucracy, politics and lack of ability to mandate action with the command and control, corporate ethos evident in, for example, the private sector and uniformed public services. The ability of the managers to notice and articulate such differences suggests active personal reflexivity concerning the work context in which they find themselves that goes beyond basic practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984). The issues of silo mentality and silo working link to the size, complexity, hierarchical and devolved and matrix nature of the organisational structure generating particular pressures on School based managers having to work closely with the academic Head of School and prioritise school needs whilst also demonstrating corporate commitment and accepting management direction from the faculty or central professional service managers. Sy and Cote (2004) interestingly suggest that emotional intelligence may be a way to cope with challenges of a matrix structure.

The words bureaucracy, political, risk-averse, silo, mandatory and the linked notion of command and control can be seen as negative aspects of culture. Person S, for whom organisational politics was a particular issue, specifically linked the political nature of the organisation with bureaucracy and saw this as a challenge she had to grapple with in higher education particularly in relation to the role autonomy that she expected/preferred and consistency:

*"Because it's quite bureaucratic and it's quite political as well. You've got to be quite sensitive to who does what where and when. I didn't understand that. I suppose I came in, I wanted - this is my school. I saw this as mine. I can come in and I can do this and it took me a little bit of time to realise you can't do that because somebody else over there you know. So that was quite a big challenge as well."*

*"The main is political.  The main is the lack of autonomy and also the lack of consistency."*

Once again we see links between comments categorised thematically as 'culture' and those relating to management and role.  I have tried to capture some of the key aspect of these conceptual inter-relationships in the venn-style diagram in figure 11, however it is not possible in such a high level depiction to capture the intricate potential connections in understanding for and between individual interviewees.  I will make efforts to do this where it is likely to amplify understanding of the results in relation to the research question in the narrative.

As already shown in the case of the word 'bureaucracy', the use of the word in context for different individuals was nuanced.  It is not especially useful or practicable to attempt to report every variation and nuance here, but a further example in relation to the word political or politically has merit:

**Person N**

*"I mean, obviously you've got to deliver what you say you're going to deliver.  And you've got to be politically astute enough to understand where the institution or the organisation is going, so that you understand what it might require in advance and work out well, actually how am I going to do that."*

Person N here relates political astuteness to strategic vision or thinking (which therefore links to the management and leadership clusters), often listed as a key skill or competence for senior managers and states that it is obvious that you deliver what you say you will. Not delivering what you say you will breaks a promise or fails to meet a reasonable expectation, thereby undermining trust and your credibility which is not something a politically astute person would willingly do. Active reflexive monitoring (Giddens, 1984) of current activities and changing circumstances is therefore important for Person N in order to be seen to meet the expectations of influential others and be prepared in advance to continue to do this when things change.

**Person F**

*"So there are so many groups with multiple interests, so the capacity therefore to integrate strategic planning and actions and so on, it's really quite a challenge to do that. Because all these different interests, and competing political interests etc. Umm, So I think there are massive challenges."*

Depicted as a 'massive' challenge, the complexity of the organisation with its diverse groups and multiple/competing political interests is again linked to strategic planning and actions.  The use of the word 'massive' in this context may imply that politics is a

particular issue for person F (in fact, this personal theme occurs several times in relation to person F's line management relationships) with notable links to the management and structure clusters and particularly to the word 'silo' encompassed in the culture cluster.

The commonly used metaphor 'silo' (but only mentioned by six of the interviewees) implies division and separation that **person J** saw as particularly unhelpful to teamwork across the organisation as whole:

*"I think the other one particularly in an organisation of this size is very much the silo sort of ways of working and not being perceived as or not seeing yourself as a member of one team. So one of the things I will challenge and gets my values going is when I hear people saying well that's the Estate's fault or that's HR's fault or whoever it would be."*

Here an implicit link is to leadership directed towards generating a sense of commonality of purpose and the big-picture perhaps seen as a way of reducing the silo mentality that person J believes can develop in a large organisation.

**Person N** links the silo thinking and operations, and even alienation, to organisational structure (as shown in figure 11) rather than size:

*"But we don't seem to understand that, that's the case and so you do have a lot of siloed thinking, siloed operations, perhaps people on the ground not really understanding or feeling quite alienated from the senior management team at the centre."*

The organisational culture was described as risk averse by persons N and P. **Person N** links this to the bureaucratic decision-making process in which 'everybody and his aunt seems to have a say' and sees it as limiting innovation. Interestingly, the degree of risk aversion is perceived to be greater in her current research-intensive university compared to a previous post-1992 university in which she worked. This is an important issue for both the activities of management and leadership as it increases the potential for organisational politics requiring work to persuade different committees regarding a particular course of action. It also slows down decision-making leading to frustration for both staff and managers:

*"And I think it's always…it's more cautious, there is a reluctance, I think, to be bold, to be innovative, to take risk…very risk averse; very risk averse. And I think more so here than at (Post 1992 university). (Post 1992 university) was a more managerial organisation insofar as decision making was concerned. Many decisions would be seen to be managerial business decisions; get on, do it, sort it out, make a decision. Here, everybody and his aunt seems to have a say, and trying to actually, you know,*

*get a decision…Oh endless committees, you know. Any decision I want made has to go through one, two,* four committees."

**Person P** identifies one of the effects of risk aversion being a tendency not to challenge poor professional service staff performance or 'sloppy delivery', once again underpinning a culture that appears to endorse slow speed of action and by implication inefficiency. Superficial harmony appears to be the overt cultural position with people not 'rocking any boats' and avoiding bureaucratic conflict (Pondy, 1967) through not 'confronting the issue'.

*"I think, there are…academic non achievement, traditionally, has not been challenged as robustly as it should have been, I think, and the same, I think, we're a very risk averse institution and we don't want to rock any boats and upset people, so sloppy delivery from support staff, for example, has not been challenged and still isn't challenged and we tend to find work around, you know, if somebody isn't delivering, or a service isn't delivering, we'll find a way to work around it, rather than, actually, confronting the issue and saying, look, this has got to change, as an institution, we don't do that."*

Also categorised as linking to the over-arching theme of 'culture' were the less potentially negative terms of collegiality, corporate and customer. The limited use of the word collegiality/collegial is of interest here as, given the published literature, one might expect greater reference to it. In fact, **person E** uses it in a very particular way that can be linked to interactions and relationship building and the idea of leadership as intentional influence (Yukl, 2002):

*"So, it's that collegiality, and, I think, you've got to work hard, this is, probably, pre-empting some of your later questions, but, I think, you've got to work hard to make contacts, and to, kind of, you know, work with individuals to get them to influence others, so, I think, at the same time, I think, it's a very friendly, and supportive organisation, but you've just got to work that bit harder to make those contacts, and to make things work, essentially."*

**Person F's** use of the word collegial is more typical but he then goes on to highlight the cultural tensions existing between those who are collegially oriented and those who are much more competitive and sees this situation also as pertaining in a number of other institutions:

*"In so far as you have large numbers of people who are collegial, respectful, appropriate, well-motivated, etc; you have other people who are careerist, selfish, competitive, you have other people who are, you know, a university in a sense is not any more noble or different, I believe, than a number of other institutions, at this stage."*

Person F's linking of the word collegial to respectful, appropriate and well-motivated casts collegiality in a positive light and he contrasts this with being competitive and selfish. The sense of collegiality at play here is that of the quality of interpersonal behaviour rather than the nature of organisational decision-making. The critical reference to universities not being any more noble than anywhere else, suggests that person F finds disconnection between his experience of working life in the university, not wholly 'collegial', and the noble public image he believes that universities present. This sense of an aspiration towards a consistent collegial culture seems idealistic given the diversity of interests and groups that he and others elsewhere refer to.

**Person B's** use of the word corporate emphasising decisions structured by whole organisation administrative standards and requirements, links back to person B and Q's comment on the ability to mandate and to person G, N and F's comments around bureaucracy and politics as well as linking to issues of structure and management:

*"You know, we're under pressure to make decisions at a very corporate level across the whole faculty, umm, against administrative standards and administrative requirements, whereas our heads of school will be much more selfish in terms of their, you know, their local concentration."*

Whereas in **person D's** comment, like person J, we can again see a clear link between ideas of silo thinking and associated blame games versus taking corporate responsibility:

*"I think there's a risk that people use…they blame other parts of PSS for things that are going wrong, rather than taking sort of corporate responsibility. Because there are siloes, you know. I've heard, you know, of heads of school administration sort of talking very negatively about estates or about HR, or about catering or whatever it is, to academic colleagues. And that's always damaging, you know, it really isn't helpful. So I think avoiding that."*

This managerial tendency to seek corporate control and consistency and to combat silos and aspects of organisational diversity is interesting as it can be presumed to act against moves to distribute leadership, where leadership is associated with power and decision-making (Hatcher, 2005; Lumby, 2013). Weaving the various threads of the word analysis together as the theme 'culture' we find a general discourse that seems to align with strong/tight elements of both policy control and implementation in the corporate quadrant of McNay's (1995) culture model.

Finally, for the culture cluster, we have the word 'customer'. As a centrally located service manager, **Person M's** use of the word was particularly interesting as it

aligned with her general philosophy of relationship building with internal customers across the organisation in order to develop the profile and usage of her service:

*"I said earlier, but I think because of my role I'm probably more sensitive to it, but the work I've been doing with PSS managers and leaders has been about that about recognising actually you're perceived as this awful ivory tower that just ploughs out email after email, that means nothing to people; create work and systems that don't have resonance and so the work with them has been about thinking about people in faculties as customers in a way but I don't use that word but, but in effect it's about engagement…"*

Person M's acknowledgement that she doesn't use the word customer resonates with debates about the use of the term in higher education particularly where it concerns the service relationship with students (Svensson and Wood, 2007).

In contrast, **person O**, for whom customer service was a significant issue, shows no difficulty in embracing the idea of students as customers and articulates a sense of service improvement as a result of managerially restructuring the processes that support the 'customer journey'. She goes further to claim that customer service is part of the ethos of her service (though perhaps not of other areas) as demonstrated in the achievement of various nationally recognised accreditations:

*"And so now we've moved very much more to a function whereby we manage the first stage of the customer journey, so, through from the first stage of enquiry right through to enrolment…I think we're lucky in as much as it's almost unsaid in our department that we put the student first, so people are very customer focused. We've just been re-accredited for the third time, with Investors in People, and got Silver status, and we're currently working towards the Customer Service Excellence Framework as well. And people get it. We're the only department in the university that's got Investing in People, Silver, and we'll be the first ones, by a long way, to get the Customer Service Excellence. So people understand it. It's part of our culture, it's part of our ethos."*

**Person O** also links service improvements to the customer journey and to the managerial techniques of setting targets, metrics and 'dashboards':

*"Yes…well we have targets for enquiries, targets for open day registrations, targets for the proportion of people that following the open day will then say they're more likely to apply, go first, put us second to third…targets for the numbers of offers that we make, targets…so the whole customer journey is aligned to a set of targets, and we can measure them. We now have dashboards, measuring how we're doing as well."*

**Person Q,** for whom issues of customer service were also very important, described the cultural changes necessary in his service in relation to the idea of a business-

oriented approach to the 'customer base' that wasn't being best served by the previously insular, inward looking and comfortable department for which he was now responsible and trying to realign:

*"So it was more about what the department felt it needed to do or it wanted to do, not what the customer base wanted or needed us to do. I think the department historically had probably put itself in a bit of a box and really didn't want to go outside of that box. It was comfortable inside that box."*

*"So that's the sort of approach. What I'm trying to engender in my staff is an approach that mimics that, that actually has people thinking the same way that I do in terms of the importance of the customer, because I think fundamentally in this business that's what is important to us."*

**Person C** clearly recognises the debate around the idea of students as customer but feels that they should increasingly be treated this way, presumably as pre-emptive action in advance of higher fee paying students beginning to believe they are customers. However, he does believe that the customer relationship will be different to that found elsewhere:

*"Yes mostly, I caveat that with… I think students are increasingly more like customers and I think we would be wise to treat them that way even though some people might argue that they're not strictly customers, but I think from the XXX perspective we should be looking at it in that way… I think it's explaining what we mean by that, I suppose it's becoming more customer focused doesn't mean that they get treated in the same way they might do in Tesco or something."*

Overall, the discourse linked to the word 'customer' points towards a desire for culture change away from traditional, inward looking professional services (and by implication universities) towards those which are managed and run in a customer-focused and business-like way. This again reinforces the idea of a trajectory towards a stronger corporate culture (McNay,1995) rather than an entrepreneurial one as there is no hint at any looseness in the control of implementation, rather the talk is of targets, metrics, dashboards and the achievement of nationally recognised standards/benchmarks.

Across the culture cluster of the key word analysis the discourse of management (or managerialism if a more critical view is adopted) is evident. Working in an environment seen as bureaucratic, political and with diverse interests and groups in their silos is seen as challenging. An increase in management control and corporate consistency is seen as desirable as is an ethos of 'one team' for professional services, rather than competing/blaming factions. Changing an inward looking

culture towards one that is more corporate and business-oriented is seen as desirable. This somewhat hard/unitarist (Guest, 1999) and managerial view of context can be regarded as informing the managers' understanding of leadership and seen as part of the wider institutional reflexivity (Elliott, 2009) concerning the kind of organisation preferred by professional service managers.

### 5.1.2 Management

The logic of the words I have categorised as relating to management inter-link with other clusters most clearly with culture, structure and role. As previously noted issues of management can be read critically as relating to an ideology of managerialism (Deem et al, 2007), however there is little indication that the managers see themselves as ideologues. Rather, management is a key feature of their work, and identity as a manager working morally on behalf of the organisation, for which they view themselves as responsible (Clarke et al, 2009).

For **person J**, accountability was a significant issue associated predominantly with amount of responsibility related to numbers of staff which person J links to both line management and leadership.

*"But I suddenly inherited a direct management accountability of about 800 people at that point and also led the site which was a conglomeration of different groups that happened to collocate in a single location. With a site leadership team I acted a chair of that site leadership team and a site manager and we had about 4,000 people on the site in total. So it was a huge step change in line management, accountability, leadership responsibilities."*

Speaking of a significant world event that may have impacted on staff, Person J highlights the sense of personal responsibility that goes along with acceptance of accountability for the working lives of others and preliminary doubts about how he would respond when put on the spot:

*"Now that real sense of personal responsibility and accountability I very much remember. Rather than advising somebody else of leaving it with them it was mine and I knew it and I felt it at that time. And until I went through that particular experience I had personal doubts as to how I would respond and would I do it well and all those sorts of things. Hoping it never would happen but knowing that inevitably at some point there would be something that you had to take accountability for."*

Person J links accountability both to prioritising his own work and through delegating, holding others to account for the work for which they are responsible commencing

with the premise that they are trustworthy, but subject to person J agreeing 'it's a sensible thing to do', and will deliver:

*"By prioritising certain things I could do the job in a way in which I wanted to do but it meant me stopping doing some things that historically the XXXX was doing, and actually giving more accountability to all of my reports. So as a very practical example of that if you look in budget terms the conversations I've had with all my direct reports are I will hold you accountable for delivering the overall objectives within the resources that are available to you. I formally am required to sign off on everything but if you're telling me you're going to deliver and it's a sensible thing for us to do I will support you within that decision. And I'll sign it and you'll get it back in 24 hours and that's what I did. But I will hold you accountable for delivering what you say you do and if I find that you're not able to do that then don't give me the confidence then I'll behave in a different way."*

Although not obvious in person J's account the exact manifestation of the sense of responsibility, in terms of role understanding and potential leadership effectiveness, is vitally important as will be shown later for the few managers amongst this sample who seem to be struggling in different ways. Person J is organisationally responsible for the work of all his staff and acknowledges this by noting that he is 'required to sign off everything' thereby categorising this act, and the relationship, as an organisational requirement rather than a personal leadership choice. In specifically mentioning the 24 hours turn-around for decisions he is acknowledging the potential frustration when there is a delay in decisions being made, but also signalling that his part of the decision-making transaction has thus been fulfilled (in terms of speed) and it is over to his direct reports now to implement and deliver their own recommendations. Thus he indicates that he will now be arbiter, rather than manager, of the outcomes that his direct reports must now achieve. This re-construction of the relationship achieves two important things – it aims to generate a sense of ownership and personal accountability amongst his reports and liberates him from the stress of psychological ownership of all activities ostensibly under his control and for which, if things go horribly wrong, he may be called to account.

Finally, person J notes a general lack of personal accountability in the traditional institution in which he works, the prevalence of which suggests that it is endemic:

*"The lack of, and I say this, the lack of personal accountability for targets is striking."*

**Person O** feels personally accountable for her own work but sees the Governance and committee structures working against the creation of a general sense of accountability, with people hiding behind committees and decision-making being slowed down, resonant with person R's comment in relation to bureaucracy:

*"And it's just, you're not afforded it…and lack of accountability in people's jobs…I mean I feel very accountable in my role. I don't feel accountable for all the students that aren't coming this year, because there's a sector wide issue, but I have felt very accountable for trying to do the absolute best for the university. And I don't think that the way that the university is governed, and the way that the committee structures work, actually create that sort of an environment really. So people can always hide behind a committee…and that's what slows down the culture and it leads people to hide behind other people…"*

Person S echoes person J's stance on accountability linking it not just to delegation but to the way the subordinate job roles have been structured in the first place:

*"I've taken the opportunity to create a very structured team leader and each team leader has a distinct team. So that we've got accountability, we've got clarity of roles all that. So that I've got team leaders who can assist me.*

*Because it just didn't make any sense to me. So the key people I really need I work with on a day to day basis are my four team leaders. They're the people I rely on.*"

The link to the theme of structure is obvious with the creation of a hierarchy being seen as a way to gain support for her in her work role and to distribute accountability (rather than leadership). For person S, accountability is thus about control; it is a socially constructive device for attempting to order peoples' work activities and create conditions where they feel personally responsible for the outcomes of their (and as a manager other people's) efforts.

**Person B** spoke of <u>control</u> in relation to self or impulse control, particularly of some demanding yet high-performing academic colleagues:

*"As XXXXXX put it, haven't got very good impulse control. (Laugh) They tend to say what's on their mind without holding back. We work with very clever, very high-performing, demanding individuals –**very** high-performing... and….ummm…. I think sometimes in, in, in education and I've only ever worked in this higher education establishment; I think in, there, there's not quite the expectation of controlled…. A way of behaving. And that there is more room given, there is more tolerance of people expressing themselves in ways that perhaps aren't always acceptable in other places."*

Person B also speaks of control in relation to line management responsibility and the uncertainty of her role now that she was no longer directly responsible for some of the functional services, for example finance, that she once was. There is some ambiguity in her statement as she indicates that even when she had line management responsibility for the finance manager, she wasn't sufficiently close to the work activity. The lack of control results in uncertainty over resources and an obligation to negotiate. This is a very significant point as it highlights that what is set out in an organisation chart or structure diagram only partially constructs the managerial relationships with the actual attentiveness and practices of the manager constructing it.

*"When I line managed the finance manager, I wasn't sufficiently close to the activity to know whether he was doing a good job or not. So, whilst I had control over his activities, I didn't. Now at least the finance managers are being managed by finance managers, but I have no control over their activity and no control of over the amount of resource that we get without negotiation and then it still doesn't seem to get any better. So, it's a bit damned if you do and you're damned if you don't – is how it feels."*

**Person P** talks of control, not in relation to the behaviour of others but to her own 'control freak' tendencies that she links to the degree of trust that she has in her team to perform work to an appropriate standard and consequent difficulties she experiences in delegating:

*"I've had to really think carefully about and, also, delegating, that's the other thing, thinking carefully about delegating and trusting other people to do things, you know, there's an element of control freak really, isn't there? But trusting other people to do it as well as you would do it and the other thing… to delegate something and have it done not as well as I would have done it, but it's been done to a level that is fine, but it's just not brilliant and that I have found very difficult."*

Person P's point resonates with talk of accountability raised by Person J, however here we can identify an interesting dialectic of trust in the performance of others linked to manager expectations of work standards which underpins difficulty in delegation and possible perceptions from the staff of micro-management and over-control. This is important as one of a number of potentially self-limiting beliefs or mind-sets that managers may hold that impact on their leadership effectiveness.

As a central service manager, **Person K** links limitations of control to organisational structure and the freedom that has been granted to schools. Her response is especially interesting as the lack of perceived management control results in a

leadership response in which she talks of seeking to influence people through discussion and sharing knowledge:

*“Here, it’s very much, we have people in schools and they have the freedom to do things how they see…and there’s benefits for both, but it’s harder to have any control, if you like, so it’s very much about influencing people and discussing with people and sharing knowledge in this area.”*

**Person O’s** comment below refers to the variety of sub-cultures in the university (echoing person F’s observation about different groups and multiple interests) which she seems to implicitly link to the ‘calibre of people’ (the implication being academics and academic freedom), however in her own area, given the nature of the services she is responsible for, ‘control is tighter’. Outside her own area ‘you have to sort of persuade people to work with you’. This is another important factor in the understanding of leadership by professional service managers to which I will later return, the orientation towards *management* of direct reports and *leadership* (as intentional influence/persuasion) of other organisational members.

*“I think, quite genuinely, I’ve always been very impressed by the calibre of people that work in the university sector…you know, a lot of well-educated people who are very good at producing information, reports, interpreting it…fantastic public speakers…the calibre of people is very, very high. The command and control though, is really quite different, the culture is very, very different. So, in the department that I manage, the control is tighter, and it has to be. When you go outside into the wider university, it’s harder, because you have to sort of persuade people to work with you, you can’t enforce that basically.”*

**Person T’s** comments around consistency managerially link to planned control through the design of organisational structure. This restriction on diversity of structure can be interpreted as an attempt to weaken the culture of freedom but it is depicted as a positive opportunity for professional service staff career development. It can also be seen as a device to undermine the disparate ‘organic growth’ that can occur with the successful award of research grants and the ownership and control issues that are connected with the contract.

*“The structures that we’ve put in place in schools, we’ve tried to make as consistent as possible. Now, you know universities as well as I do, there’s always a good reason why department A should be different from department B, and sometimes they’re valid, sometimes not…so, what I’m trying to say is that for someone coming into the university as a grade four finance clerk in one of my schools could easily see where a grade five position would be in another school, and actually have that career structure in place, rather than where I think universities have come from, which is very much that sort of organic growth, and you join this group, whether it be as an academic or as a support member…”*

Most of the references to strategy had a typical meaning and referred to the vision, leadership and direction of activity for the organisation. However, an interesting reference to calling upon strategy as an authoritative device to generate consistency of direction and ensure the compliance of her staff to new ways of working was made by **person M**:

*"…and the strategy that we've set as opposed to getting pulled into all sorts of different directions that people want to pull them in. And actually they're doing quite well with that actually, they've got a lot better… I can actually say no without feeling bad because what I'm saying is that it doesn't fit with our strategy, unfortunately. It's not me saying No to you it's the strategy that's saying No (laugh)."*

By displacing responsibility for the negative response away from her personally to the anonymous strategy, she potentially achieves several things – she draws a line to prevent further discussion as the staff member should realise that the manager has no control of a pre-determined strategy; she side-steps any interpersonal conflict by depersonalising the decision and therefore maintains a more positive relationship with the staff member, who might otherwise harbour a grudge against her.

This use of formal organisational strategy to persuade or cajole is precisely the one that person F rails against.

In keeping with the first of the two senses used by person M, **Person O** linked the writing of strategy to her own effectiveness and respect from staff by getting 'everybody on the same page':

*"But I think they think that I'm effective, I can write strategy, we have a plan…it's a naff term but I can get everybody on the same page…and I can keep us all on plan. And I think that's what they would probably say that they respect in me."*

**Person's P's** reference to strategy was in a specific leadership sense of people-oriented work to create a sense of value and contribution:

*"I think, it's all part of the same strategy, actually, to make everybody feel that their little bit, that their piece of the jigsaw is a huge contribution, it makes a difference, we couldn't do it without them, so, I think, it's part of all the same strategy, you know, to…so that my team…they don't just come in and sit down and do their typing and go home, you know, they feel that that piece of work that they're doing actually helps build the Jenga tower."*

The metaphors of jigsaw and Jenga tower are interested as they succinctly evoke the sense of success arising from the pieces (different peoples' contribution) fitting together and the delicate accumulation of effort required to build 'the Jenga tower'. Person P later refers to this work, almost apologetically, as a 'touchy-feely strategy'

differentiating the sense of the work from the more formal development and following of organisational plans.

**Person C's** reference to strategy is connected with the sense of loose coupling (Weick, 1976) in the organisation and the tension that exists between attempts to align people in a corporate way with a local preference to follow their own strategic priorities:

*"So, you know, the faculty XXX teams report into the Heads of Faculty Administration so there's this tension between the central university wide strategy if you like and the local strategy."*

The sense of tension is outlined by **Person T** as a challenge but this time in respect of a perception of the less committed relationship that (some) academic staff have with the organisation compared to professional service staff:

*"When I look at higher education I don't see many of them, for academics, that actually work! I mean, I always use the anecdote, if you ever ask an academic where they work, they'll tell you they work at the University of XXXXX, but not for the University of XXXXX. And it's only one word, but it conveys a lot I think. And there's a real difference in the way that you try and get any sort of corporate strategy, corporate identity moving, and as professional services managers, particularly at a higher level, you see that and it's…that's quite a challenge, and a big difference."*

Finally for the management cluster we arrive at project management. The usage for most interviewees related to aspects of the work they undertook in previous or current roles but **person G's** account is more revealing about aspects of both managerial and leadership work which links with the role cluster; person G talks of the understanding of project management as key to delivery on time within given parameters. The perception of delivery is a key aspect of the development of credibility, and the interpersonal perception and social construction that underpins leadership as a process of intentional influence:

*"I think project management and understanding of project management has been key because a lot of what we do comes down to just making sure that you're delivering something on time with the resource and that you understand the parameters that you're working in. So I like that kind of project management discipline, and I think that's really helped."*

Whilst the managerial disposition or habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) towards control and consistency through corporate strategy and accountability for performance is strongly in evidence in these extracts, the major limiting factors appear to be organisational structure and sub-cultures.

However, the individual tendencies or self-limiting beliefs of the manager, for example towards being a control freak (person P) will impact on the nature of the relationship with direct reports and how management is perceived. Although the organisational chart or structure diagram provides a guide to managerial relationships, it is the style of enactment that realises them or otherwise (person B). Finally, a managerial tactic to persuade (or arguably lead) can be displacement of decisions away from the manager to an already agreed organisational policy or strategy.

### 5.1.3 Structure

I have already noted the close link revealed in this analysis between organisational structure (centre, central functions, faculty, schools, disciplinary area) and an organisational culture described as traditional, bureaucratic and risk averse and the perceived impact on managerial control and consistency. The implications arising from the use of the word 'hierarchy' for **person B** are significant in relation to how she perceives some of the key challenges for her role as school administrative manager:

*"And even though I have help from secretarial staff I have people to delegate to, there is a great deal of activity, and because I have 600 staff for whom I have some level of responsibility – any one of those 600 staff could call upon my time – I have a hierarchy of people underneath me to whom they could also go, but ultimately they can do and sometimes do still come and talk to me. Because, within the structure I'm their senior administration person and they want to talk to the person at the top, if they fail further down and they go to me because they don't know who else to ask. Or maybe I've been helpful to them in the past, so there's all sorts of reasons why they might come and talk to me rather than talking to somebody else."*

Person B thus links some of the volume of activity and talking to people that she has to deal with to her position in the hierarchical structure, the number of staff for whom she is responsible, the perception of her role as the senior administrative person and the personal relationship generated by her having been nice to someone in the past. Implicit in this amalgam of factors is how she might respond if she feels under too much under pressure – she could do little about her role and responsibility, unless she leaves, but she might implement bureaucratic procedures to restrict access to her, emphasise delegation and downward accountability for work or restrict the number of people who she helps, all of which then have implications for perceptions by others of her management practices and leadership style.

**Person F's** comment around hierarchy links to organisational culture and contrasts the sense of freedom to ignore managerial requests and look after the interests of your own area in higher education with the respect for command and control and the hierarchy in the Police:

*"Not that other organizations are not messy and complex but the Police service, it's messy and complex but that complexity and messiness is overcome by a sort of command and control culture and a respect for hierarchy and that, Umm which we don't have."*

Besides structural messiness and complexity, **person B** talks of self-initiated complexity arising from the imposition of (by implication bureaucratic) system controls and the desire to keep things in orderly 'neat little boxes':

*"You could have a very large organization but with a fairly simple business model (right), such as a manufacturing (yes) a much simpler business model. Whereas we have a very complex business model; we make it more complex ourselves (umm). I was talking to some of my colleagues about the proliferation of different account codes for what is fundamentally, university funding; so, all the different numbers we have for things; different sorts of HEFCE account codes, hundreds of them (right) and we pay some into that code, or that code and eventually I said, "Why don't we just stick on all one code – anything that's not research or donations or soft money, or research, just stick it under one code and be done with it. Make our lives simpler. We create our own complexity by wanting to be clever, and by wanting to keep things in nice neat boxes."*

An even more interesting use of the word 'complex' related to person B's decision about who to speak to for professional advice relating this to the complexity or fluidity of the answer she wanted or expected to get:

*"….how much freedom somebody er, er a research, er er HR assistant might be able to give, how much flexibility as to how to flex the processes will be very different, or the answer you will get will be very different, for them to the head of Faculty HR. Now I, in my job will work with all of those people. So, if I want a more complex answer or I want a more fluid answer I'll go to the head of faculty HR; if I want the written word I'll go to the assistant, because that is how much flexibility they are given."*

This shows person B tactically choosing to escalate an issue to a particular level in the managerial hierarchy of a functional area with a view to gaining a more flexible, and to her preferable, response. Elsewhere she talks of building a friendly relationship with the head of HR which can be seen as creating the positive social relationship and capital needed to achieve the kind of complex and flexible response to questions that she may from time to time require.

Person B also uses the word ‘complex’ euphemistically in relation to previously noted problematic behaviour of some academic staff and also links this to the perceived complexity of academic roles:

*“...and I think, I personally have found that understanding peoples’ motivation, particularly of complex academic individuals – academics have very complex roles (right), has been very helpful.”*

Other usage of the word complex demonstrates the conceptual linkages between the analytically over-lapping word clusters with **person G** referring to the managerial complexity arising from Government initiatives and the complexity of having to deal with academic individuals who are ‘passionate about their area’; person R refers to the ‘complex little bits’ of senior roles and, once again the complexity arising from individual differences as, “we are all complex beings”.

Managerial complexity and challenge is seen to arise from the devolved structures and numbers of hierarchical layers. **Person K’s** (a central manager) comment relates to budgets but could equally well apply to other aspects of policy and operation that were structurally distributed:

*“The key challenges are very much about that, because there is a real dilemma, here particularly, that things have devolved to faculties, we have a very devolved structure now, we didn’t used to, I don’t think, a number of years ago, when I first came, it was, sort of, changing, but it’s very devolved now, so faculties have their own budget, they set their own plans, obviously, we agree them, but they monitor performance against them, they report on risks, all these things, but we, also, have to do things that we need to do for the institution, so we, also, have to say, we’ve got our strategic objectives and our strategic plan, so the dilemma is getting the faculty not to say, well, I’m just doing my part to see the wider issues*.”

The almost apologetic comment that, “obviously we agree them,” implies that agreement may not always be forthcoming and the tension between maintaining a focus on local interests and encouraging faculties to see the wider issues. As a central manager **Person E** experiences similar tensions linking resistance to her service activities directly to the devolved structure and indirectly to size which required her having to influence academic and professional service colleagues – in fact, undertake leadership:

*“I’ve never worked anywhere so large, clearly, because we’re one of the biggest, but it’s the devolved structure at XXXXX that, I think, is a real challenge, when you’re working within the central administration in a leadership management role where you’re not just, you know, I’ve got a team to manage, but I’m leading an area of work that spans across the university, so, I’m, you know, I have to influence academic, and other PSS colleagues right across the university, and it’s a very devolved structure...*

*So, you know, in some areas that means quite a lot of resistance to me coming along to say we need to do X, because of whatever, so, I think, it's the devolved structure."*

Person E's comment is very revealing as it implies that leadership activity is not necessarily seen as good in its own right but as necessary owing to the lack of direct managerial authority that comes as a result of the devolved organisational structure.

As previously noted, **person C** also raised the issue of the impact of the devolved structure on the linked tension between central and local strategy and the difficulties of trying to achieve a sense of connection and teamwork:

*"Well I think my biggest challenge is how to get XXX in the university to work as one, even though our structure is devolved. So I have the sort of university wide responsibility, but not necessarily authority in all cases. So, you know, the faculty XXX teams report into the Heads of Faculty Administration so there's this tension between the central university-wide strategy, if you like, and the local strategy. And I've put a lot of effort in over the years to try and make that work well together… We do work well as a team but there's a kind of natural inbuilt tension which can make some things that you think should be easy quite difficult."*

Three uses of the word layer are in evidence. **Person I** spoke of layer structurally but more particularly in relation to talent management and career development:

*"I think the most significant things – well, I think there's a great pool of potential talent in the next layer down, as it were, which I've already said to you. And I think we ought to be focusing more efforts on developing those individuals."*

Person C made a similar point referring to the opportunities to develop staff two layers below his own managerial level, with person D also seeing the need for management development owing to "huge gaps in peoples' development.'

**Person E** spoke of the need to understand the roles and responsibilities of the different structural layers in order to work effectively:

*"Yeah, it's, kind of, understanding the roles and responsibilities of the different layers, if you like, of the organisation."*

With person L commenting, as already noted, on the additional layer of bureaucracy she perceived to exist in higher education compared to elsewhere. **Person P's** metaphorical reference to the layers of a sandwich encompasses a variety of different role - related issues:

*"I think, because the role is so incredibly varied and, I think, the difficulty is that we're, almost, a sandwich and each layer of bread is expecting a different interaction with us, so, I think, that's almost a challenge actually being all things to all people, being*

*able to deliver strategically, at the level that senior management want us to do, but, also, operationally, at the level that our colleagues and staff want us to do and it's, almost, as if we're a one size fits all, oh, school manager will do that, you think, eek, hang on, can't, you know, can't do it all and that's the challenge to deliver at all levels, I don't, actually, know if it's achievable."*

Person P's comment epitomises the challenges of a middle management role subject to demands and expectations from above and below, expected to think and operate strategically as well as operationally and expressing a doubt as to whether, for her, the role is achievable. In questioning the achievability of the role person P implicitly accepts both her potential to do it well or badly and logically that there is scope for variation in how the role is performed. In its performance the middle manager constructs the role within the constraints of how the role is constructively perceived by self and others (Harding et al, 2014). The notion of formal hierarchical structure going back to Weber (Morrison, 2006) is a way to channel decisions and structure activities and relationships – it is therefore a symbolic device for social construction underpinned and constrained in a formal organisational setting by the duties and responsibilities set out in job descriptions, by organisational policies and by employment law. However, as we have seen, perceptions of devolution and the culture of freedom impact on how the authority actually flows. The structure might better be envisaged as a socially constructed and constructive (Cunliffe, 2008,b) cluster of overlapping and interconnecting locales (Giddens, 1984) or fields (Bourdieu, 1992) in which the inward looking or local focus generates permeable boundaries and resistance to wider corporate direction.

### 5.1.4 Role

The cluster of words categorised in relation to the theme of role are very relevant to the understanding of leadership by the professional service managers as they are at the heart of how they see themselves in relation to the organisation and others. Unsurprisingly, many interviewees used the word <u>deliver</u> in relation to the service outputs for which they were responsible but it is the nuances of how the delivery is achieved that are of most interest. **Person N** emphasised that her own achievement as a senior manager was dependant on 'the people on the ground':

*"…most importantly, to work with my senior leadership team and particularly the middle managers, the operational managers, who, at the end of the day, will deliver what you…any change that you want to make, it's those people on the ground that will deliver. And it's those people that you've got to really get on board. If they're not on board, you can forget it. You know, they'll nod all they want, they'll agree with you, they'll walk out of the door and then it's the silent refusal, isn't it?"*

The leadership activity that she describes here is directed towards ensuring that the people for whom she is responsible actually 'get on board' rather tacitly disagree (silent refusal) so that commitment to required changes is manifest.

For **Person N,** (work /service) delivery was a significant issue and she directly connects achieving a reputation for delivery (through her engaged team) to the confidence that people have in her personal effectiveness and ability as a senior manager:

*"So much of this is about personal effectiveness and, you know, people having confidence in your ability and your judgement is, you know, you've got to have the key people behind you, above you as well. Because you can have the best idea in the world and you can write a fantastic paper, but if actually people around the table don't actually have any confidence in your ability to deliver or…then you'll get nowhere; absolutely nowhere."*

The reference to writing a 'fantastic paper' is interesting given comments previously noted about the need to write and present papers in a plethora of committees and do service to the bureaucratic and political machine.

Whilst this 'political astuteness' (person N) may be an expectation and one element of what it means to be seen to be working properly as a senior manager it is the delivery of what is promised in such papers, reliant upon engaged/committed staff, that instils confidence in the personal effectiveness of the manager.

Person N extends her understanding of what builds confidence to include being able to anticipate things and 'being a proactive member of the team'. This is a very important quality in Person N's eyes as the consequence of complaining and not delivering as a member of the senior team is seen as gradual loss or resources (and therefore inability to deliver) and metaphorically 'death':

*"…it's about I suppose gaining that confidence because yes, you deliver, but also that you anticipate those sorts of things, so that you're seen as being quite a proactive member of the team; not kicking and screaming or, you know, sitting there with a long face and complaining all the time, and sucking your teeth about how…you know, and I do have one or two colleagues who behave like that, and over time, you see that they lose people's confidence. And that's just death; death, because very slowly, they will get less and less resource, or less and less, you know."*

Other elements that she believes are critical to build the confidence in her as a senior manager include building relationships, possessing technical ability and delivering what you say you will deliver that is valuable to the organisation's success:

*"But also, more than that, to work at this level, you have got to be able to work across the board at relationships about building confidence; about people having confidence that you do have the technical ability to deliver something successfully; and, you know, that you're making a valuable contribution to the institution; and that, you know, you're contributing towards its success, and you deliver what you say you're going to deliver."*

Person P's concern around the feasibility of being able to deliver her role and issues arising from not challenging 'sloppy delivery' have already been noted, however she also refers to the difficulty of delivering to short deadlines and with a lack of appropriate time and resources.

*"I think, that's one of the challenges and also time, operationally, to deliver within the time and the financial resources available to us, that's the other challenge, because it has become apparent that an awful lot, which should have happened hasn't happened, let's say, I don't know, emergency response planning, for example, business continuity plans, that kind of thing hasn't been done properly and now it's, eek, need to do it, you know, need to do it by the end of November and that is really challenging to do. There's several big pieces of work that we really need to do and we really need to do properly, but the deadlines are very short."*

**Person Q's** understanding of senior level teamwork and building supportive relationships, in this case with colleagues across different professional service functions, resonates with that offered by Person N but with transactional overtones:

*"Anybody who thinks they can deliver their personal objectives without engaging and working closely with others…and sometimes it's scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. There's always a give, give, there's always a collaboration that always has to happen, and that's always been the case in any job that I've done. Here particularly my professional services leadership colleagues, so the people in other professional services departments, FM, communications, finance, HR, they're absolutely crucial."*

Conversely, **Person E** emphasises her own role in delivery by stressing the leadership and selling that she needs to do to generate commitment to a government initiative for which she is centrally responsible but which, given the tendency in faculties and schools to focus on their own issues and priorities, other people may not see as a priority.

*"I suppose, I do it unconsciously now really, and I'm always thinking, you know, for example, one of the things I'm leading on, at the moment, is something called the XXXXX, which is a government initiative, I've got to lead it and deliver on it, so, I'm consciously, you know, I have had to make myself consciously think through how do I, in effect, sell it to academic colleagues in schools..."*

For Person E being seen to be delivering a worthwhile job and having a raison d'etre is important for a central service seen as a cost to the university:

*"...because you are, yeah, you know, you are, we are a cost to the university, so, we've got to be seen to be doing a worthwhile job, and delivering, and not everybody is going to see us in that way all of the time, but, yeah, you know, I'm very conscious of that, so... Yeah, yeah, you know, delivering, and then, yeah, demonstrating that, you know, yeah, as you say, you add value, that, you know, you are there for a particular reason."*

A more introspective view of delivery was offered by **Person F**, linking personal effectiveness to 'feeling comfortable' with the situations and people he encountered when delivering services personally:

*"Personal effectiveness for me is about feeling comfortable with different situations and different people and different things that I personally have to deliver."*

To the contrary person G felt that she delivered little personally but rather emphasised the leadership (although not specifically mentioned as such) that she undertakes to make things happen through her direct reports and in turn through their staff:

*"And a lot of that comes down really to rather than…I think of it more as kind of influencing management, rather than direct management because you're dealing with managers who themselves have experience in a management style, and you're trying to really influence where you want something to go but you want it to be them that feels ownership of it. So I don't feel like I deliver a lot in that sense now, but I help influence the things that happen. So a lot of it is around staffing."*

She also emphasised a 'customer' oriented perspective on service delivery that was so important as to constitute a 'fundamental principle' pointing out the danger of, over time, losing focus on what the customer wants:

*"My fundamental principle, and it has always been and it remains to be now, that we think about what deliver from the person we're delivering it for. And I think the mistake I've seen, I'm sure myself as well, but I've seen a lot of teams make and still see make, is that you get wrapped up in what you're doing and you forget about the person that it's being delivered for. And so you start to deliver what you want to deliver, rather than delivering it in a way that your customer wants to receive it."*

Person T applied the word to his personal work to manage the interface, act as a buffer and deliver a palatable message:

*"I'd hate to think I was someone that was two faced and wore two hats, but you have to balance the two. And sometimes, the word I use often is, 'buffer'. You interpret a message and deliver it in a way that's perhaps more palatable, going backwards and forwards."*

This idea of being an interface emerges again in the clusters of relationship and interactions, however the main point here is that person T felt personally obliged to do work to modify messages between parties to make them acceptable to both. The idea of a buffer suggests that if this work wasn't done then various parties would come into conflict in some way, thereby hinting at the diverse interest and agendas and political culture in which person T finds himself.

Finally, as previously noted, Person J links delivery very much to the notion of managerial accountability with him holding his direct reports responsible for the delivery of objectives that he has signed off:

*"So as a very practical example of that if you look in budget terms the conversations I've had with all my direct reports are I will hold you accountable for delivering the overall objectives within the resources that are available to you."*

The link between delivery and achieving the confidence of others has already been noted, especially for person N. **Person B** mentions the importance of self-confidence when dealing with and trying to influence other senior colleagues:

*"Very often we'll hear from our HOFA, you need to talk to, you need to get your head of school to understand that. You need to persuade him that… and that is predicated on the idea that, a) they don't understand in the first place, b) that they want to engage with it, c) that they are, that their opinions are changeable and d) that I have any influencing skills at all. So you haven't to lack confidence."*

**Person M** expresses a similar view of the need for self-confidence but in relation to professional services staff as a whole adopting a discourse of professionalism as a defence against organisational members (academics) who might cast them in a subservient role. Thus the self-confidence of professional service staff relates to parity of esteem and greater equality:

*"I'm qualified as a professional we have financiers, we have planners, we have marketers, all, you know, at the top of their game, yeh, and certainly not subservient to an academic in their field. So, I think our professional services community have needed to get a sense of their confidence, they need confidence, to recognise that I think."*

**Person N** very much related confidence to leadership giving a particular example of speaking to larger groups of staff, once again stressing the need to gain genuine engagement and commitment rather than superficial acceptance:

*"Yes, of those who are leading them as well. I mean, I think if people don't have confidence in you as a person then, you know, if you're stood there in front of a group of people, as I am often, you know, it can be 30, 40, 50 people. Because I'd have*

*large teams of people, and if I'm stood in front of that number of people and talking to them about something that's going to change, and they've no confidence in… They may superficially accept well, things have to change but they'd rather they didn't. And sometimes, despite explaining it, they won't really…not as you're committed to making that change. So, you know, it is quite challenging."*

Person N offers a specific way of gaining peoples' confidence – listening to peoples' suggestions for improvement and acting on them:

*"And that, again, gives people confidence that actually, you did what you say you were going to do, that's the first thing; and that this person is interested in what we do and is interested and, you know, sees things that needs doing, will get them done. But also, if they were to say to me, well, I think we could do this better, they're probably more likely to listen."*

Importantly, person N links confidence to interpersonal trust as an essential component of effective working with peers:

*"And, you know, it's managing those interfaces all the time, both above you and beneath you and sideways, you know, with your peers, with your counterparts, you know, with XXXX who's along the corridor from me, who together we're delivering a strategy. I've got…he and I have both got to have confidence in each other. We've both got to trust one another. And that's a word I probably haven't used so far, which I think it's important. It's trust; confidence, trust, probably they're a very similar type of word. You know, he's got to trust that when I've number crunched these figures and I've said, "Look, this is what we need, XXXX", he's confident about me, when he tells me, "Right, it's going to cost you this much to build this, XXXXX" I know it's right."*

For **person G** the development of self-confidence comes from long experience in the organisation but also mastering the challenges of working in new roles:

*"And I think it builds your confidence on the fact that someone walks through the door and you think, do you know what, I've been here already, I know this. And there's things you don't know but I think, you know, the fact that it's sort of different people but very similar stories, it kind of builds your confidence as a manager that you do understand, you know, what you're working with. So I think that ability to just be kind of picked up and plonked somewhere else is probably the best management building I've seen."*

The notion of being confident in someone links to trust and in turn to credibility. **Person I** believes achieving credibility can be difficult for those joining from other sectors but mentions a specific credential that he thinks generates credibility amongst academic colleagues, that of having an academic or pseudo-academic background (in fact, person I has a doctorate and previously worked in research)

*"And so one of the real challenges we've got now is then how do you integrate those guys into the HE sector, get them to...help them to understand some of those issues we've already discussed, and how do you build their credibility with the academic community to give them what I've sort of said earlier on about the fact that, actually, there's...credibility is easier to achieve with people who have come from an academic or pseudo-academic background."*

As a recently appointed manager new to higher education and completely unfamiliar with its jargon and culture, **person S** had experienced just such difficulties as referred to by person I, but felt that after 12 months, or in fact one academic cycle and 'picking their brains', she'd now developed credibility with her team linking this here to her own knowledge (of higher education) and the provision of managerial support:

*"Because it's about my credibility. Because I do believe now - I do believe I've won them over, I do believe they're with me now. I think for the first 12 months they struggled and I can understand that because I didn't know what I was talking about. They knew more than me… I had to ask the very basic of questions at everything that happened throughout the year was a new thing for me. So it was a complete learning curve. So I suppose one of the key things in my mind was to retain credibility whilst picking their brains as much as I could. And whilst supporting them to be a manager."*

An important role related factor is that of autonomy – the degree of and the nature of, as it imparts a certain quality to the relationship between the professional service manager and their own line manager. How the manager constructs the relationship between them and their line manager, and also the academic manager with whom they had a matrix management relationship, proved an interesting challenge for a number of people including **person O**:

*"She provides me with autonomy, and in response I work very hard, and I always keep her in the loop, but I never cut her out of a conversation or anything like that. Which does happen in universities…and my champion is the PVC for the Student Experience. And so, when I want to talk to academic heads about a significant issue, I will always ask him to front it with me, and that works for us, doing that kind of double act."*

Autonomy is achieved for the relatively modest cost of keeping her line manager 'in the loop' and of particular interest is the leadership tactic of working with and through the pro vice-chancellor as a 'kind of double act' in order to influence academics. However, the managerial autonomy is quite limited, not as a result of any difficulties with her manager but owing to the decision-making structures within the university and the committee/governance system that has previously been noted:

*"Yes, I think people…in all honesty I get deeply frustrated by our decision making processes, because I think, as a manager of a large department, responsible for a huge amount of income, managing a pay and a non pay budget of 5.2 million…there's a degree of autonomy that I can be afforded, that would speed up the way that we work. And it's just, you're not afforded it."*

Person F provides an opposite view suggesting that people are 'permitted to feel' that they have more autonomy and rights than in other sectors, with resistance legitimised:

*"So, it's almost as if when people come into the institution, to some extent, they're permitted to feel as if they more discretion or autonomy and rights which they may not have in other sectors. I'm not saying it's a good or bad thing, but what it does is make the process of leading and managing other people more complex, 'cause they're more, they're more tuned into their rights, shall we say, and the potential freedom and discretion that they have. (Right) And so actually that's the backdrop against which stuff like change becomes much more complex; resistance is much more legitimised. Not just for academics but for everybody because what people see it is, "Academics have some freedom and I want some of that." Yep, and it's Ok for me to behave in that way. And I don't think that's right or wrong that's just the, just the thing about where we are."*

There are mixed managerialist messages here regarding person F's true views about the autonomy and discretion, with him feeling obliged to say that he doesn't think it's good or bad or right or wrong but linking the autonomy to permission, being tuned into rights and legitimised resistance that makes managing people and change more complex. He believes that professional service staff use the example of academic freedom to claim the right to behave in a similar way, rather than this necessarily being a good thing.

The personal tension around how much discretion and autonomy to afford staff is more clearly evident when person F states:

*"I mean the thing I struggle with is interpersonal relationships and how to get those right in terms of the balance between me supposed to be manager, leader or what have you and other peoples' autonomy. That's the challenging thing."*

Person R sees the provision of autonomy as one way in which a manager can motivate staff:

*"How do you motivate staff at work through recognition, through autonomy, rather than financial rewards, all of this sort of stuff…"*

The reduction in decision-making autonomy, by implication linked to the requirement to comply with HR policies and negotiate with Trade Unions, compared to that experienced in a previous role in the private sector is referred to by **person S**:

*"I had much more autonomy within - taking aside the students; if I just look at the 30 staff I managed within the youth training programme. It was much easier for me to discipline to motivate to be more creative in my approaches to motivation. I actually instigated a new PDR system. There was no Trade Union input. So it was very much - I went in as XXXX Manager over to you, you make this work."*

Whilst feeling a lack of autonomy herself, person S perceives that she grants this to her team by not micromanaging and links this to mutual trust, with the implication that anyone perceived to be less trustworthy may need to be more closely managed:

*"I don't micromanage, I believe that we pay team leaders - we pay all staff to have some level of ownership and autonomy. Because it's nothing more frustrating than saying I've got your permission to pick that pen up. It just doesn't work. So there's an element of mutual trust."*

The word 'mentor' has been included in the role cluster as it is a role that a manager may adopt to develop others and from whom development may be received, although links can be made to relationships and leadership.

**Person K** found the help she received from her mentor on joining higher education from another sector was invaluable and she has now chosen to operate as a mentor herself to help others:

*"I think, the other thing, certainly when I was newer to employment and a management role, is having a mentor, so someone who is quite experienced, who you can go to and say, oh, this is not right, or this is not working…But, then, when I came here, it was obviously something that was done here and to help, I think, with the transition from a totally different organisation and, in actual fact, my mentor turned out to be the assistant director of HR and it was really invaluable… So, so I offer myself to be a mentor for other people who are doing leadership training or in more junior roles, as well, because I have seen how useful that's been."*

**Person H** had similarly undertaken the role of both mentee and mentor:

*"…how to do the management things and I think it's a now become a mentor, telling other people how things can be done. So, that's a two way, kind of a direction."*

**Person M** had a long-standing informal mentoring relationship with a former masters level classmate that had proved 'critical':

*"…we both worked for different organisations and we've been mentors for one of each other for the last 10/12 years since then. So that sort of works and someone else that I meet, usually weekly who's a friend, but is in a similar job to me, and so informal mentoring is, I think, absolutely critical."*

**Person E** had undertaken the role of mentor as well as having worked with a mentor in the past but was now searching for a coach to help overcome occasional wobbly moments':

*"I've had a good mentor in the past, I mentor people myself, but I'd like, sort of, a coach/mentor to work with me, because I've got a lot of quite high profile projects that I'm working on, and, you know, occasionally have, sort of, a wobbly moment, and would just like somebody to, you know, to work with me on that."*

**Person C** felt that a previous mentor had had a significant effect on developing him as a manager:

*"…he was essentially my mentor and I owe him a great deal of gratitude in terms of developing me as a manager. So I learned an awful lot working with him…"*

**Person G** had discussed the possibility of identifying a senior manager in another university to work with her as her mentor:

*"I've talked to XXXX recently about having a mentor, potentially sort of a registrar at the university or someone that, you know, in terms of leadership style and understanding of the environment, perhaps could provide some mentoring for me. So, you know, that's probably the next step."*

**Person I** wanted to semi-formalise mentoring arrangements for potential future managers with a view to gaining experience:

*"…putting in place some sort of more thoughts of semi-formal supervisory or mentoring arrangements, whereby people who are potential managers in the future can get a little bit more experience of the people side of things."*

**Person S** had struggled with the transition into higher education precisely because she had not been provided with the support of a mentor and advocated this as part of the induction process for new managers:

*"I would provide a far more robust and supportive environment when they first start for six months. I would provide a mentor almost, a buddy. Somebody who you can go to. Because I found the first six months in this job incredibly lonely and incredibly stressful and it didn't need to be that lonely or stressful. Because I had no induction."*

It is in consideration of role that we see some of the central features of the understanding of leadership, sometimes considered in relation to self and social identity (Hogg et al, 1995; Ellemers et al, 2002). We see a tension between the desire for autonomy and expectations of being line-managed (control) with the confidence of others founded on delivery and being seen to deliver (personally and through the team) and confidence from the team linked to the knowledge and the

supportive relationship provided (trust). The trust/control dilemma is an important one for managers with lack of trust potentially undermining effective relationships but unbounded trust potentially leading to disappointment and political vulnerability (Whitener et al, 1998). Underpinning this we have issues of self-confidence both individually and as a professional linked to perceptions of power and status in a higher education setting.

### 5.1.5 Relationships

Whilst formal role can be identified as arising from the job description and related position in the organisational structure and level in the hierarchy, the notion of role clearly links to that of relationships with the enactment of role informing relationships with others, for example the degree of trust (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006) and micro-management (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003).

Specific difficulties around building and maintaining relationships within the university structure were confirmed by **Person G** linked to the key word ‘partnership’:

*“Yes, to an extent. I mean, I think it depends where the PSS staff work. I think when you're working in partnership with academics, it can be simpler and harder in different ways, in that I think certainly some academic staff don't like to be bound by rules…So it's access to people who you need their time, and that sort of thing can be quite hard. And I think, again, that probably creates a toughness for the PSS staff…But on the other side, I think working in a school or at the coalface with the academics also has the opportunity to build that partnership and gain more of an understanding and sort of the excitement of what they're doing…And I think when you work with someone who is passionate about what they do and you're very clear what they're trying to achieve, you can kind of help them a bit more find a route through to do that.”*

Partnership with academic colleagues is seen to be easier to accomplish in schools, metaphorically working at ‘the coalface’, than in the centre implying a sense of teamwork through shared hard labour. Difficulty in developing partnership working is also linked to the academics tendency not to be ‘bound by rules’ linked here to a ‘passionate’ focus on their own priorities. Finally a way to develop a partnership is suggested by helping academic staff find a route to achieve their objectives.

The fixed-term nature of senior academic manager appointments and pressures to maintain academic activity at the same time as managing is highlighted as a difficulty in developing partnership working by person T:

*“…everything I’ve talked about is linked to developing that partnership between the academics and the professional services that do do that, and you’re absolutely right.*

*I've said it many times, that heads of schools are appointed on a three yearly basis, they're not permanent positions, and they want to carry on their research and they want to continue being an academic."*

The key word ‘protect/ing’ illuminates some interesting relational construction by the professional service managers in respect of their own direct reports and staff, linked to issues of being an interface and buffer as previously mentioned. **Person S**, a school based senior administrative manager, describes herself metaphorically as a ‘protective wall’ between faculty and her colleagues in the School:

*"I mean you talked before about the different relationships and the difficulty of managing relationships and it's much more difficult to manage the relationships with faculty than in the school. I think they saw that then and saw that I'm that middle bit aren't I? I'm that protective wall between faculty to the school. Does that make sense?"*

**Person H**, also a school based senior administrative manager, describes her experience of being in the middle between academic staff and her own team as being a ‘punch bag’, implying that she finds associated pressures threatening and potentially painful:

*"So, it's a kind of managing the expectations and then linking the two sides together and I am a kind of a, you can say, more like a punch bag. You can be punched by the academics but at the same time you are protecting the support staff being punched and sometimes you might be hit by the support staff occasionally. So, this is a kind of pushing between them, this is how I see myself at the moment. We say dealing, you know, I do protect the support staff when the academic is unreasonable and I believe they deserve some protection and I do help them and that is the way I support them."*

Person H's support for colleagues is not automatic as she suggests that she will support and protect her staff when she perceives that they deserve it. However, a different sense of protected is used by **person S** about university culture:

*"Absolutely. It's actually a world within a world. Local government I thought was a protected environment and it actually isn't. When you come into higher education you realise how protected higher education is. Can I say that?*

*Local government as well, although its public sector there's the pressures are very varied and very demanding because our customers are so varied and so demanding. Whereas you come into higher education and it's quite cocooned."*

Being metaphorically ‘cocooned’ emphasises what person S sees as the protected work environment within the HEI, and whilst not obvious in these quotes the protection to which she alludes is elsewhere revealed as an absence of commercial pressures and strong management.

**Person P** concurs with this view but describes the culture as being family oriented and a little later a recent re-structure almost as a 'divorce':

*"I've never worked in another university, or another higher education institution, so I don't know if that needing to be part of a family is part of an institution, but I've never come across it in previous jobs that I've had, you know, out in industry, or I used to work in the banking sector as well, never quite come across it to quite such an extent, you know, this need to be protected and feel part of something and that, I think, to recreate that, I think, is quite challenging…"*

The implication here is that the university culture, as person P sees it, is so close knit as almost to be a family with members that need to feel protected and part of something to a greater degree than she has encountered elsewhere.

The nature or style of relationships is also referred to in the word (and its relatives) collaborate. Previously noted is **person Q's** use of the word in respect of work with professional service functional colleagues, however he also uses it in the sense of working together towards some overall goal or vision which, as we have already noted, seems contrary both to the structure and the culture of higher education as described by the interviewees:

*"But I suppose everybody through the organisation, all the way from the vice chancellor down to an academic who's new to the institution. It makes life a lot easier if we are collaborating and we recognise that we're all trying to get down the same route."*

**Person R's** sense of the word collaborative arises out of consideration of the scope for closer institutional working in a more competitive global environment and the difficulties of achieving this in some cases owing to pride in institutional history and autonomy:

*"If they're paying £9,000 fees and then really talking about post grad and then post doc, all of this sort of stuff, these are difficult things for us to deal with, and therefore, change which is not something the sector is particularly renowned for, collaborative work across institutions, all this sort of stuff is very, very, difficult to achieve because we hold on to our autonomy."*

Person R used collaborative in a different sense relating to his interpersonal style and the impact this ultimately has on his relationships with colleagues:

*"I do open, honest and collaborative, sooner or later you won't like me for that, but if you employ me, I do open, honest and collaborative because I can't behave in any less than an open honest and collaborative way."*

He clearly sees his tendency towards being open, honest and collaborative as in his nature and given the fact that he states that eventually he will not be liked for that implies that he may be quite forthright in being open and honest.

Of the many references to the word ‘relationship’, ones of particular note include **person B’s** (senior school manager) in respect of the working relationship between her and her senior academic manager in which she sees a number of elements including advice giving, accessibility and straight-talking as being important:

*“…my head of school, XXXX – the basis of our good working relationship is, is ,is that he needs someone to give him.. we’re very different, so he needs somebody to give him good advice sometimes, or to just to listen or to say, you know, “You’re being a plonker,” (right) “this is how it is” or just to give him some information or advice and guidance on how to approach things. So he wants me there when he needs me there (right) and he wants a quick answer on things, so that would be effective for him.”*

The nature of her relationships, understanding others and herself were significant issues for person B:

*“The individual was always going to react in a very significant way, but they I.. it’s… you know the relationship broke down, working relationship broke down because of the way in which I worked. Umm, it did actually, when I came back.”*

*“…relationships and I think, I personally have found that understanding peoples’ motivation, particularly of complex academic individuals – academics have very complex roles, has been very helpful. I remember not understanding the motivation of a colleague uhh and going to talk to another colleague once who said to me, “What you need to understand about this individual who does this particular job is his motivations are this, this and this, so if you ask him to do this he will say that.” And that was very helpful.”*

The link between role and relationships has already been noted, for example in relation to teamwork and confidence, and **person N** re-confirms this in respect of the critical importance of reputation especially in senior roles, expressing similar sentiments to those previously noted for Person Q:

*“If you've not got their support, you would find it very difficult to do your job; very difficult to do your job. And, you know, your reputation is absolutely critical at this level, so you do have to get on with people; you do have to form good working relationships with people; you do have to work collaboratively with people and support your colleagues. Because when you want something in return, you won't get it, if you've not worked in that way.”*

*“And it's all…at this level, success is all about relationships, in some form or another and in whatever guise that takes, it is. [laugh] And about managing those, and in its broadest sense of the word, you know. And that's not just about the personality*

*element of relationships, it's about communication and all of the other things that are covered by that very loose word really, in my view."*

Evidence of a significantly difficult working relationship was apparent for **person F** who was unable to say anything positive about his own line manager and some of his peers which in this extract is linked to concerns about not having been supported to gain a pay increase:

*"Which also in a sense leads me into observations about, well I suppose it's about my personal relationship with her as well, which is having not had an increment…"*

In respect of service delivery person F felt that establishing strong relationships with stakeholders was important:

*"…that relationship and stakeholder relationship is not well established...But I think, partly the issue about effectiveness being judged, is predicated on stakeholder relationships being clear."*

**Person S** stated that she put effort into building relationships as they were necessary for getting 'anywhere in this world':

*"I have very good working relationships because I make sure I do. I make sure I do because you can't get anywhere in this world if you don't build the right relationships with the right people. So yes we've got good working relationships."*

Even with the good relationships, the lack of understanding of work contribution by academic colleagues and the second class status of professional service staff is described as frustrating and sad by person S:

*"I don't think the academic community quite understand that without us life would be awful for them. That frustrates me sometimes. That some of the emails I see that get sent to my team that are quite disrespectful. I find that quite sad and we have built up very good relationships with our academic colleagues, but I still think sometimes there's this sort of feeling that we're here to make the tea."*

Person J also recognised a relational difficulty with academic staff but attributed this to how professional service staff constructed the relationship showing a lack of confidence and seeing themselves as subservient:

*"I think we struggle with the relationship with academics and I think people can be more confident than they are in some cases about the value that they bring to the institution and to the relationship with academic colleagues. So I have...I've met some colleagues who are too subservient in nature and almost a sense that the academic is always right and I don't think that's a healthy relationship.*

Membership of and relationships within social networks have been much considered in the literature (Granovetter, 1983; Burt, 2000; Balkundi and Kilduff, 2005). Participation in networks by **Person M** was seen as important and subject to a strategic choice that she was apologetic for in case this was perceived as too self-interested, transactional and one-way:

*"I'm absolutely, totally and utterly sold on the principle of networking. Yeh, but I'm also really, I'm quite strategic about that, it makes that sound like I'm horrible, bit I really like people I meet, but I never go to these events without thinking, "Right, Why am I going and what do I want to get out of this 2 day event."*

**Person P** identified internal staff development events as 'very, very valuable' as much for networking as for session content:

*"Having said that, I mean, these training courses, certainly the in house ones we do, I mean, are immensely valuable, as much for the content as for the networking that happens, you know, you meet all sorts of people from within the university and it's really…they're very, very valuable…"*

For **person G**, as senior faculty administration manager, networking and informal discussions with senior professional service and academic managers in schools is portrayed as important for sharing understanding of work:

*"Yeah, I work very closely with all the heads of schools and heads of school administration. I think my most useful kind of network, because I work with the other office very closely, we meet regularly and we talk much more informally about how things are going and things that we want to try and have, so that there's similarities across how we work, or where we think things aren't working and we need to do differently, so that we have an understanding of each other's areas."*

Person G sees networking as potentially contributing to the development of her own managers but believed experience in working in different parts of the organisation was key:

*"But I find some managers don't have the confidence of doing that and it's sort of seen as, you know, well I've got to tell people I don't know sort of thing. So I think that sort of sharing. I've tried to encourage them to network around the university. But on the whole, I have to say, in terms of management and leadership style, and growing people's abilities there, I honestly believe experience in different parts of an organisation is the key."*

Empowerment can conceptually be linked to the degree of autonomy or power afforded to staff (structural) (Conger and Kangungo, 1988), their relationship with their manager (psychological) (Maynard et al, 2012) and, consequently, perceptions of leadership or management style.

**Person M** associated talk about distributed leadership to the language of empowerment popular in higher education but not manifested in practice:

*"I think the distributed leadership probably is the new empowerment language in a way isn't it really, and I know that it has a lot of favour within the higher education world, and I've seen a lot I've read quite a bit about that which I find really, really interesting because I think it's a theoretical perspective that I actually don't see manifest itself in practice very often I'm being really honest."*

**Person O's** reference to 'empowered' was linked to her reflections on having been in the role a long time and taking action to delegate more of the day-to-day management work to her direct reports freeing her up for leadership. However, she saw this change as permanent inferring that her team would be unwilling to cede control back to her:

*"…how do I re-invent myself in my career, having done this for a long time, and I'd like to have more of a kind of leadership role. And I think that's for me…otherwise, all I'll be doing is…not all that I'd be doing, but I've empowered the management team to be more responsible, and so…you can't really go back on that, are you with me?"*

Multiple relational issues informing understanding of their work and role is apparent across this sample of interviewees from the nature of relationships with academic colleagues, to relationships with their own line manager, peers and direct reports and with the value of networking identified. The different status of professional service staff can be portrayed as arising from the attitude and relative power of academics (habitus and social, symbolic capital – Bourdieu, 1977), a lack of understanding by academics of the contribution that professional service staff make or by the lack of confidence and subservience of the professional services staff themselves. Issues of structure re-appear in the idea of protecting school-based staff from faculty with empowerment of staff conceptually linked structurally to management and psychologically, through the nature of interpersonal interactions, to leadership style. While the formal organisational pattern of relationships as depicted in the organogram sets the relational scene, the process of relationship building and maintenance is an on-going and dynamic accomplishment incorporating habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), practical consciousness and reflexive monitoring of actions (Giddens, 1984).

### 5.1.6 Interactions

The separation of the over-lapping word clusters for relationships and interactions is to some extent aesthetic rather than epistemological, as it is possible to argue that repeated interactions of a certain type constitute the structure of the relationship and that the relationship structures the kind of interactions that are acceptable (Singelmann, 1972), a duality in keeping with the structuration theories perspective adopted in this study. A main focus in this cluster is on language use and opportunities for interaction and the outcomes associated with these in terms of engagement, trust and credibility.

The difficulty of coming to terms with some of the terminology of higher education has already been noted in the case of person S. **Person M** emphasises the active variation of language use, or translation, for different audiences:

*"I think very hard about the language I use. I work especially hard at doing the translation for them about when I'm talking about managing performance – what the hell does that mean in History, or whatever, you know, and what it might mean to them in that environment."*

Terminology was also perceived to be important in relation to the identity and status of professional service staff (a point with which both person D and J disagreed) given the professional expertise possessed in their field:

*"I'm a professional; you know, I'm qualified as a professional we have financiers, we have planners, we have marketers, all, you know, at the top of their game, and certainly not subservient to an academic in their field. So, I think our professional services community have needed to get a sense of their confidence, they need confidence, to recognise that I think."*

The idea of acting as a translator and 'couching' messages was also offered by **person L**:

*"…when you're talking to an academic you might frame something one way, when you're talking to somebody else you couch it in another way. It's not about it's a different thing when you ask an academic and you have to address them in a certain way, it's about the translation."*

Person's G, M, Q, S and T all mentioned the need to be able to hold difficult conversations in an appropriate manner, with the example below from **person G**:

*"And I think what a lot of managers find hard, and I would be no different and I see it with my managers, is having that difficult conversation and being able to raise issues in a way when you don't just put someone's barrier up straightaway."*

For person M conversations were especially significant with her core influencing strategy relying upon building personal contact through having face-to-face conversations:

*"So, the challenge is about getting into the conversation… was I actually made a point of going round and meeting every single head of Department. It was absolutely, no way was a centralised email saying come and look at this great big thing leadership I bet you're really interested…"*

Both person M and S referred to using conversations with direct reports to influence their thinking and generate an orientation towards necessary changes in service delivery, with the example below from **person S**:

*"So from an internal perspective, my conversations with my team leaders are all around adding value about understanding the next five years and the challenges that we're facing about our share in the market. About how we continue to improve."*

The word 'academics' is included in the interactions cluster, with clear links to culture, management and relationships, largely owing to references to the importance of working well with academic colleagues and the difficulty sometimes of doing this. As previously noted Person B felt that academics are complex individuals with complex roles who are 'very driven' (person P), passionate (person G) and working at rather than for the university (person T). **Person N** saw communications from academics as being problematic, unless money was required:

*"Because academics aren't the best at communicating upwards and letting people know what they're doing, et cetera, et cetera, unless they want some money to do it."*

**Person A,** stated that some academics talked to people in an unacceptable way (almost as if they were autistic), but owing to their role communications skills weren't 'paramount':

*"…it's the way in which academic staff talk to people, uhh, is not what you'd say acceptable. But I think, umm, what also has to be recognized is that for someone to be successful in their academic career they've got to be somewhere on the autistic spectrum – so, whereby communication skills aren't, you know, paramount really."*

Admitting to a sweeping generalisation, Person P felt that academics were perhaps limited to work in higher education:

*"I think, this is a sweeping generalisation and I don't know about it going on tape really, but, I think, I would say 95% of academics would not cope in the real world, not in the real world…"*

Insight into the frustrations of academics was seen to be useful information to bring into conversations with academic colleagues by **person L**:

*"Yeah. So I've had close contact with academics on a professional level as well as being a student, so I think I've had some insight there and I know the frustrations that they have when they can't get the photocopier working or, you know, down to that level to what they need to do to organise a conference… Because I do bring it into the conversation sometimes just to let people know that I am aware of that side of life."*

Person L also cautioned against stereotyping academics, as she encountered different reactions from different people:

*"…with some academics they're totally yeah, let's go for it, let's do it, and others aren't. But whether that is because they're academics or whether that's because that's the way they are…you can't stereotype, draw a line down the middle and say well, that set of behaviours belongs to that group."*

A call for mutual respect and parity of status was evident from **person M**:

*"And academics recognising that, you know, the professional services are part of their academic endeavour and to come together and to serve it but to not be subservient. Which was the first bit you know. No I don't believe that academics should push professional services people around"*

**Person Q** recognised the need to demonstrate the value of services to academics and win support given their work focus and interests:

*"…in this sector that you've got to demonstrate academics who are wedded to their subject matter and their department, and I go in there and say I want to do X, Y, and Z, you've got to really demonstrate why that's going to be of value to those guys and make sure that they're onside and they support the process you're going to go down."*

However, a significant issue for interactions and relationships with academics was their anti-management orientation, according to person Q:

*"And what you're not creating there, you're not creating a mature management model for education. And the problem with that I suppose, the counterpoint there is that academics don't want to be managed, quite simply… Yeah. They don't want to be managed and they don't like managing, so you're caught between that rock and that hard place all the time."*

Person Q saw the lack of managerial skills and preference not to manage as being issues for academic managers, which he related to short term contracts and the need to balance management and academic commitments already noted by person T. **Person G** saw weakness in management of academics but attributed this indirectly to a lack of rule following:

*I think when you're working in partnership with academics, it can be simpler and harder in different ways, in that I think certainly some academic staff don't like to be bound by rules…Academics aren't particularly managed, you know, effectively. So it's access to people who you need their time, and that sort of thing can be quite hard. And I think, again, that probably creates a toughness for the PSS staff*

Person G also felt that it was professional service staff's role to support academic colleagues by relieving them of their administrative burden to liberate them to spend their time more productively as a 'fee earner':

*"And you want academics not feeling like they've got a big administrative burden, for a start. And then I think, you know, the fact that they can trust that their exam papers will be correct and on time, and marked and collated and whatever… Absolutely, yeah. I mean, they're our fee earners ultimately and, you know, you wouldn't want your fee earner sitting putting exam marks into a spreadsheet when you could pay someone different to do that work. "*

The danger that some academic staff might push this service relationship to an extreme by harbouring unrealistic expectations of what professional service staff could/should do was mentioned by person H:

*"I think the academics see the support staff as a doing everything, kind of running around and doing, "whatever I like, whenever I want and whatever I ask for," kind of services."*

However, **person P** emphasised that this was not merely a uni-directional service delivery relationship but required two-way engagement to avoid academic disenfranchisement and loss of connection with the university:

*"I think, sometimes, that's almost what is strived for, striven for, whatever the, you know, we'll deliver absolutely fabulous professional service and the academics can sort themselves out, or we will do this for the academics without any, kind of, two way engagement from the academic community…I think, you get resentment, I think, the academics become resentful and almost disenfranchised, you know, they lose their sense of identity with the institution. So, yes, I think, because they're very…I don't know, they're strange, you know, you view academics as a strange lot, yes, I think, they can be quite sensitive, in a strange way, so they do become disenfranchised if they feel they're not being taken seriously enough and their opinions are not being heard"*

**Person R** perceived the existence of the 'them and us' relationships reported in the literature (Dobson, 2000):

*"On both sides to be honest with you. Professional services managers will sit there and, you know, I have heard it in this university, and slag off academics because they are not good managers, and I've heard academics slag off professional services because they can't get anything done when they ask for it to be done."*

Closer working was offered as a way to break down the barriers between professional service and academic staff is offered by **person D**:

*"I think probably more closer working with academic leaders for people who are in the central PS, so that there's a little bit more engagement with people in those areas."*

Although both trust and engagement have been linked in my analysis to relationships and interactions both feature in terms of leadership and I will briefly review both themes in a way that forms a bridge to the final cluster of leadership key words. Engagement suggests positive interaction such that the person who becomes engaged is attentive to some person (the leader) or issue. In fact **person P** highlights this as a feature of leadership:

*"Yes, well, that's my perception anyway, management is process and leadership is much more encouragement, engagement."*

**Person O** articulates engagement in the sense of more active, perhaps two-way communication with service users and also with changing the mind-set of service users:

*"And to be fair, we are probably not equally public enough about that, and I'm trying to think about ways of improving that engagement really, so that I don't spend all my time just talking to people, and people don't feel as though it's just another meeting that's been called by XXXXXX. But, it's trying to get people to engage with a very different way of thinking that is quite hard, actually."*

**Person M** closely links engagement to the strategy of holding one-to-one conversations already noted:

*"So it was about engagement for me (Right) I went round and met people I asked to have 10 minutes on their meetings, you know they had management meetings, and just asked them for that…"*

The link between trust and mutual confidence has already been noted in respect of person N, with **person P** linking trust to delegation and her own 'control freak' tendencies:

*"I've had to really think carefully about and, also, delegating, that's the other thing, thinking carefully about delegating and trusting other people to do things, you know, there's an element of control freak really, isn't there?"*

**Person S's** role of school administrative manager would be untenable if she hadn't achieved the trust of her head of school:

*"He and I if he doesn't trust me there is no job.  I couldn't do my role."*

A final comment from person S cements the connection between several of the key words and the discharge of her role as a (school based) professional service manager:

*"No.  It's about trust, it's about credibility it's about consistency and it's very much, for me, success in my role is not to do everything myself but to make sure that I've got the people in the right roles, understanding what they need to do and taking ownership and doing it.  I don't micromanage, I believe that we pay team leaders - we pay all staff to have some level of ownership and autonomy.  Because it's nothing more frustrating than saying I've got your permission to pick that pen up.  It just doesn't work.  So there's an element of mutual trust."*

Interpersonal interactions/conversations were highlighted with a key objective being to develop engagement in the sense of interest from other parties, for example service users.  The notion of translating messages to suit different audiences, for example academics, was apparent with the benefit of having insight into the frustrations of academics noted. Holding difficult conversations, for example with staff, was seen aspect of management with other opportunities to use conversations influentially also mentioned. Here discursive consciousness and competence can be regarded as a resource (Giddens, 1984) that facilitates the development of social capital (Bourdieu, 1977), influence and therefore leadership. The orientation towards management and rule-following (arguably a habitus of control or managerialism), academic manager contracts and service expectations towards professional service staff all impacted on the nature of interactions.

### 5.1.7 Leadership

As this study concerns the understanding of leadership by professional service managers then the analysis as a whole provides a conceptual framework relevant to leadership, however in conducting the key word analysis certain words held a strong affinity for notions of leadership including vision, champions, bigger picture, principle and coaching, although mentoring can be closely linked to leadership development.

Most comments relating to vision align with the usual usage of the term associated with strategy, planning and leadership. **Person O** links vision to leadership as she differentiates leadership from management but this is a leader-centred vision that needs to be sold:

*"But I think leadership is all about inspiring people, selling your vision, taking people with you.  And I think that management is about making sure the right thing is done at the right time."*

Drawing partly upon the terminology of transformational leadership (Bass,1999), rather than selling the visions **person E** talks about ‘taking people with you’:

*“I see management as the more transactional, you know, operational day to day stuff, kind of, making things happen, whereas leadership to me is more about the vision, and, you know, sort of, taking people with you, sort of, setting out what you want to do, and taking people with you.”*

Person E also links visioning to strategic planning and the bigger picture:

*“…you know, the whole sort of visioning strategic plan side of leadership for XXXX is relatively straightforward, because she can focus on the bigger picture of where the whole organisation is going.”*

The cultural issues relating to multiple groups and divergent interests emerge again as person O talks of the need to move beyond debating the vision to agreeing it, securing buy-in and making it happen:

*“And we spend a lot of time in higher education debating the vision, and at some point we have to agree, ‘This is the vision,’ and we secure buy in, and then people are clear about what they’re contributing towards that vision, and how they can make that happen.”*

**Person P** talks of tunnel vision, operation in silos and the longevity of staff:

*“…so you’re not stuck in this silo, I think, it’s so important to think outside the silo, rather than the box, you know, to see the bigger picture, to feel part of a bigger world, to see what’s going on out there, rather than just this tunnel vision of School and Environmental Sciences from when you’re 16 to when you’re 65 and that’s it, you know.”*

**Person Q** describes himself as a ‘visionary’ linking this term to being free to undertake strategic level thinking and work by ‘empowering’ people to use their skills to do operational tasks:

*“I think the skills that I see as being important in my role is about being a visionary, being able to maintain at a strategic level my thinking, because if I start to go into the detail of the technology I start to do the job of the people I’m employing. I employ people and empower people because of the skills they’ve got. I don’t employ them so that I can then do their job for them…”*

The issue for **person D** is not so much the vision but the managerial mechanisms for delivering it:

*“…but I think perhaps we need to get a little bit more managerial about well, how those visions are actually going to be interpreted and delivered…and you do need to have that sort of vision, but if you don't have systems and processes, if you don't have structures in place, you know, you ain't going anywhere if it's not delivering for you.”*

As already noted for person E (and person P), discussion of the 'bigger picture' naturally relates to vision, however with different nuances. Person **O'**s consideration relates to her personal review and evolution of her role, seeing bigger picture leadership as something that adds value:

*"So you've put yourself out of that frame, and you think, 'Okay, what do I do? Bigger picture, leadership?' But, so that you're still doing something, so you feel as though you are making a contribution…and you're actually doing something, you are generating something of value rather than just hosting a series of meetings!"*

Person B's reference to chessboard is again indicative of a leader-centred view of leadership seeing her staff as 'pieces on a chessboard':

*"Rather than pure you're seeing them as pieces on a chessboard, I do like…I like to build that, kind of, intellectual awareness of how you fit into a bigger picture."*

For **person D,** ensuring that managers collectively see the bigger picture is essential for organisational health as the alternative is people focusing on their own areas and wasting time and resources, a situation which appears prevalent in the university, but for different reasons, according to several of the interviewees:

*"I've seen it with a couple of my former XXXX colleagues who kind of, having been made to think of the bigger picture for four or five years with me, now it's kind of well actually, let's just focus in on what the benefit is for our own areas…And I think that's hugely dangerous because if you start doing that, you then just jump from what it is academics and the core mission, you know, you start wasting time and resources and energy on things which are actually not, in the scheme of things, as important. And I think it just waters down everyone's approach. And has lots of other negative impacts as well in terms of, you know, it's the enemy of teamwork…"*

The word champion(s) was infrequently used but is helpful to consider in relation to leadership action with **person O** (central service manager), as previously noted, seeing the pro-vice chancellor as her champion when influencing academic heads:

*"…and my champion is the PVC for the Student Experience. And so, when I want to talk to academic heads about a significant issue, I will always ask him to front it with me, and that works for us, doing that kind of double act."*

**Person E** (central service manager), also advocates the value of identifying champions and argues that, rather than being manipulative, such a leadership strategy is 'very savvy':

*"I think, you've got to, kind of, identify who your champions are really... so, yeah, so, it's both, it's how I work with them directly, but then how I, kind of, choose, or find champions to work with on specific projects. It makes me sound very manipulative [laughing], but, you know, it's just, I think, you've just got to be very savvy."*

**Person D** identifies champions as people who have a stake in the outcome of any work to change and improve:

*"But then also, the actual you need to have a project champion within each project from the business area who knows it. And they'll normally be middle managers of some description, you know…But you've also got people who know whatever the area is and the issue is intimately, and actually have a stake in it being improved. Because if you don't have a stake, there isn't anything in it for them…"*

<u>Coaching</u> is a recognised development intervention (for example, person E) but increasingly seen as a leadership technique (Kets De Vries, 2005), for instance, **person M** differentiates between the coaching style she uses when influencing colleagues from the more directive approach she uses with her own direct reports:

*"I use more of a, I use a coaching style a lot as well which I find much more productive. No, no I mean I do that with my team as well actually but, oh, I don't know, I'm probably more directive with my team I think if truth were known."*

**Person H** articulated a coaching style of leadership or management as involving questions, rather than directions, to staff, thereby encouraging people to arrive at their own solutions and by implication take ownership (and in person J's terms accountability) for the outcomes. Described in this way coaching can be regarded as a form of empowering leadership (Srivastava et al, 2006):

*"What I'm really trying to do is get people to think and say, "Well, well, what are the options? What are the options and what do you think?" and all that, and try and move in that direction. And that for me is, So if you want to call it a coaching style of leadership or management, then cool."*

**Person G** outlines a similar point in relation to her own leadership:

*"And a lot of what I do really now is coaching and working with my senior managers to try and make sure that we don't get to the point where we hit, you know, tribunal or anything that's difficult…So I spend quite a lot of time really in meetings with my managers, trying to just make sure that we're happy with the path we're going on. And a lot of that comes down really to rather than…I think of it more as kind of influencing management, rather than direct management…"*

**Person I** sees coaching as his role relating coaching to individual talent management and team development:

*"That's what I see my role as – to coach and guide people around those sorts of things; to get them to reflect, themselves, on what they see within their team, what they see in other processes and so on that are going on. It's easy to fall into the trap when you're so busy with things, I think, as a manager, just to...you sort of fire fight, you manage the people day to day, and then you never have time to step back and*

*think, 'Well, actually, okay, let's think about the impact of what we're doing here,' and coaching people to try and get them to reflect on that."*

*"So with a bit of motivating and coaching and so on, and just trying to understand what their talent is...and then of course a team, a great team, is the combination of all of those talents."*

At odds with the terminology and sense of other interviewees, **person T** identifies coaching with management rather than leadership (this may be due to an active involvement in sport that person T elsewhere mentions, with sports coaching having a more performance focused and directive element – Whitmore, 2009):

*"I think you get the other side of the coin, you do get people that are actually very good at managing people, and I suppose that's more of a sort of coaching type role, but haven't got the strategic context of actually, part of an organisation, saying, 'That's where we're going.' "*

The word <u>principle</u> (and for person R, standards) was used by interviewees to emphasise a value or idea of importance to them in how they conducted their affairs, and interacted with/led people. For **person F**, the point of principle was delivering on service promises or explaining that there was a problem:

*"Where they are clear, I think it is about being seen to be responsive; doing what you say you're going to do; umm, now that to me is something I've not mentioned personally, now that to me is a point of principle about this outfit. We ought to do what we say we're going to do, and if we don't do what we say we're going to do we have a reason for it, and we're big enough to apologise to people and say we've cocked up."*

**Person G's** fundamental principle for service delivery can be summarised as being customer focused:

*"My fundamental principle, and it has always been and it remains to be now, that we think about what deliver from the person we're delivering it for. And I think the mistake I've seen, I'm sure myself as well, but I've seen a lot of teams make and still see make, is that you get wrapped up in what you're doing and you forget about the person that it's being delivered for."*

**Person H's** principle arose in response to an experience of unfair treatment from a previous manager that she hoped to avoid replicating with her own team:

*"I very, very much like to be transparent and fair kind of manager, so I also want them to be a transparent and fair manager as well. So that is another principle that I have as a manager."*

Whilst the idea of leadership arising from the application of principles is familiar (for example, Covey and Gulledge, 1992), **Person** I's leadership approach was founded

on three principles worth reporting in full here as they have ramifications for the understanding of leadership as more diverse than is typically depicted in the literature:

*"To me, it's the same, actually. There are two kind of...well, three kind of abiding principles, really. One is a slightly flippant one, which is, you know, don't look to upset anybody on your way up, as the saying goes, because sure, they'll be there when you come back down again…And so just because you might have been elevated to a higher position doesn't mean that you shouldn't now still be associating with, and encouraging and motivating, and so on, the staff you used to work with.*

*The second principle, which is the one I kind of abide with, really, is do unto others as you'd have done to yourself. That, for me, is how I try and operate as a manager. I try and treat people with respect and treat people in the way that I would wish to be treated.*

*And then the third is, I really strongly believe that everybody has a fundamental talent within them, and it's just about identifying...good management, to me, is about identifying what that particular talent is, and channelling that in the right direction."*

In principle one we see a pragmatic political principle that recognises the vagaries of career success and failure and that it is not possible to predict from which quarter help may be needed in future. This is linked both to a notion of not becoming so important that you fail to associate with people with whom you previously had a different relationship as well as 'encouraging and motivating' them. Principle two shows the application of a biblical principle concerning moral treatment of others and principle three encompasses a view about human nature and a commitment to 'talent management' (Lewis and Heckman, 2006).

#### 5.1.18 Summary

The key word analysis identifies a number of significant words apparent in the text to unlock some of the themes and concepts relevant to an understanding of leadership by professional service managers in the context of higher education. The venn-style diagram (figure 11) was structured to offer a visual impression of significant inter-relationships between the seven thematic clusters. The narrative account of the results restores a little of the context from which the words were extracted by providing verbatim quotes from a number of the interviews, though not necessarily all to avoid unnecessary duplication and length. Some of the links and inter-relationships between themes are also identified and considered.

The venn-style diagram provides a visual summary of the inter-connected themes around which to group the concepts emerging from the key word analysis in relation to issues relating to, for example, organisational culture, structure and role and was presented at the start of this section as it also serves as an organising device for the

research narrative. As a whole the diagram (figure 11) depicts a generalised complexus of the understandings of the managers revealing a concern with the context (culture and structure) in which they operate and with management and leadership practices oriented on the one hand towards control and consistency and on the other towards having a clear view of the future of the organisation. The importance of fostering beneficial and influential relationships is apparent as well as an awareness of the need to translate for and communicate appropriately with different audiences, such as academics. The desire for role autonomy is also shown accompanied by articulation of the perceived need to sometimes protect direct reports and also build partnerships and enhance personal credibility through service delivery. Several leadership foci highlighted in the literature review and summarised in figure three are apparent including understandings related to context, relationships and interactional processes.

Therefore, the key word analysis is a useful technique for identifying some of the major themes across the data set. However, it is just one way of accessing meaning that can usefully be supplemented and enhanced, for example by analysis of stories told.

### 5.2 Stories/narrative analysis

Bruner (1991) outlines ten important aspects of narrative linked to both cognition and discourse including that they are time-based and possess an intentional storyline interpreted as a gestalt interaction between the plot as a whole in context and the parts/characters that interact to generate it. Bruner sees narratives as presenting 'a version of reality' (p.4). Therefore, in the context of a research interview the narrative, stimulated by a given interview question, presents a version of reality told by the interviewee that attempts to explain, or even justify, the interviewees understanding of a topic. Jameson (2001) sees narrative discourse as a key element of individual leadership/management and collective, cultural 'story-building' and with rational/factually informed stories not always passing practical believability tests. Weick and Browning (1986) suggest that 'narrative rationality' has two elements – probability and fidelity and that, "A true story is one that contains not just reasons, but good reasons which are grounded in history, biography, and culture." (p.249) Assessment of the 'truth' of the narrative is therefore relative and contextually dependent and believable relative to the listeners own values, assumptions and culture.

Brown et al (2008) link narratives to individual and collective sense-making and identity work involving shared 'frames of reference', while Polkinghorne (1995) sees stories as of particular interest to qualitative researchers because, "Stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes." (p.8) Therefore, the stories told by the professional service managers during the interview provide potentially important insights to their understanding of leadership. The stories may be interpreted explicitly as providing what the person believes is an accurate account of some event or implicitly as encompassing implications of which the manager appears to be more or less unaware.

Each response to an interview question is a focused narrative around a pre-determined theme encapsulated in the phrasing of the question. However, each response reveals more embedded issues of implied or overt significance to the interviewee. Not all accounts that might've been classified as 'stories' were collected for analysis, for example personal accounts of career history were not considered except in cases where the account offered insight into leadership within higher education. In most cases the narrative I categorised as a story related to other people with whom the manager had interacted in significant enough way that the

manager chose to exemplify some point or issue through the telling of the story. Interviewees varied in the extent to which responses to interview questions were story based. Table 3 below lists the number of stories from each interviewee selected for analysis:

**Table 3**: Number of stories from each interviewee selected for analysis

| Interviewee | No of analysed stories |
|---|---|
| A | 5 |
| B | 9 |
| C | 4 |
| D | 4 |
| E | 5 |
| F | 13 |
| G | 9 |
| H | 10 |
| I | 4 |
| J | 7 |
| K | 2 |
| L | 2 |
| M | 7 |
| N | 11 |
| O | 1 |
| P | 3 |
| Q | 5 |
| R | 17 |
| S | 17 |
| T | 7 |

(Organisation A = 70; organisation B = 72)

Given the diversity of the stories and the various possible linkages between them there are various ways in which the analysis might have been presented. Here I have chosen a narrative interpretation in which themes emerging in the account of particular interviewees form bridges in several cases to those of others. The order of analysis is shown in figure 12 below:

**Figure 12**: Links between the analysed stories of the interviewees

| Interviewees | Link or theme |
|---|---|
| B and N | The issue of implied or implicit significance to the understanding of leadership by the individual compared to overt or obvious significance in the stories told |
| H and F | Particular aspects of self-limiting beliefs that impact on understanding of leadership and management in a particular context including the nature of interpersonal relationships |
| A and P | Frustrations with aspects of organisational culture and behaviour likely to constrain leadership and management thinking and action |
| S and T | The choice regarding how to balance the relationship between themselves and their PS line manager/their senior academic manager |
| K and S | Transition to HE; need for a mentor/induction |
| O and Q | Ability to persuade senior managers (or not) with a strong business case |
| (Q) J and D | Issues of accountability and contribution; creating a narrative |
| M and R | The nature of interpersonal relationships and influence; critical friends or being critical/authentic |
| L and C | Nature of the work role and experience of working towards/achieving PhD (plus person I) |
| E and G | Love of higher education, close work with senior academic colleague and expectations of the role |
| I (and R) | Principles of leadership – maintaining integrity through adherence to principles or standards |

An example of a story having **implied significance** to **person B** (a senior school based manager) is:

*"I remember XXXX saying to me in the (appraisal discussion), that it'd been fed to her that I had a, in inverted brackets, 'interesting personal style', and I suspect I still do. And I wouldn't like to be one of these people who isn't using their personality at home. But I think we all do understand that certain methods of behaviour and way we present ourselves, and the way we organize ourselves that are expected at higher grades; perhaps being slightly less outspoken."* (Ref.B2)

From this story we can reasonably infer that Person B's self-identity is partially informed by feedback from her manager that she has an 'interesting personal style', a point with which she agrees. We can also see that this viewpoint was expressed some time in the past but for person B, this still pertains.

We therefore have indications of a consistent pattern of behaviour noticed by her manager (who partially distances herself from the comment as it was fed back to her), herself and very probably other people that is euphemistically termed 'interesting'. Person B appears to wish to construct herself as being consistent in how she is seen to behave both at home and at work but expresses the view that the social identity (Hogg and Terry, 2000) of senior managers in this organisation is constrained by a need to moderate their behaviour and present themselves as both organised and 'less outspoken', highlighting the need for impression management (Bolino et al, 2008) within a political culture. So we can also presume that one aspect of her 'interesting personal style' is a tendency to be outspoken beyond the norm for senior managers. The fact that she has expressed this suggests political awareness but not necessarily consistent inter-personal or political sensitivity (Baddeley and James, 1987). Whilst these points can reasonably be inferred from the text she does not state them herself and therefore I classify this particular story as having **implied** rather than overt **significance** to her.

In fact, several of person B's stories related to relationships and interpersonal interactions which cumulatively suggest that this is a key issue for her, one which she is overtly/reflexively aware of and that she has taken some action to address, specifically attend (and reflect on) a neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) course as shown in the extract below:

*"I was in a support group, umm and there was a particular individual in the support group who I allowed to spoil my experience, and I think post-NLP I would deal with it very differently. Umm, A lot of the management lectures and stuff I didn't get a great deal out of it, it was more of a reiteration of stuff that I'd already done. I don't know in how much of a good place I was personally, 'cause I remember (the course tutor) saying to me about a year later you look like a different person." (Ref: B9)*

Here Person B tells a story of where she didn't get on with a fellow course participant and articulates this from a position of emotional self-responsibility as she allowed the person to spoil her experience. She acknowledges the feedback one year on from the course tutor that she seems like a different person and given the reference to her not dealing with the difficult person in the same way post-NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) we can reasonably infer that she believes that NLP knowledge has, at least in part, contributed to her being seen as a different person.

This is an interesting example of where a manager has identified a developmental need and taken intentional action to address it a situation that aligns strongly with Giddens's (1984) theoretical position concerning the reflexivity of knowledgeable agents.

From the nine stories that I abstracted from the transcript of person B's interview a number of more general themes emerged including:

- Research-intensive university **culture** – bureaucratic/complex
- Organisational **structure** – the matrix structure created occasions when loyalties were divided or seen to be divided
- Nature of her **role and interactions** in relation to the senior academic manager with whom she most closely works
- Self-identity and the nature of **interpersonal relationships**

The eleven stories identified in **Person N**'s transcript offered more **overt descriptions** of her understanding as a leader and a particular person whose approach had inspired her own understanding of effective leadership:

*"Absolutely inspirational person. And, you know, he's very much the person I model myself on today really. You know, just you would have followed him anywhere, to be quite honest; he was just marvellous, a very interesting character. So no, I found his leadership style very much the leadership style that I've probably adopted through the rest of my career really." (Ref: N1)*

The strong impression (inspirational, marvellous) made on Person N by this previous manager is apparent with her regarding him as a (role) model, so much so that she has tried to emulate his practice since. Two other stories indicated some of the specific practices that he employed that stimulated this image of being an inspirational leader for person N:

*"And he would have gone round personally and he'd have put it in your in tray, because each department had a set of pigeonhole in trays in the old days, for your post. And you'd look to see, and he'd put a little white card. And you didn't always get a white card, but often you got a white card and it was just…and it was something, 'I notice you've changed your cake display, Catherine, looks brilliant'. 'Noticed excellent customer service was given by your cashier, can you congratulate her for me'. You know, he noticed all these little things in your department." (Ref: N5)*

The account of the practice of giving positive feedback on white cards is clear and we can also infer that Person N looked forward to receiving such cards as valued complimentary feedback on her own performance. Interestingly, it is also apparent that the person chose to enhance Person N's managerial role and build her relationship with her own team by encouraging her to give feedback to the cashier, rather than him doing this directly with the final comment suggesting that excellent leaders pay attention to staff, notice the little things and actively seek to give positive feedback, in this case using the vehicle of white cards in trays as a tangible way to symbolise appreciation. Person N goes on to describe a specific way of developing empowerment through stimulated reflection, which would now be termed coaching:

*"Equally, he noticed the bad things. You never got those on a white card, he'd come and see you, come and find you in your department. He'd just walk into the department, any day, you always knew he might walk in at any minute, because he used to walk the floor. And he'd come and find you, "Catherine" and he'd give you a management training session. He said, "Now why have you…" and he always said 'why'; "Why have you done this"? So you had to explain. "Do you think it works"? "Well, yes". "Why do you think it works"? "Well, da di da di". "Have you ever thought of a different way of doing this or…"? He'd never tell you what to do; he would never tell you what to do, he'd always pose these questions to get you to come up with the answer that he thought you ought to come up with. Equally, you know, sometimes he'd say, "You know, actually I can see why you've done, actually that's probably a good idea". He said, "I would have done it this way but actually, I think your way's better". And he would always do things like that." (Ref: N6)*

This story provides further indications of the kinds of action/practice (for example, (Kouzes and Posner, 2012) that person N sees as effective leadership including being visible to staff, providing negative feedback directly, using occasions when the role model manager had concerns about her approach as opportunities for management training and applying a series of questions to generate dialogue as to why she had acted in a certain way and what other alternatives (including the one he preferred) might have been adopted. Finally, in acknowledging circumstances when Person N's choice proved to be superior to his own he not only provides complimentary feedback but maintains a non-directive leadership relationship that empowers Person N and builds her confidence as a manager.

From the eleven stories that I identified in the transcript for person N, the following general themes can be specified:

- **Leadership development** and practice – impact of an inspirational role model
- Research-intensive **HE culture** – traditional, hierarchical; different sub-cultures
- **Role and relationships** – expectations of staff to conform to behaviour expected in a particular role; managing multiple directional interfaces
- Social **identity/**credibility – developed through building effective relationships and being seen to deliver; building trust and confidence

There are clearly other interpretations that can be attached to stories such as those of person N. From a critical perspective it could be alleged that the manager is using covert manipulation techniques to generate an image of likeability but with the intention of achieving his objectives in a way that, in fact, reinforces his positional power. From a structurational perspective Person N indicates a belief that leaders/managers are knowledgeable agents (Giddens, 1984) able to initiate different leadership practices that generate outcomes such as developing managers. However, it is also possible to see that this story can be positioned to support the claims of a number of leadership models including for example, charismatic (Shamir et al, 1994), as the way the person acts has been interpreted as marvellous and inspirational by person N; transformational (Bass, 1999), as the manager appears to be seeking to develop the confidence and skills of Person N; empowering (Srivasta, Bartol, Locke 2006) as the manager appears to be allowing person N to make their own decisions; relational (Uhl-bien, 2006), as the manager seems to be generating a non-hierarchical leadership relationship; distributed (Spillane et al, 2004), as the manager in allowing Person N latitude to act and is, in effect distributing leadership decision-making and coaching (Goleman, 2000) in that the manager uses a questioning approach to stimulate reflection and learning.

Irrespective of the vocabulary used to describe the leadership process we see evidence of intention, a choice of how to interact, the development of a certain kind of relationship and the enactment of influence directed simultaneously towards achieving particular work outcomes, developing the management skills and approach of person N and cementing their social relationship in a way which enhances the managers social capital.

This can be viewed as reflexive strategic action by knowledgeable agents that goes beyond basic practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) or the social practices of durably disposed people who have a feel for the game and able to increase their social capital by competent performance in a field (Bourdieu, 1990).

**Person H** saw herself as controversial and eccentric leading to particular relationship difficulties with peers:

*"So, I strongly believe certain values, so occasionally I'm a little bit controversial at the meeting as a result of which I could be hated by a lot of other people as a result of that… I am pleased I have not been murdered or killed by anyone - being back stabbed; stabbed by other people in the back. But you know, I'm a kind of a different person and I may be sometimes a little bit eccentric or maybe different. I will say that I'm different; the way I think, the way I do things and also the way I think about things is different from other people." (Ref: H7)*

She exhibited a conflict in her positional-informed thinking about how to manage her own staff indicating a tendency to be directive (on the basis of her own experience and position) but also seeing herself as supporting her own manager and holding up the organizational structure from beneath:

*"But other than that, I have a full understanding about how to do things and also because you have experience elsewhere and it is quite easy for you to say, "Oh, I remember I can do something like that." And therefore you can do the job more effectively because you have more experience. And sometimes I will help my colleagues, because if my colleagues have less experience, they will come and ask you I've got this problem and how to do it, and I will say, "Well this is actually quite straightforward you might have to think about half a day and still don't know how to do certain things. And I will say that, "This is the way I would do and it will only take you about a few minutes, and you can finish it off." (Ref: H2)*

*"I believe that my role is to support my manager to do their job properly. (Right) This is something I firmly believe and this is also the way, when I was interviewed in 2004, they asked, "How do you perceive your role? OK. You are the head of everything, so what do you really do? " So I told people that, you know, I believe as (Senior Administrative Manager), the organization structure, instead of I am on the top, actually, I should be on the bottom. Because, I am there to support my manager and my manager is making sure his/their team is doing the jobs and supporting their staff …maybe that is something like err maybe Hercules, holding a very big rock supporting everybody. But I could not do their job but I have to help them to do their job. So, I think this is the way, I believe in the management point of view." (Ref: H3)*

Indications of the pressures she felt in her role when attempting to meet the expectations of academics and her own professional service staff were evident as she described herself as a ‘punch bag’:

*“So just like we have a one professor who would like to have someone to answer his phone and err, he says that I since I come here in 1999, I always, we always, we used to have a secretary to answer my phone call and now you have taken (the post) away, and no one answers my phone call anymore – it’s so important; I have some outside company look for me and no one answers my phone call. But things have moved on so therefore things have changed and the support service is not doing that kind of job anymore. So, now this is a matter of a trying to explain to this particular person why we do not have a lady answer everybody’s phone call or do these sort of things. So, it’s kind of managing the expectations and then link the two sides together and I am a kind of a, you can say, is more like a punch bag. You can be punched by the academics but at the same time you are protecting the support staff being punched and sometimes you might be hit by the support staff occasionally.” (Ref: H8)*

Many of person H’s stories indicated the tensions and conflicted ways in which she understood her own role and relationships that she could verbally describe but seemed unable consciously to positively reframe. This could be theorised in a number of ways, for example, unhelpful unconscious schemata (Giddens, 1984) or under-developed emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), however general themes identified include:

- **Role and relationships** – position in hierarchy
- **HE culture** – locally ‘owned’ staff/resources and resistance to central service provision; entitlement culture, e.g. sick leave – contrast with private sector

Many of **person F’s** stories concerned difficulties he had with his own line manager and some of his peers on the line manager’s team. Thus potentially important hierarchical and peer relationships were compromised by virtue of his perceptions of, and feelings towards, his line manager and colleagues indicating a specific or perhaps general lack of political sensitivity (Baddeley and James, 1987) and emotional intelligence in terms of managing self and relationships (Goleman, 1998).

*"I'm reflecting back to when that person came, there's a kind of a group-think developed where some, some frankly quite outrageous things are said and that and un-questioned. I can give you a couple of examples, I used to raise objections to continual XXXX knocking that went on in that kind of format, right, so for example, "Well anybody in XXXX has got to be barmy anyway haven't they?" I'd raise an objection to that, but actually I've given up. Because it's clear, that that's a blinkered view about life and what's happened now instead of challenging the views, a number of people within that group contrive around them and they all kind of contrive in that defensiveness and stupidity by having jokes about XXXX who are, "Oh yeah, and he can't hardly write his name," and all this other stuff. Which to me… is quite frankly, ludicrous. But, anyway, that's a different issue. " (*Ref: F5)

A further relational difficulty was between person F and his direct reports. Person F repeatedly mentioned 'permissions' and implied that insufficient scope was provided for him to initiate action without permission, however he was uncertain how much autonomy to extend to his own team:

*"I think the balance of, that freedom issue I think is very, very challenging. Umm, and is something that I frequently do not get as right as I feel I ought to. Umm, That getting that balance between being flexible enabling people to feel as if they're flexible and have discretion and on occasions getting people to do stuff when I think it's appropriate to say, "I'd like you to do this;" getting that kind of balance I think is immensely difficult… I mean the thing I struggle with is interpersonal relationships and how to get those right in terms of the balance between me supposed to be manager, leader or what have you and other peoples' autonomy. That's the challenging thing.* (Ref: F8)"

Although articulated most clearly by person F, the dilemma of how much control to exert and authority to display when managing direct reports (for example person H, P and S) arises as a consequence of appointment to a managerial role encompassing responsibilities to manage resources (including human) and deliver services via team members. This dilemma is exacerbated for person F as comments elsewhere indicate that he himself wishes not to be managed.

In addition to relationship issues, person F also expressed contrary views concerning HE culture, on the one had criticising a former colleague for their naivety in expecting academics to embrace an administrative process but also indicating shock on joining HE from a different sector and frustration with the bureaucracy that required him to submit papers to a senior committee and make what, to him, appeared to be trivial changes.

The frustration that person F expresses in relation to changes to his work can be understood in a number of ways, for example indicative of lack of trust in his professional ability, but in the light of the difficulties he has with his own manager and his dilemma around autonomy it is again indicative of a reluctance to be subject to control:

"*And it was kind of naivity on my part but I actually thought things would be different, or somewhat more different than I experienced them when I got there. But when I got there, what I thought was interesting was that, I can only describe it as a kind of a period of six to nine months in as a kind of, a kind of emotional and erm values dissonance. You know people talk about cognitive dissonance but there's almost something like an emotional and values dissonance which means, I feel really uncomfortable about this; this is such a shitty place and. No, it wasn't a shitty place, let's be honest, but strange stuff going on.* " (Ref: F1)

*"Oh, XXXX's made some comments, you need to change it." So I had a look, and this is what made me laugh, I had a look and he'd changed massive to substantial – changed one word- umm, he'd changed two more words and he'd done something else. I think he might have put a semi-colon in instead of a colon, something like that. All of which were in the first paragraph. Now the substantive comment about who's going to do what to whom and so on, nothing in that, right. And I thought, this is just so silly, just so silly. And I kind of psychologically and I'm thinking, for Christ's sake why don't you look at it and say, "Yes, fine get on with it." But it's about that thing where it's got to have been seen to have commented on it, even though it's insubstantial and unnecessary. And so if that becomes magnified as it does (Yes) it slows up proceedings." (Ref. F7)*

Person F had a peculiar rhetorical practice (synchoresis) of offering strong criticism to be followed by a moderating comment as if to emphasise the difficulties he encountered in the situation and with particular people but counter-act this by the reasonableness with which he viewed them (for example, 'shitty place': 'strange stuff'). One of Person F's ways of dealing with the challenging political situation was somewhat subversively to initiate changes that he felt appropriate and wait for senior managers to later realise, he believed, what a good idea these were and endorse them:

*"So, for example, we more or less said, we want to do a XXXX process. The institution at a senior level did not say, "This XXXX process, jolly interesting why don't we have some of that?" We set that in train and to some extent, almost umm in a way which was somewhat, umm, what's the word, somewhat subversive. But that was quite deliberate for me which is saying this is something we think is useful and good, and we want to make it work and we can show that it works. Now what it seems to me has happened that's come home to roost now and increasingly large numbers of people are saying, "This is a jolly good thing to do and, why haven't you been doing it earlier?" Which seems a kind of irony. "* (ref: F6)

In addition to self-initiated change Person F also indicated a willingness to build support amongst some senior managers (political awareness – Baddeley and James, 1987) and align action with their agendas but in pursuit of his own, however he portrayed such influencing activity in a negative light by terming it 'toadying overtures':

*"But actually in a sense, implicitly, I think we probably are attempting to do some of that by getting involved in the XXXXX stuff; you know, making toadying overtures to XXXXX, about you know, "Look at us, we can help you mate," and all that other stuff, linkage with YYYYY and so on. But some of that now, I think actually, is deliberately, and partly serendipitously, is come to the fore. So that's a good place where we are to build on, I think."*

Unlike person H, whose self-awareness blind spot seemed to undermine her own self-belief and confidence, person F appeared to attribute faults to others with his frustration and aggression suggestive of leadership's dark side. (Kets De Vries and Balazs, 2011). For person F, relationships, especially with his own line manager, were a focal issue and amongst the 13 stories selected for analysis the following general themes could be discerned:

- **Relationships** – with his line manager, peers and team; preference for his own autonomy yet uncertainty about how much autonomy to afford direct reports
- HE **culture** – culture dissonance on entry; bureaucratic, slow decision-making; too many un-coordinated and short-lived initiatives; over-reliance of PS staff on bureaucracy
- **Leadership** – subversive; planned and serendipitous; main challenge is to work with people

**Person A** expressed frustration with the sub-cultures of research intensive universities and indicated relational difficulties with some academic colleagues and some of her own staff as well as concern over a perceived lack of a consistent identity for all staff:

*"On Friday, this particular academic rang me up to say a PS staff had been rude to her on the phone, who should she complain to? So I said, you should speak to this particular PS staff, you should speak to the line manager, well this member of academic staff had set an hour aside to do a job, the person who was providing them with the information was doing something else and they gave them half the information they required, so the academic went off and found it elsewhere and got it wrong. And so got quite frustrated at that, but it's the fact that you're not, not, you know, other people have things to do, you know. There are time frames and lead in you pre-plan." (Ref: A3)*

Embedded within this story is a perception that (some) academic colleagues have an unrealistic expectation of the work of PS colleagues, expecting immediate service without suitable notice or lead-in time. The relational difficulty leading to the complaint is perceived to arise from this unrealistic expectation that can be considered indicative of a 'them and us' (Dobson, 2000) attitude developing in both parties.

*"What I find here is again to some extent at the XXXX is the cottage industry that people make out of some roles and it's like, OK, I've been on this grade for ever and a day, I'm at the top of my grade, therefore, I need to be re-graded – well, no you don't, you need to go and get yourself another job. It's that, the institution owes me a living that you know, you don't get and I think here, you know, in some roles people do get an easy life and in others they don't. But there is a lot of that kind of view that I see here… It is and then, you know, in the middle of all this merger at the moment, you know, there's a member of staff I have difficulty with comes and says they want to apply for a regarding, and I just think, Oh God, how insensitive can you be, there's not one person in PS who's had their role confirmed and then I've got somebody coming for a re-grading. Yeh, and then we had the same individual as well put themselves forward (for a pay rise) of course, like all the ones that went to the internal panel got sent back for additional stuff and I talked to this individual about theirs, and they burst into tears, "What do I have to do?" Expresses surprise... God! Laughs " (Ref: A4)*

Revealed here is a negative perception concerning (some) professional support staff (in keeping with the views expressed by person H in relation to entitlement to sickness absence) who are seen to take advantage of the institution by having an easy life and presuming that this is acceptable as the institution owes them a living. A specific example is provided of a member of her staff who chose what she regards as an inappropriate time to bid for re-grading. There is evidence of bifurcation in her perceptions of PS staff between those who adhere to the process and behave in a managerially endorsed way and insensitive staff who do not. It can be inferred that Person A has a strong drive, arguably a habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), for consistency and conformity as also indicated in another story:

*"Whereas, uhh, the previous head of school and myself worked very hard to break down the barriers between the PS and academic staff, so we would work together as a team, there are communications going out to staff in both schools and they've got to be timed, to go out to all staff at the same time; and if XXX have drafted anything, they will put this phrasing, you know, "To all staff (including PS)." Now to me, 'all staff' is all staff there's no reason to pick out one group of staff separate from the other, because all staff is all staff! " (Ref: A1)*

A drive to achieve consistency and conformity in a large, diverse institution having strong sub-cultures and at least two clear cadres of staff (academic and 'non-academic') is going to be difficult, generate resistance and, for person A, obvious frustration. Once again, the individual manager's understanding and managerialist expectation of how the world *should* work and other people *should* behave are indicative of an orientation towards control and constitute self-limiting beliefs indicated in the stories told with the general themes in evidence being:

- HE **culture** and sub-cultures – lack of consistency; them and us; sub-cultures; cottage industry that owes me a living
- **Academic staff** – unrealistic expectations; impetuous behaviour; bullying

Arguably both person F and person A present indications of unhelpful narcissistic thinking (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006) which colours their perceptions of and relationships with others in a way which may be ultimately self-defeating.

For **person P** the differences in working approach and expected standards of performance between higher education and the private sector were very noticeable. Person P offered several accounts of her own experiences but only a couple of 'stories' as I categorise them here, however some of the other important points she made were expressed using a variety of game related metaphors (jigsaw, jenga tower, chessboard) and likening the organisational culture to that of a family. In the context of the interview repeated use of metaphors can be inferred to be an aspect of personal sense-making and self-understanding as well as a method by which such understanding might be communicated to the interviewer and thereby made mutual (Lakoff and Johnson, 1992). The game metaphors suggest that person P understands work in the university as puzzling, a challenge and to some extent competitive, whilst the family metaphor implies that she perceives the university to have a culture of care and (over) protection.

Her observations of the lack of appreciation of professional service work and staff roles by academic staff echoes those expressed by person A:

*"I think, this is a sweeping generalisation and I don't know about it going on tape really, but, I think, I would say 95% of academics would not cope in the real world, not in the real world…You know, because they're so focussed on their research and what they want to achieve, that they have no concept of what has to happen around them to make that happen…I find academics very different from people in business…Yes, yes they're very driven by what they want and it's down to us to provide them with what they want and there's…there's very little…I mean, there can be interaction on a social level, but there's very little comprehension of other people's roles and other people's tasks and what, you know, what it takes for the support staff to produce what they want." (Ref: P1)*

Rather than any malicious intent on the part of academic staff to make life difficult for their support service colleagues, Person P attributes interactional problems to the academic focus on research and a lack of understanding of the support service realities.

In keeping with person B and S, the volume and variety of work tasks is an issue for person P with the added dilemma of having doubts about the standard of work delivered by people to whom she might delegate some tasks. Whilst there no specific relational difficulties with PS staff mentioned, it can be inferred from her self-description as a 'control-freak' and reservations concerning the standard of work delivered by her team that relational difficulties could arise linked to the reluctance to delegate being perceived as a lack of trust by her staff or alternatively them becoming unsympathetic to her work over-load as she is seen to bring it upon herself.

*"I think, the thing I've really had to concentrate on is there's such an incredible volume of things and so many things on so many different levels that we're asked to do, the thing I've had to do is become far more clever at (a) prioritising and (b) actually sitting down and making sure that I know what it is I haven't done, whereas, in previous jobs, you tend to work at one level and you generally can assess the kind of work that is going to come in and what you've got to do and the deadlines have generally been fairly achievable here, none of it is achievable instantly, you know, so prioritising, I've had to really think carefully about and, also, delegating, that's the other thing, thinking carefully about delegating and trusting other people to do things, you know, there's an element of control freak really, isn't there?*

*But trusting other people to do it as well as you would do it and the other thing I find is that I've had to really train myself to accept a standard of work from other people that isn't, necessarily, the standard I would have produced, which is acceptable, their standard is okay, but it's not spot on and it's not how I would have done it and that has been very difficult for me, you know, to delegate something and have it done not as well as I would have done it, but it's been done to a level that is fine, but it's just not brilliant and that I have found very difficult." (Ref; P2)*

Although manifesting itself in different ways persons A, B, F, H and P all provide stories that suggest endemic issues relating to aspects of trust and control evidential of self-limiting beliefs that could impact on managerial performance and leadership effectiveness.

Giddens (1984) discusses issues of trust from a psychoanalytic perspective and talks of 'ontological security' as anxiety reduction founded on predictability; the apparent need for predictability through control and managerial consistency appears as a thread running through the responses of many of the managers, but in varying ways seems particularly problematic for persons A, B, F, H and P.

Unlike Person N who overtly paid tribute to an inspirational model, Person P attributed her development to travel, interacting with different people as well as the confidence of a previous Dean, and finally realising, as a result of coaching in preparation for the interview for her current job, that "that woman can do that job."

Referring to herself in the third person in this way objectifies her and her performance and implies that her abilities as a manager can be recognised by others, a point validated through her appointment. This identity formation through self-reflection and self-talk reveals another method by which confidence in one's own ability (Hatzigeorgiadis et al, 2009) as a leader/manager can be shored-up:

*"I think, having travelled and having met a lot of people has had a big influence in that respect. I think, working in the XXXX faculty with the dean, I got on very, very well with him, well, with both of them, in fact, and having had their confidence in me, because, again, I hadn't worked for 10 years, you know, that made a big difference, because, I thought, actually, I can do this, but the real decider was getting this job, was the job interview, which just went fabulously and that was the thing, I thought, actually, I can do this and there was one particular trigger, if you like, in that we have a friend who…I'm not quite sure, I think, he does management training, or something and when I was preparing for this job, I never thought to even talk to him about it, anyway, I happened to mention it to him and he said, well, you know, do you want to come and talk it through with me and I thought, oh, that's a good idea, so the night before the interview for this job. I went over to his house and, sort of, went through my presentation and he said, well, shall I video you and I thought, oh my…just anything but that! Anyway, he did and we made some changes and he said, get rid of the notes, you know, do it no notes, he said, if you forget what you're saying, just stop, think, it'll seem like a life time to you, two seconds to everybody else and I watched myself and I thought…and I was expecting to be horrified and I thought, actually, that woman can do that job and that was, you know, sometimes there's a trigger instant, isn't there, in people's…" (Ref: P3)*

Links to the general themes in the stories selected from person P include:

- **Academics** – lack of understanding of PS work and what is required to provide support to them
- **Own role** – volume of work at different levels; prioritising and delegation
- **HE culture** – tolerance of lower standards/performance

Analogous to person A we can see person P's expectations of others, especially in comparison to her own perceived standards of work performance, constitute a potentially self-limiting belief that we can theoretically relate to her own self-evaluation (Judge and Bono, 2001).

Echoing person P's experience of the role of senior administrative manager, **Person S** described the work variety as going from the sublime to the ridiculous:

*"It's the diversity of this role is huge. I can go from the sublime to the ridiculous. People come to me if the toilet's broken, they come to me if the world's falling apart and that's how diverse - in any one day I never quite know what I'm going to hit." (Ref: S1)*

Having previously worked in non-higher education roles a key issue for person S was understanding the University as an organisation, including the language used, and this was particularly challenging during a time of re-structuring:

*"I came in and didn't know anything about higher education. I'd never worked in higher education. I didn't know what PGR meant, I didn't know what PGT meant – XXXXXX it was a foreign language. And as well as the restructure in January I also do the planning for the school. So I do all the staff forecasts, I do the student number forecasting. I do all the income. I was told to do that in the January and I didn't even understand what the words meant, let alone how I could possibly forecast how many staff I would need in the next 12 months. So that was a big challenge as well." (Ref: S2)*

The main relational issue person S identified was the interface between her school and Faculty that she understood in terms of the size and income generating capacity of the school being perceived as the school getting above themselves (using a metaphor of 'peas above sticks'):

*"We had an away day and there has been some friction between faculty and the Management School. I think because we are such a big school people think we're - I don't know whether you know the saying 'peas above sticks' - that we were a bit above ourselves. At the end of the day we bring a lot of money to the university. And we're not peas above sticks, but we are a different beast than some of the other schools." (Ref: S 13)*

In common with persons A, H and P, Person S expresses the view that the academic community doesn't understand what PS colleagues do and can sometimes be disparaging of their contribution:

*"I don't think the academic community quite understand that without us life would be awful for them. That frustrates me sometimes. That some of the emails I see that get sent to my team that are quite disrespectful. I find that quite sad and we have built up very good relationships with our academic colleagues, but I still think sometimes there's this sort of feeling that we're here to make the tea. If they but knew, if people but knew the depth and breadth of our role. I think if we weren't here people would really miss us."* (Ref: S16)

*"As a manager, it was funny I was interviewing an academic member of staff as part of the panel. My question was, what can professional services do for you? And they actually literally said, well you make the tea don't you. And this was in a formal interview with an Executive Pro Vice Chancellor and the Head of School. I was horrified." (Ref: S17)*

The comment from an academic during an interview is doubly shocking to Person S, as it denigrates the contribution of PS staff and the person felt bold enough to express such a view in front of senior colleagues when appointment to a post was at stake (unless of course this was a deliberate ploy not to be appointed to a role they wished to avoid). It is easy to see how a sense of 'them and us' (Dobson, 2000) can be created with even infrequent comments such as this suggesting the inferiority of status and contribution of PS staff.

The political dimension of relationships in the university, and particularly between school and faculty, was such that person S consciously made efforts to moderate her comments (resonating with a point made by person B). The high stakes involved in this political game of impression management was seen to be won or lost on the turn of a card with the organisation metaphorically depicted as an animal or beast and the extent of gossip equated with its size:

*"I have realised as well that the university is a very small animal, although it's a very large beast it's a very small animal. It is run by gossip and reputations can be won and lost on the turn of a card and I've realised that. I've watched it. So I'm quite careful that my opinions - I'm honest but I'm careful about the way I express myself. So yes, especially in faculty meetings. It's not so much within here - within here to be honest I'm quite open. I've got a very good relationship with my Head of School. I've got a very good relationship with all of the academics. I think with my staff as well. Don't get me wrong, I've got good relationships at faculty level but I'm more conscious of the politics at faculty level. So yes, I suppose I have, I'm not quite as impulsive. I've got quite strong opinions which you have to have to get to the point where I am and I suppose I'm just more guarded in what I say." (Ref: S4)*

Political sensitivity (Baddeley and James, 1987) is evident in Person S's understanding of leadership within a higher education environment and further demonstrated in the close and trusting working relationship with her academic Head of school that was seen to be vital. It was enhanced by her good relationships with other academic managers and her place on the management team, indicating an awareness of the value of developing managerial effectiveness through position and referent power (French and Raven, 1959) and social capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992):

*"He and I if he doesn't trust me there is no job. I couldn't do my role. The academic community, the subject group heads and the senior management team I'm working very very closely with them. I'm part of the senior management team within the school. All the decisions about recruitment and which way we need to go and where the gaps in teaching are I'm very much part of that conversation." (Ref: S5)*

More ambivalence was evident in respect of her relationship with her direct line manager at faculty level which, together with the sensitivities already noted concerning the politics and perceptions between the school and faculty, suggests potential difficulties in upward and lateral influencing of professional services (PS) colleagues. There is clear ambivalence in her orientation to the relationship evident in her comment that she is left alone and this is a sign that everything is fine, contrasted with the feedback she received that her manager wished she went to her more often. Her own previous experience of, and preference for, working autonomously is her justification for this but the fact that she questions whether she needs to work on the relationship demonstrates her doubts:

*"My faculty manager yes, yes. She leaves me alone and I think that's a sign. We had a very positive PDR. She's fine with me. I think if I wasn't doing okay I'd know. She leaves me well alone most of the time. The only feedback she did give to me was that she wished I went to her more often. Because I don't tend to because I suppose I'm used to working it as an autonomous manager I find it difficult - if I've got a staffing issue I deal with the staffing issue. I think the other school managers go to her for her advice. I've not worked like that and I find it difficult to do that. So maybe that is something I need to work on, I don't know." (Ref: S12)*

Particularly illuminating in respect of the various relationships in which she is enmeshed and her own leadership is a practice of gift giving potentially generating symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) that she employs with her own wider team as well as informal one to one discussions which allow her directly to hear staff views without any editing by her team leaders and affords a further opportunity to build a personal relationship with all her staff:

*"So I buy Easter eggs for them all. I know that's only a little thing but…It costs me a fortune. Christmas was a fortune. I had to buy each and every one of them a bottle of wine and this - but I think it's important. And every year as well I see every single member of staff. So I started it last year as a getting to know you, and I've kept it up. So I see every member of staff so that I'm not just getting the team leader's perspective. So that I'm hearing different voices. Because everyone's got something different to offer. And it's very informal, we come in here, we have a cup of coffee and I spend half an hour with every one of them. That's a big time commitment but I think it really reaps rewards. Because I just hear different views." (Ref: S9)*

Here we see a transactional leadership practice (Bass, 1999) with the economic investment personally costing her money each year pitched alongside a socially interactive/intelligence gathering one (similar in effect to that described by person N) with the time investment generating symbolic/social/relational capital, a danger being if her direct reports - the team leaders, felt that she was deliberately going around them. We also see indications of personal agendas being played out with a desire for autonomy and self-determination (Gagne and Deci, 2005) in conflict with the political recognition of the need to be line managed and her attempt to win loyalty through gift giving. Identified in the seventeen stories categorised for person S are the following themes:

- **Role** – diversity of issues; role transition – difficult to understand HE operation and language when new to the sector therefore induction needed; representational role for the school and her own team e.g. with faculty; protect
- **HE culture** – large beast small animal – potentially reputation damaging gossip; political; politics between school and faculty
- **Matrix structure** – school manager role with divided commitment – work with senior academic and work/liaise with own PS line manager
- **Relationships** – nature of the relationship varies e.g. close and trusted with academic manager, more distant with own PS manager and combination of transactional and personal with own staff; close with planning and development and management accountant
- **Management structure** – building and developing a team of direct reports/team leaders
- **Identity** – value autonomy; credibility –sit on management team and invited to be involved in academic issues not previously granted to PS managers; constant scrutiny from direct reports; academic manager happy if the service is working well
- **Academics** – them and us; PS staff make tea

In a similar way to person S, **person T** had prioritised his relationship with his senior academic colleague at the expense of his PS line manager. A principal reason seemed to relate to his understanding of higher education culture as very civil service like or 'Yes Minister-ish' and his willingness to play the role of Sir Humphrey in relation to his senior academic colleague.

*"So I have exactly that balance in the other way, that I have a PVC who I work day to day with, when he's not swanning around the world as he is at the moment, and a line manager, the (Senior administrative officer). So, I have exactly that same sort of relationship management to work on. And, I don't think there's a right or a wrong answer to it. My role, I feel, is at times, is to challenge the (Senior academic manager), and to be his honest conscience, if that's the right way of putting it, and yes…but you build up a very strong working relationship day to day. It really is, it's to the extent, 'Right, let's get out of here, let's go down to the coffee shop, let's work this out.' And it's like that.*

*Whereas with my line manager, it's probably more formal. And just managing those two, and trying to work those interesting dynamics, that in actual fact, if the (Senior administrative manager) wants to try and influence what the faculty is doing, and knows he doesn't have a direct line to the PVC, he'll try and do that through me. " (Ref: T4)*

*"The other one that I see, and I don't know whether it's a (Research intensive university) phenomenon or more generally across higher education, is that it still feels, I suppose, the very description is, very civil service like, in terms of the professional services. It's very deferential. Very much the sort of…and again I compare it at this level to sort of, the 'Yes Minister' role. My (Senior academic manager) thinks he runs the faculty, but he doesn't really, I do! And it's that kind of relationship. And that's very different, you don't get that two tier structure in the private sector." (Ref: T2)*

Person T had a particular view concerning the general relationship of academics to the institution working at rather than for, suggesting a perceived values/identity tension (Winter, 2009); their feelings of ownership of resources as Heads of little Empires (as also noted by Person H), and their relationship to subservient PS colleagues, with an aspiration for PS staff to be sufficiently equal as to be able to challenge academics:

*"I mean, I always use the anecdote, if you ever ask an academic where they work, they'll tell you they work at the University of XXX, but not for the University of XXX. And it's only one word, but it conveys a lot I think. And there's a real difference in the way that you try and get any sort of corporate strategy, corporate identity moving, and as professional services managers, particularly at a higher level, you see that and it's…that's quite a challenge, and a big difference." (Ref: T1)*

*"I'm sure you've experience as well, universities tend to grow organically, and Professor X develops a group, and when he gets enough money he thinks, 'Well I could do with a little bit of secretarial support to help me, and a little bit of this,' and it grows, and they are seen as the head of that little empire. And when we come in and say, 'Well actually what we'd like to do is create a professional service across the whole school, and provide equal levels of service to everyone,' that's seen as a real threat, and if I could have had a fiver for every time a professor has said to me 'You've taken my secretary away from me, how are you expecting me to function?' Well, 'There's a team of people now, that's going to provide a whole range of services for you.' So, where am I going with that? It's moving from a…we're still hierarchical, and there needs to be a certain amount of it, but that sort of subservient regime to actually putting people on an equal footing, and actually perhaps being in a position to challenge the academics and say, 'Actually, I know we used to do it this way, but wouldn't it be better if we did it this way, rather than just, 'Yes we'll do it that way'? I think that's still a big area to work on." (Ref: T3)*

There is an interesting anomaly in Person T's call for PS staff to be formally regarded as equals and his depiction of the 'Yes Minister' culture in which, in fact, behind the scenes he ran things rather than the senior academic. Elsewhere he explains how he draws on the formal status/power (French and Raven, 1959) of the senior academic when working with academics but also says that he prioritises support to the senior academic that we can infer is partly in order to build a sufficiently robust relationship which would allow him to operate in this way, sometimes as the power behind the throne and sometimes as the 'right-hand man':

*"Because I am at the level I am, providing that level of service to him. He's in America at the moment, the emails fly in, 'What should we do about this? What should we do about that?' So I do measure myself on the level of service that I provide to him, in his role. And at time, and if I look at myself critically, I would probably just…not jump, that's the wrong word…I would prioritise doing that, sometimes, over other things, which may not always be the right thing, but that's...so that's very much one area, providing that service." (Ref: T4)*

Person T is particularly attuned to the issues encountered by academic managers and the implications of them undertaking a formal academic management role for their research; in commenting this way he points towards a general move to professionalise academic management and see academic management as a desirable career path:

*"Back in the old days with heads of department, it was sort of Buggin's turn, 'It's Buggin's, you're next up, you do it for a couple of years, and then come back.' And a lot of that still rolls over into the head of schools, you can feel it when we put out the letter to say who would you like to nominate? And it feels very similar to the old head of department type thing. Whereas really we're saying, 'Do you want to stand up and actually be a key leader within the university and deal with all these issues of managing performance?' And I'm not sure that our heads of schools, really, when they sign, are really signing up for all of that. Now, you can't provide them all with a career path to become a Dean or a PVC, because the pyramid gets narrower at the top, but I somehow feel that that step up to being a head of school, kind of has to be a career choice that says, 'Actually I want to be an academic leader and manager, and maybe I have to leave my research behind to do that.' But that's obviously a major decision to make." (Ref: T7)*

Once again we see evidence of personal agendas in action in person T's alignment with and strategic use of his senior academic colleague as well as his ambivalent relationship with his own professional service line manager.

Three clear themes emerge from the seven stories selected from person T's transcript:

- **HE culture** – civil service/Yes Minister; grow organically and own local resources
- **Relationships** – PS as subservient to academics but he as senior civil servant and the power behind the Minister
- **Academics** – work at not for the University; ambivalence towards academic management roles as there is a cost to research ambitions and a potential choice to make regarding following a different career path

Both person F and person H talked of the culture shock and difficulties experienced when joining higher education with **person K** advocating the benefit of mentoring to support such a transition/induction (Saks and Ashforth, 1997) something which person S felt was strongly lacking when she joined HE:

*"But, then, when I came here, it was obviously something that was done here and to help, I think, with the transition from a totally different organisation and, in actual fact, my mentor turned out to be the assistant director of HR and it was really invaluable, just for XXX to say, oh, well, people you might want to meet are these types of people and I carry on that now, it's not, you know, often I go and sit with her, we have a coffee and I moan about something, but it's really useful to know that you've got that person, who isn't your line manager." (Ref: K2)*

Another story selected from person K contrasts higher education **culture** with that of uniformed service in which she previously worked:

*"So, I think, is the real difference, certainly between…although, when I first came, I thought, it's similar here, because in the (uniform service), you do still have (uniform service) managers and support staff managers and you still have those two different cultures and, here, you've got academics and professional services, so those issues are similar in being able to work with different types of people but, I think, certainly in the (uniform service), there's very much, we're all singing from the same sheet and we all know what we're doing, here, people do very much have their own agendas to work towards." (Ref: K1)*

Person K's story highlights both similarities and differences with a perceived similarity relating to the difference between the two main cadres of staff but differences being the lack of commonality of objective/purpose linked to people having their own agendas.

In the managerial culture of a uniform service adherence to a managerial chain of command in pursuit of a defined purpose is to be expected and, theoretically, the two major purposes of teaching and research should provide the 'hymn sheets', or orienting principles for organisational citizenship (Podsakoff et al, 2000) and for work in a research-intensive university yet person K's perception is of people prioritising their own agendas presumably heightening organisational politics.

**Person O**'s first story relates to the difficulty she saw in engaging some of her senior colleagues in accepting the need for change even though she had provided what she felt to be a factually proven case. This implies **decision-making** inertia (Maitlis and Ozcelik, 2004) or resistance to change could arise owing to several factors including suspicion concerning Person O, suspicion concerning her figures, over-work leading to a preference to avoid change or even the application of a 'critical' academic approach to what Person O perceives to be an operational problem:

*"And so, for example, when providing projections around student numbers six months ago, people just literally couldn't come to terms with it. They thought, 'You have to have the forecasting wrong.' And I look at the data and think, 'But it isn't right.' And so it's trying to explain to people then, 'Well this is what the data is telling you and this is how it's calculated, and we can debate the methodology, but you can't…in a sense, the numbers are the numbers.' And that's been a very difficult thing to explain to people in the last few months. " (Ref: 01)*

The perceived unwillingness to accept data that Person O reports contrasts with **person Q's** belief, based on previous work in the private sector, that providing strong data enriched business cases is the way to effect change:

*"The beauty of this is in my career as a manager I realised very early on that if I wanted to get something then I needed to prove why. With information and data it's very easy to produce a cast iron reason why you want to do something. It's then down to the other person to make the decision as to whether he can afford not to do what you're asking them to do rather than me having to demonstrate more and more why. So if you can create strong business cases supported by proper evidence then at the end of the day you're going to get what you actually need unless there's a really cast iron reason why you can't. "(Ref: Q1)*

Out of wider context, Person Q's belief in evidence-based **decision-making** seems technocratic and lacking acknowledgement of the endemic challenge to propositions and positions in an academic environment and the realities of organisational politics. Elsewhere person Q identifies concern/defensiveness amongst some staff at the changes required to make higher education operate more commercially including the recruitment of people from outside the sector. However, person Q also advocates retention of the freedom to research within an overall trajectory that leads to a more commercially minded **culture**.

*"I suppose in this sector what I'm seeing is more and more people coming into the higher education sector from outside, from the private sector. I think there's a defensive position being taken by some of the traditional…people who've been in the sector for a long time. Defensive because they're saying well, is what we're doing not good enough? Are we failing in what we're doing? Well, no, we're not. But I think the sector is moving in a different direction now. It needs to become more commercially biased and commercially minded. I don't want it to lose the environment it is today where you've got real academic success and you've got real academic endeavour. I actually love working with some of our senior researchers because their brains are as big as this room and they're fantastic to work with, and I get a real buzz out of the fact that you're allowed to go and think and not worry about it. You can just go and think and really in some respects you don't have to create a result today because your thinking might create a result in the longer term. And I think that's brilliant. We mustn't ever lose that. But we've got to bring in some leadership which actually makes that go in the direction that we need it to go in." (Ref: Q5)*

Person Q identifies two important aspects of managing in an appropriately commercial way – developing the metrics and evidence to allow you to have difficult conversations with under-performing people and get them to realise that their performance is an issue and being prepared to accept responsibility for performance and be paid or penalised accordingly:

*"So it's really managing the environment so you can get somebody to see…if it's a performance issue you really need to be very, very hot on why it's a performance issue. Why is somebody not performing, what are the metrics that you can demonstrate as to why that person's not…because they may not realise. They may think they're doing the best job in the world and not realise that actually it's not what you want them to do. And it may be because you've not been clear about what you wanted." (Ref: Q3)*

*“I think executives take risk. If one of my guys cocks up and all my services fall down, they’re not the ones that are going to get the bollocking. It’s on my shoulders. So yeah, I believe that’s an aspect of why I’m paid what I’m paid is because I have the authority and the responsibility. It ends with me, nobody else. I can’t pass the buck.” (Ref: Q4)*

As a whole Person Q’s confidence in informed management is evident. General themes evident in the four stories selected from person Q are:

- **HE culture** – changing becoming more commercially oriented and minded; influx of people from other sectors; must retain research freedom
- **Role** – accountable – buck stops here; take risks and therefore earn the rewards
- **Leadership skills** – holding difficult conversations; evidence based decisions

A strong emphasis on **accountability** was evident in the account from **person J** but his emphasis was on holding others accountable for their performance, although he was ‘required to sign off on everything’. Interestingly his story suggests a leadership approach that commences with trust that is only withdrawn if agreed delivery is not achieved and confidence is lost, thereby emphasising an orientation towards self-responsibility rather than the upward accountability signalled by person Q.

*“I formally am required to sign off on everything but if you’re telling me you’re going to deliver and it’s a sensible thing for us to do I will support you within that decision. And I’ll sign it and you’ll get it back in 24 hours and that’s what I did. But I will hold you accountable for delivering what you say you do and if I find that you’re not able to do that then don’t give me the confidence then I’ll behave in a different way. But I’ll start from the premise that you know what you’re doing, you’re a sensible experienced leader and that I’ll treat you as such.” (Ref: J4)*

Echoing a theme apparent in the stories of persons I, M, and T, person J mentioned that some PS staff were too subservient but located this unequal relationship and inferior (self) identity in the development, self-confidence and beliefs of the PS staff themselves rather than any intended oppression by academic colleagues:

*“I’ve met some colleagues who are too subservient in nature and almost a sense that the academic is always right and I don’t think that’s a healthy relationship. Interestingly going back to what I said earlier about my training as a personnel HR person I was trained, drilled, developed in such a way that my view was as valuable as anybody else’s around the table about any other topic...any topic that came up. And as a young (xxxxx) aged 23 sitting alongside wizened XXXXX of 30 year’s experience you were developed in such a way that you were confident that if you had something to say you said it.*

*And I think some of the relationship particularly with academic colleagues is too subservient and we need to be more confident in our ability in what we bring to the table." (J.5)*

A significant theme apparent in person J's account (and in those for persons C, D, G, and N) is the importance of early job challenge and responsibility and the depth of learning that can be achieved by transformational steps:

*"I was always one of a year that there weren't very many of us so that generation of people got catapulted into senior positions relatively quickly, so it was a real bonus in terms of early responsibilities. (Ref: J1)"*

*"So my experience suggests in terms of where do you get the biggest development from it's actually those transformational steps that challenge you more and give you more opportunity for development than the incremental small ones." (Ref: J8)*

Working in a different culture, stripped of necessary local technical knowledge, was clearly challenging as well as developmental with the need for managers to have relevant technical skills also mentioned by Persons N and Q:

*"And what I found when I went to the XXXX was I was doing an XXXX job and actually the job description was very much the same but I was stripped of both the profession and technical knowledge that I had because it was country related and you were required in that process to use the transferable skills that you had in order to be successful. And I can...I have a very vivid memory on the first week of somebody coming in to ask me a question about... but asking me what the arrangements were and the most junior (person in) week two in the UK would have been able...and I hadn't a bloody clue how to answer the question. And you felt naked in terms of technical expertise. So that working in a different culture both in terms of the technical stripping away but also actually the cultural differences that there were was a very big step." (Ref: J7)*

Across the eight stories selected for person J the following general themes were apparent:

- **Leadership development** – through job change, job challenges, transformational steps; technical skills in context are important
- **Role** – accountability but delegated downwards; begin from a position of trust
- **Relationships** – PS staff can be too subservient; need self-confidence to achieve a healthy relationship with academic colleagues

**Person D** saw it as a key task of senior professional service managers to create a narrative about the value and contribution of their service area and team (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999), thereby establishing a more coherent and positive identity:

*"So it's finding…it's creative a narrative and a story as to how a) that people are watching and care about what you're doing, but that the university is grateful and, you know, that it is having a positive impact. And that's one of the things that I kind of…I always…I found in XXXX I had to do because there was so much suspicion, the people just didn't…you know, they just thought everyone was out to get them all the time, and there was no kind of, you know, belief in what was going on." (Ref: D2)*

Intentional leadership to build the confidence and image of his staff also extended to symbolic action by obliging senior managers to engage and talk to his staff:

*"You know, so I sort of pushed and bullied, you know, the VC and the chief operating officer at the time to engage with and talk to my staff, and visit them. And XXX does that off XXX own bat, which I think is good. But, you know, it's that…there was a thing in XXXX teaching the training sessions, and it was always about, you know, the guy who's sweeping the floor in NASA, you know that old story, old chestnut with the…?" (Ref: D3)*

The story alluded to here is the apocryphal tale of the cleaner at NASA who when asked about his job states that he is helping a man to get to the moon, indicating that even though doing basic manual work he has bought into the shared purpose of NASA and sees himself as contributing even if in a very modest way. It is possible to infer from the accounts of several of the PS managers (J,M,N) that they perceive value in achieving a shared vision and sense of purpose. This contrasts with perceptions of self-directed agenda of academic colleagues (P) and **structural** difficulties emerging from the differing agendas at centre, faculty and school level (E,F,K,S).

Particularly interesting was the story person D told of how he saw line managers performance is judged contrasting the things that he perceived staff value – getting interesting work, fulfilling goals and ambitions, being tested and pushed, being respected and getting appropriate support with the self-judgement of the manager in terms of achieving good team morale, developing individual performance and whether outputs and results were being achieved:

*“I mean, I think, you know, we judge our line managers, we have other parameters. So, you know, am I getting interesting work coming my way; are my ambitions and goals being fulfilled by, you know, this individual support; am I being tested and pushed; can I be relied upon and, you know, respected; is that person giving me the support that, you know, I'm looking for? Whereas I think perhaps, you know, when you're judging yourself, you obviously want to make sure, you know, is my team's morale good; are they all performing well? But you probably focus more on, you know, the outputs, are we doing the projects we said that we were going to do; you know, and are we getting the results we were setting out to achieve in the first place? So I think there are slightly different views, but broadly speaking, they should be aligned; it's just maybe different parts of it, yeah.” (Ref: D4)*

Although his story notionally projects values concerning him as a line manager it is reasonable to surmise that these are the things that he values in his own line managers. The emphasis on performance and delivery of planned results is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a key theme amongst many of the interviewees (for example, D, F, K). What is usually less obviously articulated are the potential benefits in terms of credibility (person N), trust and social/political capital that can be developed when delivery is perceived to be effective. Here, person D indicates that achievement of results, and the consequent self-esteem/efficacy that should result (Judge and Bono, 2001) is not only a managerial/leadership outcome but also a key motivant (ambitions and goals fulfilled) linked to respect from others, providing adequate support is provided.

Themes apparent in the four stories selected for person D are:

- **Self-identity/motivation** – aspire to larger role/bigger challenges; tested/pushed, goals fulfilled; respected; team morale good; delivering results
- **Leadership** –creating a narrative regarding contribution and that this is noticed; can be negated by staff suspicion; symbolise interest by ensuring most senior people are involved

The central theme in most of the selected stories of **person M** was the intentional development of influence through the formation of personal relationships, and therefore social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002) achieved through face-to-face contact and conversations.

Evidence of success in forming positive relationships were spontaneous invitations to talk to people in the organisation who might employ her expertise/services:

*"And, I think at one time when I came people thought that that was just about their knowledge (right). Yeh, lot's of assumptions that well, "Why do you have to have a conversation with someone about what they're going to do over the next 3 years, they know this they're intelligent people?" and I'd say, "Well, hopefully they do know, but how do you know they're doing it?" So, it's that kind of…, you know, I think those kind of conversations are becoming more regular and people are understanding the reasons why they're having them, certainly with our leaders anyway." (Ref: M1)*

*"And umm, and what I've found is that I now, I get people through saying, "Will you come out and talk to me about this particular issue. I'm grappling with it in my head and I'd really find it helpful to bounce these ideas off you. " (Ref:M2)*

'Critical friends' who act as advocates are an important outcome of the establishment of this network of personal **relationships**:

*"And now we've got a year on, we've now got those people starting to say to me, "Right, OK, I've got somebody waiting in the wings," or a couple who've been promoted to Head of School and said, "Right, we've got a new person coming will you come and talk to us about their development," and all that kind of stuff, so they've kind of got it. So when you start to see that happening that's really, it's good you know , it's good that you thought right OK, that's good. They can see that succession's important as well, you know, which I think is vital actually (yeh), you know. So yeh, I think the people, I think, the critical friends is virtually, really, really important, and those are the people who are going to advocate for you right up. I, I, I've spent more time moving that upwards, you know, I mean." (Ref: M4)*

An interesting tactic employed to divert potential animosity (in this case from her own team) and avoid blame (Bovens et al, 1999), and linked to other parts of her account where she makes it clear that she seeks to build positive relationships within the hierarchy through her own manager and peers, is attributing the denial of a request to the formal university strategy (that she had initiated) rather than her personally:

*"And actually they're doing quite well with that actually, they've got a lot better. And I think they've actually, I think, that they've probably actually it's quite good , I can actually say no without feeling bad because what I'm saying is that it doesn't fit with our strategy, unfortunately. It's not me saying No to you it's the strategy that's saying 'No'." (Ref: M6)*

The changing relationship with her own team members was described in terms of having harder conversations and managing their expectations and aspirations in relation to accountability for their contribution ('come up with the goods') and the limitations of her own availability to lend support:

*"I have conversations with them saying I can't be here 150% but if we have solid conversations now about what's expected, "By all means come back but get on with it, just go with it." You know, because I can't, "I've got my own job to do of which, I'm sorry to say this, actually you're probably only 20% of that." And so I'm starting to have much harder conversations with them about it, and actually, "I know it sounds hard but I am really relying on you to come up with the goods here." You know so that it reflects well on us all." (ref: M7)*

The more general themes discernible in the seven stories selected for person M include:

- **Leadership** – key strategy of building influence through personal contact and conversations; indications of success are when people proactively contact you for advice/service; development of a network of critical friends who will act as advocates (upwards in the hierarchy) on your behalf; tactic of displacing potential animosity by reference to formally agreed strategy
- **Role and relationship with own team** – managing their expectations through hard conversations to ensure they take responsibility of delivery, and realise the limitations of managerial time to provide support

In significant contrast, **Person R's** style of interaction is portrayed as much more straight-talking and hard-hitting to the point where he sometimes feels obliged to move on when people fail to act in way that he sees as reasonable:

*"I'm not saying XXX is not good at what he does, but he and I have a very different approach and it's best summed up by the fact that XXX had only worked for one organisation before he joined XXXX, which was the XXXXXXX, and to say he was a Command and Control Manager would be a minor underestimate. Somebody once told me down at XXX, oh he is brilliant, he is a really good political manager. I said no he's not. They said yes he is really good political. I said no he's not, because we know he's doing it. Right, so if you know somebody is doing it, that means they are not actually doing it very well. So I decided that it would be best if I sought opportunities elsewhere." (Ref: R1)*

*"When XXX came in, he spoke to the Vice Chancellor, he didn't like the way it was run and he unravelled it far faster than it was ever built and the queues were back to two and a half hours the following year. Actually the Vice Chancellor… I knew I had to leave at one stage, the Vice Chancellor said to the council it was fantastic to walk around and see the students interacting in the queues and I'm sitting there going, they shouldn't be in bloody queues." (Ref: R13)*

Person R did indicate self-reflection concerning his more direct comments especially when he later judged them to be 'stupid', in the instance below indicating an appreciation of some of the difficulties incumbent in some academic roles:

*"I have to say I did say something once at a particular meeting in relation to our preparation for the REF that wasn't going particularly well and comparisons to our last RAE and I said this is just ridiculous, I've been here two years and you people still haven't got your bloody act together.*

*I realised after the event what a stupid thing to say, because I'm not an academic and never will be, I was the worst academic you have ever met in terms of my studies when I was at school and actually the stresses and strains that exist in an academic's role, particularly a research academic who is balancing research teaching, or clinicians balancing also clinic day jobs as well as everything else that goes with this. They're not easy things for people to be able to balance." (Ref: R8)*

Several of his stories exemplified weaknesses and peculiarities of **culture** in the organisations, for example higher education, in which he had worked with others indicative of processes and practices that he felt were ineffective or unhelpful:

*"You know, we write papers for the sheer pleasure of writing them on occasions and we take them to meetings, because the boss tells you he needs a paper to go to this meeting, so that makes them to the meeting, and on occasion I will see papers before they are approved, four or five different occasions and it is virtually exactly the same paper. Now that can't be right as far as I'm concerned, but it's due to our ordinances, our statutes, the various committees that we have got, the fact that we are research institution or research intensive institution puts more pressure on various forms of governance and all this kind of stuff." (Ref: R2)*

*"A book I was reading a couple of years ago there was a great quote in it that somebody said. "I used to think I was really good at problem solving. What you have made me realise is I solve the same problems over and over and over again". We do that in universities a lot. We are very conventionally structured, very hierarchical, very top down driven, whereas actually the work is not, the work moves that way across an institution, not that way across the institution, and therefore if you want to improve the work, if you want to improve your performance, you have to look at it that way and we don't."*

*"Universities are very structural, my own view is I'm not sure it will ever change for a lot of organisations, but a lot of organisations have changed to reflect the differences in that, because, you know, that management structure was effectively created by Henry Ford. Man came up with it, we can change it, it's not written in tablets of stone handed down from God on an olive, whatever it is." (Ref: R7)*

In the above extract Person R refers to structure and structural in a metaphorical way to represent hierarchical/conventional top-down decision-making as an unhelpful break on the organisational changes required to re-organise in order to better handle the actual work-flows. This unhelpful **structural** resistance to change is portrayed as God-given assumptions about how things should be with person R challenging this situation as it is actually man-made. Quoting Abraham Lincoln, person R likens organisational resistance to change to a dogma:

*"Now actually the dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy future certainly and therefore getting institutions to change the way they think about the future, change the way we think about how we operate size and shape, what is of value, what isn't. I'm not saying it needs to change fundamentally, but it does need to change and it's that difficulty of changing the culture that exists within the institution." (Ref: R6)*

In respect of his own service area and staff change should be taken slowly (a similar point is made by person N) but he sees this as conflicting with the expectations of those staff for a decisive leader:

*"So we had this meeting in the chapel and somebody said to me, one of the staff said at one stage, well what are you going to do with research support? I said I don't know. You could see them go what the f***, Jesus Christ.*
*I said what I mean by I don't know, is I don't understand how the work works, and until I understand how the work works, I can't possibly tell you how, what approach I'm going to take and I'm going to work with you to try and get an understanding of that." (Ref: R 16)*

In a similar way to Person H, he sees his role as a senior manager as being 'subordinate' to those of his staff in the sense of focusing his attention on removing the blockages and barriers in organisational policies and processes that generate frustration and prevent them doing their job well:

*"I can remember I left the office late one night when I was down in XXXX, it was half seven, quarter to eight in the middle of budgeting or yearend or something and I saw one of the other members of staff there and I said. Denise. What are you doing here at this time? Apparently one of the Chinese students who was over there was threatening to commit suicide, so she just sat and stayed with them for hours. Now*

*it's that sort of stuff that is everywhere in the universities and yet you still go to the meetings and they go and you lot are f**** crap. You go, oh God, they are as frustrated with the barriers that are in their way as anybody, but they can't change them and that's why me, as a leader, as a senior manager, a key element of my role is to be subordinate, is to let them come and talk to me about what it is that frustrates them about their job, because I don't understand the detail, I don't deal with it day in and day out and if we can fix half of what makes their life frustrating in this place, the performance will rocket." (Ref: R17)*

Person R offered an extensive range of exemplary stories to tell and of the 17 selected for consideration here the general themes emerging are:

- **Leadership style** – straight-talking, combative; move-on when completely frustrated with people and processes
- **HE culture** – weak decision-making, unnecessary paper writing and consideration; bureaucratic governance in research-intensive universities; hierarchical; resistant to change - dogmatic; unnecessary posts that get in the way
- **Staff** – (some) academics have a difficult balance to achieve; many dedicated PS staff frustrated by the systems they are obliged to use
- **Role** – expectation from staff that senior managers ae decisive; subordinate; have the potential power to remove the frustrations to enhance performance

Both of the stories selected for **person L** concerned her work role describing it as shadowing, a bit of a trouble-shooter and a fixer with her taking responsibility for the managing work demands

*"But I think I'm being seen as a fixer: if you don't know go and ask XXX, and if XXX doesn't know she'll find out sort of thing. To me that's not a bad thing. I just have to be wary and conscious of the fact that I don't take too much on. So that's a slap on the wrist for me if I say oh yeah, I'll do that." (Ref: l2)*

An initial change of role from that as a postdoctoral researcher to a mainstream support role was a source of comment for **person C**'s work colleagues:

*"I did a PhD, I didn't really enjoy doing research and I gradually did more XXX as part of doing the research jobs that I had. I saw a job at XXXX which was an XXX support role, I applied for it, my colleagues thought I was bonkers, how could I not enjoy doing research but, you know, I just thought it was right for me and I got the job. Then after a few years, three or four years, a manager role came along and I applied for it… So, it was a good role in the sense of learning a big portfolio of things from the ground up in that we had to install and set up all the core services." (Ref: C1)*

Reference to the learning acquired from a challenging early career management role was highlighted in the case of person J, two differences being sector background and number of job changes. Person C did comment on the impact of sector background on people joining higher education in a way similar to person F's sense of cultural dissonance, with which some people cope better than others:

*"I think so, I mean it's quite interesting because some of the colleagues in the Russell Group who've worked in prestigious organisations, you know in worldwide roles, and some I've met that have settled in well and it's, you know, it's a different culture but the challenges are fundamentally the same. That's what some people say but, you know, others have found it so frustrating that they've gone off back to other things I think. I think often there's this trend in IT that people have made so much money in the commercial world that they think "Oh I'll come and work in higher education it'll be easy" you know for a bit of pin money almost and then they find out actually it's not. The problems on the surface might look easy but actually solving them in the culture that we have is quite difficult and I think that can be frustrating." (Ref: C2)*

Interestingly, person C believes that the managerial challenges in different sectors are fundamentally the same with the key difference being the organisational culture of higher education that frustrates some attempts at problem solving. Person C identifies working with academics as a key challenge within higher education but, like person K, suggests similarities with other sectors; based on his own experience the understanding of work within HE takes time:

*"Well the sort of glib answer is kind of maybe dealing with academic colleagues if you like but it's interesting because like I said my wife was in the NHS and there's a sort of parallel there with the nurses and the managers and the doctors. And in local government you've got the councillors or whatever they are and certainly in the local government and the NHS and universities they do seem to have this kind of almost two classes of people and I suspect the problems are sort of similar although you've got a different, you know, whether it's a consultant versus a councillor or a professor. I suppose it takes… I think the thing I feel now looking back on the 11 years or whatever in this role is you think you understand the university but then it is something that, you know, you build up over time really. "(Ref: C3)*

The reference to two classes of people, along with the examples of organisations in which two classes exist, suggests a power imbalance with academics assuming superior status to the inferior status of PS staff, an issue commented on in different ways by persons J, S and T.

Themes evident in the stories selected for person C include:

- **Academics** – bonkers to do a PS role; superior status to PS staff
- **Leadership development** – early job challenges
- **HE culture** – managerial challenges the same as other sectors; two classes similar to other organisations; difficult to solve problems; frustration for some entering

**Person E** embraced the culture of higher education and shared a similar view to person M concerning the need to make contacts and supposed that getting things done in higher education had more difficulties than elsewhere but they were not insurmountable:

*"I just love, for all its quirks, I love working in universities, and higher education, generally, I was a student rep when I was a student myself, and I just got really interested in how universities work, and that, yeah, that got me fired up, and that's why I'm here [laughing]." (Ref: E1)*

*So, it's that collegiality, and, I think, you've got to work hard, this is, probably, pre-empting some of your later questions, but, I think, you've got to work hard to make contacts, and to, kind of, you know, work with individuals to get them to influence others, so, I think, at the same time, I think, it's a very friendly, and supportive organisation, but you've just got to work that bit harder to make those contacts, and to make things work, essentially. (Ref: E2)*

She perceived position in the organisational structure as a factor in both building relationships and in respect of perceptions of agenda for example of people from 'the centre':

*"It's less of an issue, I think, because, I guess, academic colleagues in schools will see more on a day to day basis than their PSS colleagues who they're working closely with, so, it will, perhaps, have a better direct understanding of their role, whereas I'm the, sort of, person who they see every now and again at a presentation about things like the XXXX, you know, so, there might be an element of, oh god, here she goes again [laughing], so, you know, I think, it's a challenge for all of us, but it's, probably, more acute for those of us in the central admin." (Ref: E3)*

In a similar way to, for example, person B, S, T and G a close working relationship with a senior academic manager was felt to be important typified in this case by being accessible and providing advice:

*"(Senior academic manager), hopefully has a good perception, because he knows whenever he needs to speak to me, or get advice from me, he can pick up the phone, or pop up the stairs, and that I'm in a position to give him advice." (Ref: E5)*

Themes evident in the five stories selected for person E include:

- **Structure** – centre versus faculty/schools – suspicion concerning the central agenda; close working relationship achieved in schools working alongside academic colleagues on a day to day basis
- **Role** – key link with senior academic manager; accessibility and advice

The strategic/forward planning nature of her job role, whilst keeping the administrative function 'ticking over', and its links to the senior academic manager were focal issues for **person G,** who also loved work in higher education:

*"The other side of it really then, because that's almost a more operational side, the other side is working closely with the XXXX and the much more strategic element. And, you know, a lot of the things that we deal with are longer-term plans or they're…you know, we've big external partners…" (Ref: G1)*

*"It's a bit like, you know, filming a film and by the time it comes out, you're on your next film and everyone else is watching that one. It's sort of, we're often working on the next project by the time people are celebrating the one that's just been announced. So you're kind of constantly trying to look forward and not rest on your laurels really. " (Ref: G2)*

*"XXXX sees me as sort of his partner in taking the faculty forward. So the effectiveness from XXXX's side isn't, you know, just are things working but am I helping him to move things forward; and am I an effective partner in helping to build those things for the future. So like I said before, really he wants me to have that dual role of keeping everything ticking over but also really helping to forge forward. So I think his view of effectiveness would have those two strands to it, whereas I think most of the other people would say if everything seems to be working, then that's effective, yeah." (Ref: G8)*

As a line manager she saw it as her responsibility and work priority, and as expected by her senior academic colleague, to ready her staff for change:

*"And we're thinking about where we want to be in the future, the important thing from (Senior academic manager)'s perspective - and he sees it as my responsibility - is that I've got the administration in shape to cope with those things that are coming. So often, I'm trying to say to my managers, we need to think about the shape of this because something might…you know, is going to change; or, you know, there's influences in Government where we think the focus will be somewhere else. We need to be ready for that. So rather than being on the back foot and responding as things happen, I try and make sure that we're thinking about it ahead of time. And that's an inference but a lot of the managers day to day are being in the same position. You're busy and you don't have time to kind of lift your head up to think about that. And I see that as my role really is to prompt them and say well, what if; and are you in shape for that; you know, like the fee agenda changing, well what does that mean in terms of the way we market ourselves, the way we treat students,*

*whatever else; and are your teams in shape to deal with that new challenge. So I see it as that sort of approach really."* (Ref: G3)

Implementing structured meetings to share consistent information was portrayed as a way of maintaining an appropriate relationship between the centre and faculty to avoid the possibility of school managers playing one message off against another, thereby supporting faculty managers to lead with a corporate message:

*"And again, when we meet as a group of (senior PS managers in faculties), we tend to have a kind of rota of the central directors coming in and having coffee with us as well; so (central PS senior managers) and people. And it just helps to make sure that we're all on the same page, and so if they're trying to do something, we understand the context of what XXX's trying to do, he understands where that might be a challenge for us. But rather than a school writing back and saying we can't do this, we already understand and we have been able to work with the schools and say we really want this to happen. So there's not that kind of ability to play off managers or for things to sort of, you know, fall between the cracks really." (Ref: G4)*

Person G also talked of the difficulties of leading people with whom you used to work and above whom you had been promoted, suggesting that by moving to a management role in a different part of the organisation staff there would accept the person more readily and also suggesting, in a similar way to person A, G, J, and N, that changing roles builds confidence and ability:

*"I mean, I had one who was really, really nervous about the move I'd suggested to her but after a couple of weeks, came in and she said - you know, she'd been in another department for a long period of time - and when she walked into the new role, she said it was amazing because they treat me like a manager. Whereas clearly, in the old place, she'd kind of grown up and gone through the ranks. And so it wasn't that they didn't treat her as a manager but it wasn't kind of…*

*And there's things you don't know but I think, you know, the fact that it's sort of different people but very similar stories, it kind of builds your confidence as a manager that you do understand, you know, what you're working with. So I think that ability to just be kind of picked up and plonked somewhere else is probably the best management building I've seen." (Ref: G9)*

Like person R, person G's story highlights the impact of the status of the managerial role and the mixed expectations staff have of the abilities and behaviours of people in such roles.

Themes evident in the nine stories selected for person G include:

- **Role** – strategic and maintain operations; prepare own team for change to address strategic objectives; partner to senior academic manager; critical friend to own team; expectations of staff concerning you as an individual and the managerial role
- **Relationships** - partner to senior academic head; critical friend to own team; link to other faculty managers and the centre to lead on consistent message to schools

**Person I's** focus was not on the managerial role, or the development of skills but in the application of abiding leadership/relational principles:

*"To me, it's the same, actually. There are two kind of...well, three kind of abiding principles, really. One is a slightly flippant one, which is, you know, don't look to upset anybody on your way up, as the saying goes, because sure, they'll be there when you come back down again… And actually for me, it's rather important, actually, to keep those staff and carry them with you, almost. And so just because you might have been elevated to a higher position doesn't mean that you shouldn't now still be associating with, and encouraging and motivating, and so on, the staff you used to work with…*

*The second principle, which is the one I kind of abide with, really, is do unto others as you'd have done to yourself. That, for me, is how I try and operate as a manager. I try and treat people with respect and treat people in the way that I would wish to be treated. I guess with that comes a sort of...I sort of expect to be able to operate in a particular way, and so on, as well – but there we go.*

*And then the third is, I really strongly believe that everybody has a fundamental talent within them, and it's just about identifying...good management, to me, is about identifying what that particular talent is, and channelling that in the right direction." (Ref: I1)*

Person I's principles are a fascinating mix of political practicality and ethical values; in principle one we see the realpolitik of avoiding alienating people with the practical value of continuing to associate and carry with you the people with whom you previously used to work. Principle two is an ethic with a biblical heritage emphasising both mutual respect and relational equitability with principle three embodying a practical belief that all staff members have talent that can be developed and seeing managerial roles and leadership concerned with channelling such talent 'in the right direction'. This implies that not only do managers such as person L have the responsibility and authority to undertake this directional orientation for staff but that some members of staff may go off in the wrong direction and need to be re-directed.

The achievement of a doctorate is a foundational requirement for work as an academic in research-intensive universities and an achievement that categorises academic staff as being different from (most) PS staff. Having achieved a PhD and previously worked as an academic person I mentions the advantages of having this influential passport, but that it annoys him – this can be understood in relation both to his abiding equitable principles and the challenges of sometimes having to coach PS staff without a PhD to undertake discussions with academic colleagues:

*"But for the simple fact – and it does annoy me, actually – that because I've got a PhD, and some of my other colleagues in the special support services of the faculty have PhDs as well – we do tend to get treated differently than some of our colleagues that don't. So I have come across situations before, where someone has gone and asked an academic colleague to do something, and they say, 'No, clear off,' and then I'll go and ask them to do exactly the same thing, and they'll say, 'Yes, fine.' And it's that sort of difference. So that is very...that's sort of difficult in that sense. But then trying to sort of coach and work with other staff who don't perhaps have a PhD or an academic background, to form those relationships, is a real challenge." (Ref: I2)*

Once again the frustrations of working within an higher education culture for people from the commercial sector (persons A, F, H, R) more used to being able to dictate decisions is mentioned:

*"I've got a colleague down the corridor here who I've got considerable respect for – a fantastic individual who has always worked there in a commercial setting. He gets very, very, very frustrated when somebody will come in and say, 'Well, why can't we just say we're not doing it? We can't do it?' But as you know yourself, there are certain things where, you know, you can't just fall back on that: you have got to engage and buy in, and get people to buy into a decision within academia. That sort of culture within academia is changing, but very gradually, and it's just, sort of, one man missions to say, 'Well, tough, we're doing it,' is not quite going to cut it." (Ref: L3)*

Finally person I's understanding of his leadership role involved the use of 'activation energy' to guide and motivate people to solve the problem themselves:

*"Someone once described to me that – and I think this is a good definition – someone once said to me that their definition of my sort of role, and the way I operate, as well, is getting people that activation energy. So it's not necessarily leading them all the way to the solution, but it's just saying, well, XXXXX, have you thought about this? And if you looked at it in this way...and why didn't you speak to that person? – Ah, yeah, brilliant, of course! And you can see your way clear to solving the problem." (Ref: I4)*

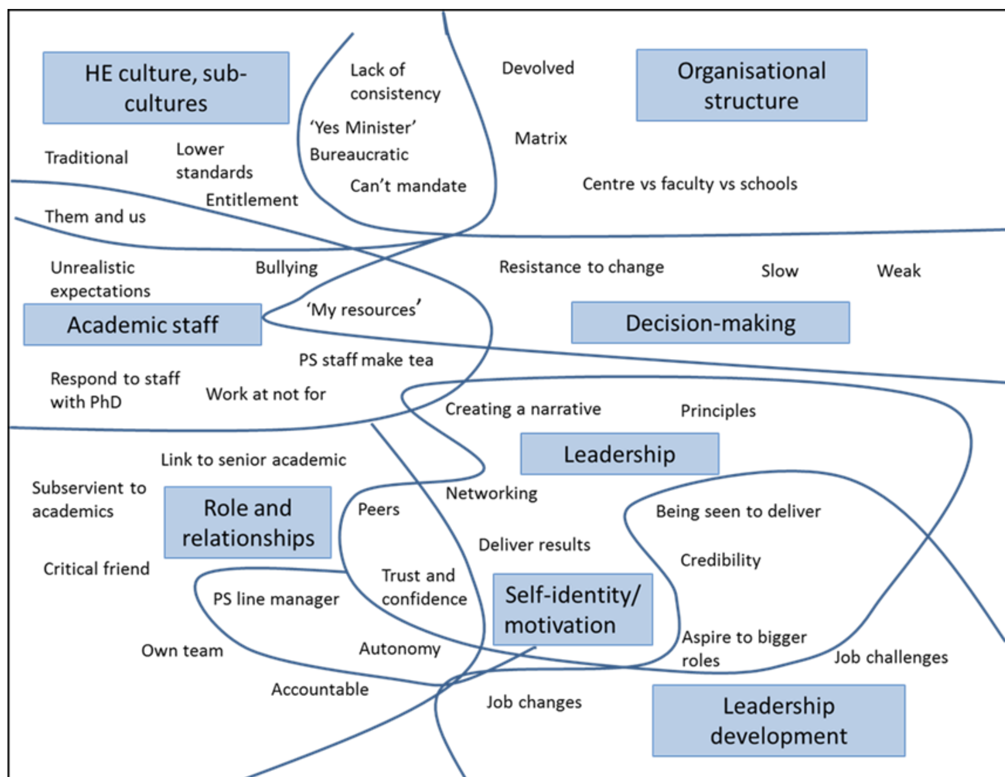
General themes evident in the four stories selected for person I are:

- **Leadership** – three pragmatic and ethical principles; activation energy; guide/coach to achieve solution themselves
- **HE culture** – need to get buy-in, can't dictate
- **Academics** – respond to colleagues who have a PhD

A similar process occurred for all twenty interview transcripts – elements in the interview responses that I chose to define as 'stories' that appeared to offer insight into the person's understanding of working life as a manager were identified and categorised according to the main issues that seemed sensible in relation to the story, for example stories (C, K, T) concerning the perceived impact of devolving certain activities were linked to organisational structure though they can also be linked to organisational decision-making.

The table in appendix seven provides a summary of the themes identified amongst the stories considered for all of the interviewees that have been visually presented in Figure 13. Once again this depiction is double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1984) as it attempts to show some of the linkages that I interpret exist (arising from the stories told by the managers) between various aspects of organisational life, leadership and management that might otherwise be perceived as discrete factors. For example, lack of consistency in application of organisational policies (as an aspect of organisational culture) can be linked in the story of person R to the devolved but hierarchical organisational structure that has been adopted that can also be linked to slow decision-making (person O), the perceived ownership of resources (person H) by some academic staff which in turn reflects tension concerning degree of autonomy in roles and relationships (person S). This is not a causal argument that a hierarchical structure will always lead to slow decision-making on all decisions but more a reflection of the structurational social ontology articulated in the methodology in which the practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) and social practices, constrained to some extent by the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), of knowledgeable agents generates the structure vivified and experienced by organisational members.

**Figure 13**: The broad themes emerging from the analysis of stories




Both figures 11 and 13 are venn-style diagrams aimed at organising in a visually coherent way the themes emerging from the respective analyses (key word and story). The slight difference in format in figure 13 is an attempt to better depict some of the interpreted interconnections across thematic areas. It also broadly clusters the themes into the more personal ones emanating from the experiences and activities of the manager (self-identity/motivation, roles and relationships, leadership development and leadership) and those linked more to the organisational context (HE cultures/sub-cultures, organisational structure, decision-making and academic staff).

The similarity with the themes emerging from the key word analysis is obvious and to some extent inevitable given that, as previously noted, the interview questions were structured to address the research question but were also informed by theoretical elements emerging from the review of the literature; the same source data was used (the 20 interview transcripts) and the interpretation undertaken by the same researcher. However the story/narrative analysis produces a more distinct delineation of some themes particularly decision-making as a specific issue as well as amplification of views about leadership development. Very clear in the story analysis was the belief that the most significant or 'transformational' development (person J) occurs through having to grapple with the challenges of a new job and a view that

professional service staff need internally to change jobs for their own development (person G, I) and to counter the static culture that might otherwise occur (person P). Also of interest was a stronger sense of the frustration of some of the managers with their own staff who appeared to have lower standards of performance than might be expected elsewhere (person P), see sick-leave as a right (person H) and feel that the organisation owes them a living (person A). Of some interest is the fact that if we recall the ambivalence of person F concerning professional service staff seeking the same freedoms as academics and person B's concerns around delegation and line management control, we notice that the group of managers who appeared to have the most significant relational tensions or self-limiting beliefs (Bandura, 1989) all had direct or indirect concerns about management of their own staff.

In the context of the interview each of these broad categories informed consideration of issues such understanding about the nature of a research-intensive university organisation and how it contrasted with the culture of organisations in other sectors; understanding of own work role and the challenges associated with it and self-identity, image and how leadership/management is conceived and relevant skills developed.

### 5.3 **Individual distinctiveness and difference**

Some of the stories told by a number of the interviewees, particularly person's F, H, B, P and A and to a lesser degree S and T, revealed relational tensions and/or self-limiting beliefs likely to have an impact of their leadership practice and potential effectiveness. The source of the tension can be located in their self-understanding, self-esteem (Cast and Burke, 2002) and 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1998) or in relationship to the actions, attitudes and behaviours of others but in each case leadership effectiveness could be undermined owing to the potentially unhelpful responses that may arise from these perceptions. Person B appeared to have recognised the need to address aspects of her own behaviour and had undertaken NLP training in order to better understand herself and others and develop stronger positive interactions. This level of self-awareness was not obvious in others with persons H, F and to a lesser extent A, all providing indications of both unresolved inter-personal tensions and an orientation to externalise responsibility for issues indicative of a certain degree of political insensitivity.

As a whole the stories told by a number of the interviewees, particularly person's F, H, B, A, P, and to a lesser degree S and T, revealed relational tensions likely to have an impact of their leadership practice and potential effectiveness. Person's K and O

appeared to be concerned with the status of their role and preferred a clear contribution via a place on the senior management team. The source of the tension can be located in self-understanding, identity and 'emotional intelligence' or in the actions, attitudes and behaviours of others but in each case leadership effectiveness could be undermined to some degree owing to the potentially unhelpful feelings/actions that may arise from these perceptions. Person B appeared to have recognised the need to address aspects of her own behaviour and had undertaken NLP training in order to better understand herself and others and develop stronger positive interactions. This level of self-awareness was not obvious in others with persons H, F and to a lesser extent A, all providing indications of both unresolved inter-personal tensions and an tendency to externalise responsibility for issues indicative of a certain degree of political insensitivity. Inability or unwillingness to construct a politically acceptable social identity (Watson, 2008) seemingly related to emotional tension/cognitive blocks to self-awareness or emotional self-management (Goleman, 1998).

Investigating the understanding of professional service managers orientates this study in a phenomenological direction that can reveal the diversity of perspectives on the life-worlds (Schutz – Gurwitsch, 1962) of the interviewees as knowledgeable agents (Giddens, 1984) as they seek to make sense of the organisation in which they work, the challenges they encounter and the activities they undertake. However, at the broad thematic level of analysis the uniqueness of each of the interviewees can be lost. To highlight the differences, figure thirteen attempts to capture in one or more words a significant concern or issue revealed in the accounts of each interviewee, with the detail underpinning this condensed presentation available in appendices seven and eight. Such a presentation grossly simplifies the richness of the interview as a whole and the interviewee as a person, but it does have some value in highlighting differences, especially in relation to inferred political sensitivity and self-awareness.

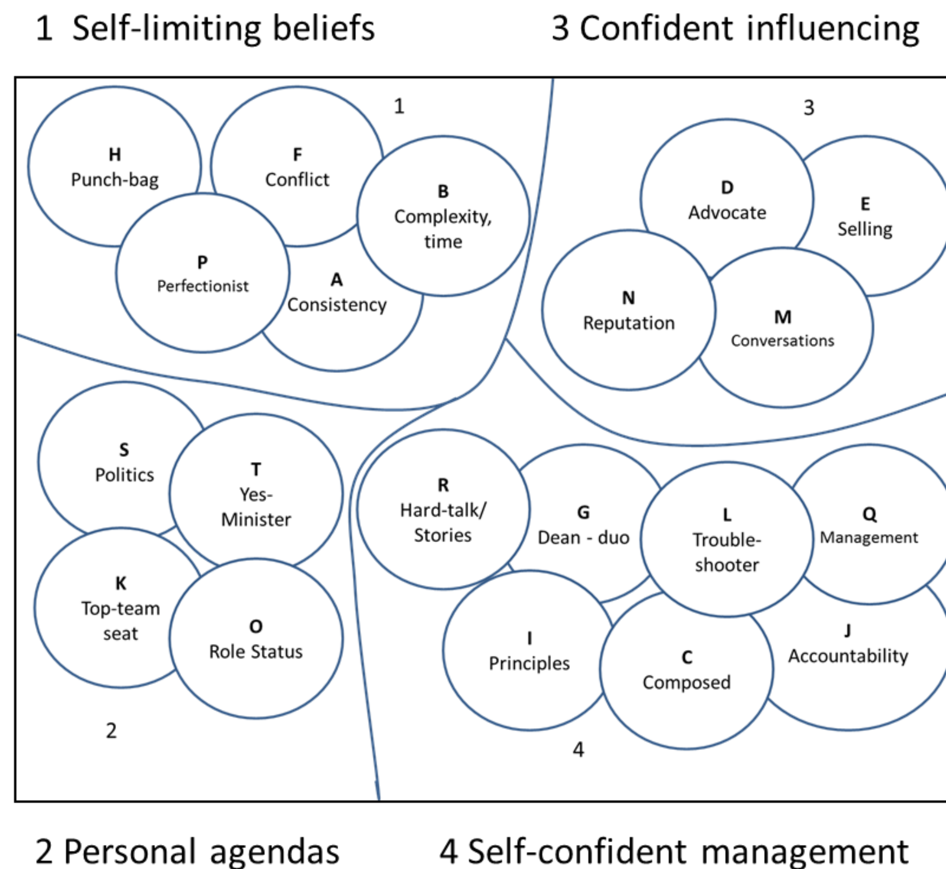
Prior to the depiction in figure 14 an initial attempt was made to situate the interviewees using a model of political sensitivity (Baddeley and James, 1987) however this proved this failed to provide much differentiation as most interviewees were judged to be situated in the 'wise' category (others being clever, innocent and inept). A further attempt was made to tabulate the perceived strengths of the interviewees against researcher-defined categories of self-confidence, inner tension/conflict, leadership orientation, management orientation and political

awareness/sensitivity. The categories and classification of individuals against them was impressionistic arising largely from repeated reading of the interview transcripts and the most significant issues suggested in the narrative/stories but also to a lesser degree from impressions gained during interaction with the interviewees during the interview itself. A table of quotes from interviewees that exemplify an aspect of their thinking that has been used to differentiate them in the diagram shown as figure 14 is included as appendix 8.

Figure 14 is the final version of the interpretive iterations that seeks to differentiate between the managers who appear to be confident and clear in their approach from those who can be inferred to harbour agendas, issues or beliefs that may negatively affect their performance to a greater or lesser degree. This assessment clearly has to be treated with caution and would need considerably more data from a variety of sources to substantiate it but it does serve the purpose of identifying those interviewees whose understanding of themselves, others and their role potentially places them in stronger or weaker positions regarding potential success.

The interviewees grouped in quadrants one and two revealed self-limiting beliefs and/or personal agendas that may impact adversely on their performance as managers. For example, Person H describes herself as a punch-bag, as being hated by others, and potentially stabbed in the back and even allowing for stylistic hyperbole there are strong hints that the person is experiencing relational difficulties. Person F's frustration with his own line manager is indicative of a broken key relationship that could potentially undermine his effectiveness. Those shown in quadrants three and four demonstrated self-confidence of management/leadership and clarity of influencing approach, although person R's 'openness and honesty' could be interpreted as a lack of tact and is therefore pushing towards one or other of the difficulty quadrants. In contrast, person Q's confident managerial account suggests an experienced manager aware of some of the issues associated with attempting to apply managerial approaches, developed through his high-level experience in the private sector, within a higher education context.

**Figure 14**: One word or phrase expressing individual differences




It is not possible to establish leadership effectiveness merely from the data generated in this study, however it is very noticeable that the stories told and language used about self and others by some of the interviewees suggest potential problems, for the very obvious reasons noted above.

**Summary**

The narrative analysis served the purpose of confirming the themes identified in the key word analysis and fore-grounding particular elements of organisational culture, for example decision-making. The experiential elements of leadership development were brought more into prominence but perhaps most interesting was the sharper focus on the idiosyncrasies of, and differences between, the individual managers captured in figure twelve. The potential impact of these differences on the managers' actual practice is significant. Whilst the managers are capable of articulating their views and beliefs about how to undertake leadership and management, their explicit understanding, there is clear evidence in some of the stories told and the accounts

overall of emotionally infused 'self-limiting beliefs' about themselves or others that might undermine their effectiveness.

### 5.4 Responses to specific interview questions – challenges, perceptions of leadership effectiveness and leadership and management

As already noted two primary techniques, key word and stories/narrative, were used to undertake the thematic analysis, however examination of responses to some of the specific interview questions generated a number of interesting supplementary thematic nuances that complement and enhance those already reported and they are worth briefly summarising here as they have significance in relation to the findings.

To simulate reflection and responses related to a number of particular issues relevant to the understanding of leadership by professional services managers in the context a higher education seven specific trigger questions were employed (Appendix 2) relating to challenges encountered (3,4,6), perceptions of leadership effectiveness (10,11,12) and the perceived difference (if any) between leadership and management. Responses in relation to particular questions were re-examined and identified themes and categories organised in a way designed to share the interpreted sense made of the data by the researcher, table four being an example. The analysis of the responses is a manifest analysis rather than a latent (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004) or critical one as I make no attempt to challenge the comments made by the managers only to categorise them conceptually and thematically. However, the results do complement those derived from the key word and narrative analysis as they reveal understanding at a discursive level of consciousness (Giddens, 1984).

A **challenge** necessitates a sense-making response as it presents a difficulty or problem, singular or on-going, to accommodate or understand and may entail an emotional response in addition to activity necessary to cope with the challenge itself (Weick et al, 2005; Maitlis et al, 2013). In Giddens's (1984) scheme, certain challenges may represent a threat to 'ontological security' if control is seen to be lost and routines disrupted that may lead to increased anxiety. A noticeable challenge for the managers is coping with the transition from one organisation to the higher education institution, particularly if the former organisation as a 'field' (Bourdieu, 1990) supported a more managerial habitus. I infer that the question responses represent some of the most frustrating, or recent, and significant issues that each particular manager encounters or bears in mind when undertaking their work. Some interviewees also mentioned challenges encountered during their responses to other questions. The responses to the questions maps particularly onto the themes of **role and relationships** and **organisational culture and structure** identified in the key

word and story analyses and a complete summary list of challenges mentioned is provided in the table in Appendix eleven,

The challenges identified were categorised under the following themes:

- External environment and impact on higher education
- Organisational **culture** (traditional; academic freedom; non-managerial; focus on academic work and contribution)
- Organisational **structure** (large; hierarchical; devolved)
- **Relationships** with **academic staff** (difficult; outspoken; focussed on own area interests; fixed term for academic managers)
- **PS staff** (static in their roles; resistant to change; cocooned; may not understand academics; feeling of entitlement; may not appreciate corporate direction/priorities)
- PS manager **role** (diversity of issues and divided loyalties for middle manager; need to sell, persuade and negotiate)
- **Leadership** (keep self-motivated; motivate and inspire team to change and develop; ideally move staff around to develop and get in fresh)
- Processes (some external and some self-imposed bureaucracy/complexity; may generate work-arounds; HR policy difficult to move staff around for development)

The analysis of challenges corroborates some of the cultural, structural, role, relationship and leadership themes already identified in the key word and story analyses, as well as issues around perceptions of some professional service staff as noted in the story analysis. Themes that are more prominent among the challenges include the impact of the external environment and discussion of organisational processes.

Given that the focus of the question was around challenges encountered by the managers it is inevitable that some of the negative aspects of how they perceive their work in higher education have been drawn out. It is important to recognise that most of the managers had worked in higher education for many years and had therefore found ways to cope with the challenges; some expressed fondness for higher education (person E, G), its quirky nature and the stimulation of working with highly intelligent academic colleagues (person Q).

The general frustration with the lack of ability to enforce managerial decisions, mandate action and, in fact, adopt a more ‘command and control’ approach is consistent with functionalist/unitarist (Rollinson, 2002) view of organisational life aiming for the elimination of conflict and a preference for the application of legitimate authority, neither of which seem to sit well either with the political culture of freedom

or the devolved structure in which staff can too easily prioritise local agendas and interests above corporate ones.

From the analysis of the accounts of challenges it is not only possible to delineate a number of thematic categories, elements of which constitute implicit challenges for professional service managers such as the research-intensive university culture and the behaviour of some academic colleagues, but also to infer possible chains of relatedness, similar in some respects to Giddens's (1984) 'structural sets' that depict institutionalised aspects of social systems, as suggested in Figure 15 below:

**Figure 15**: Possible relational chains between themes

| | Role | Relationship | Structure | Culture | Staff response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Divided loyalties | Matrix to academic or PS manager | Devolved | Academic freedom | Parochial not corporate focus |
| 2 | Competing interests | Non-authoritative | Central services | Politics | Sell, negotiate |
| 3 | Limited authority | Formal/ Status overlay | Traditional/ hierarchical | Academic focus | Professional services seen as subordinate |

The reasoning behind line one of the table (figure 15) is that the devolved structure in a culture of academic freedom encourages a parochial focus on local interests and activities rather than an embrace of corporate strategy and direction. This creates particular issues for hierarchically middle professional service managers who have line management accountability to a more senior professional service colleague but who are also required to work closely with their local senior academic manager. This can lead to a tension in how the middle manager role is discharged and actual or perceived divided loyalties in which the manager might be seen to have 'gone native' (person B) and prioritised local issues and priorities above corporate ones.
In line two, the competing interests generated in part by the size and diversity of the organisation and also as a result of the devolved structure, leads to a sense that authority is lacking and corporate mandates will not necessarily be followed.

For centrally provided services, this political culture generates a need to sell and negotiate on many issues which in other more strongly managed organisations might just be complied with.

In line three, the limited authority of professional service roles in relation to academic ones, as academic outcomes are the primary focus in an academic institution, leads to a general perception of professional services staff and managers being subordinate to academic colleagues. Thus working relationships are overlaid not only with positional issues arising from the traditional hierarchical structure of the research-intensive universities but by the status differential between academic and non-academic staff exemplified in terms and conditions such as freedom to work away from the office, take periodic paid sabbatical leave and so on.
Thoughts on possibly differing perspectives on leadership and service effectiveness (by self, stakeholders and direct reports) were invited (appendix two, questions 10,11,12) with a distillation of the detailed analysis that was conducted presented below.

Table 4 summarises at a high level of abstraction some of the important features of service effectiveness that were articulated by the managers that have been categorised as either leadership/influence focused or management/activity focused. As previously noted (section 2.8) the difference (if any) between leadership and management has been contested in the literature with perhaps the most integrative assessment provided by Kotter (1990) seeing them as complementary systems of action. Here I classify ‘actions’ that have a greater potential to influence the perceptions of others as leadership and actions that are primarily concerned with getting the job done as management, though to some extent this is an artificial separation as in order to deliver valued services (and be perceived as such) the management of the activities and resources allocated in support of such service delivery needs to be effective. Given the methodology employed in this study the results do not reflect actual leadership effectiveness (although this is difficult to ascertain owing for example to the ambiguity of its definition and attributional nature, Pfeffer, 1977, for example) but the manager’s perceptions of effectiveness might be judged. This is particularly important for the *understanding* of leadership as we can infer that the managers will devote attention and effort towards their achievement, though we cannot say on the basis of this study in which ways and to what extent.

**Table 4**: Perceptions of service effectiveness – leadership or management

| General category | Summative theme | Leadership (influence) focused | Management (activity) focused |
|---|---|---|---|
| Service delivery | Meet expectations e.g. timeliness | X | |
| " | Deliver valued services | X | |
| " | Reduce costs and improve efficiency | | X |
| Service style | Minimise problems/complaints | | X |
| " | Proactive management | | X |
| " | Well-organised | | X |
| " | Perceived as responsible, friendly, good | X | |
| General effectiveness | Perceived strategic focus | X | |
| " | Effective infrastructure | | X |
| " | Maintain communication | | X |
| " | Build the confidence of/relationships with key people/stakeholders | X | |

*N.B. The categorisation as either leadership or management focused is the researchers and is based upon the inferred extent to which this activity is likely to enhance perceptions of service (and therefore manager) credibility thereby potentially building influence*

The general balance between leadership and management activities and focus apparent when considering service effectiveness shifted in relation to perceptions of self-effectiveness and presumed perceptions of effectiveness by direct reports. When judging self-effectiveness, many of the practices/actions map well to notions of leadership but in relation to the kind of activities the manager performs in relation to their teams a high level of management is apparent, although the relational stance (or arguably leadership style) emphasised is empowering/supportive. When presuming the judgements of team members on their own effectiveness many of the actions describe map well onto the Mintzberg's (1971) 10 managerial roles including, for example figurehead, liaison, leader, disseminator, spokesman, disturbance handler and negotiator but with an emphasis on a supportive and accessible

relational style, representing and defending the team and providing energy, emotional support and credit/recognition.

In respect of the articulated difference between leadership and management, where a clear view was stated (rather than implied in the descriptions provided of leadership and management) opinions varied with person P describing leadership as more visceral and believing it to be uncommon to get a manager who is also a good leader while person E suggested that they were different activities and that a person could both be a good manager and good leader. Person Q saw leadership more as an innate quality – a spark, whereas persons C, D, E, F, G, K, N, S and T suggested in different ways that they were linked and both necessary for a manager to deliver their job. Both person G and N saw management as underpinning leadership but with G linking this to confidence whereas person S proposed that if you are leading people managing becomes easier. These differences in understanding are potentially important as they could influence managers' attitudes towards the value and nature of leadership and management development and/or whether to focus effort on the recruitment and selection of people with the leadership spark.

**Summary**

Responses provided to specific interview questions, for example what the managers see as the difference between leadership and management, offers manifest data (Graneheim and Lundmann, 2004) articulated at the level of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984). Analytically there is a heightened danger of rationalisation or impression management (directed towards self and/or the researcher) as the interviewee responds in the way she/he believes is appropriate and possibly politically correct. Although arguably supplementary to the interpretive analysis generated via the key words and narratives the analysis of responses to specific interview questions around challenges, effectiveness and the perceived difference between leadership and management casts useful light on the managers' overt understanding of leadership within higher education.

## 6 Discussion

The focus of this study is the understanding of leadership by twenty professional service managers in the context of higher education. It is a qualitative study situated in an interpretive paradigm and drawing on the structuration and practice theories of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977). The analytical narrative is a second order interpretation by the researcher of the first order manifest and latent (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004) understandings of the managers based on the responses to the semi-structured interview questions. Therefore, it is a double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1984) interpretation not an account of any presumed social reality. This discussion outlines the significant issues arising from this study and considered in the results chapter (5) and is divided into the following sections:

6.1 Understandings of context

6.2 Understandings of challenges

6.3 Understandings of roles and relationships

6.4 Understandings of interactions and relationships

6.5 Understanding identity as managers of professional services

6.6 Understanding managerial identity as credibility through delivery

6.7 Understanding identity as a manager undertaking effective leadership

6.8 Understandings of the difference between leadership and management

6.9 Different managers, different understandings

### 6.1 Understanding of context

Leadership takes place within a dynamic socio-physical environment (fields – Bourdieu, 1990; contextuality – Giddens, 1984), therefore understanding of leadership (as agentive influencing practices) by managers needs to embrace their understanding of context. In Bourdieu's (1990) scheme institutional context could be described as an objectified field, partially sustained by the habitus of organisational members, whereas Giddens (1984) conceives of context in relation to the routinized interactions of co-present, communicating actors in time-space locales. The thematic analysis highlighted inter-connected themes of organisational culture and structure as important elements in how the managers viewed context. Words used by the

managers that can be linked to understandings of organisational culture include traditional, messy, complex, political, risk-averse, silos and bureaucratic and lacking the ability to mandate action. Metaphors of the organisation being a village, a family, a beast and cocooned provide vivid impressions of aspects of the organisational culture that the managers perceived they encountered. Some of the issues linked to institutional governance and decision-making that was perceived as slow and weak compared to elsewhere with this manifest in the operation of numerous committees and requests for papers. Some of the issues arose from the behaviour and service expectations of academic staff and in some instances the cocooned, lower standards and entitlement expectations of professional service staff. From most of the managers' point of view the cultural context in research-intensive universities appears to be difficult and frustrating, although this negative view wasn't shared by all, for example persons E and G.

In contrast to the culture they perceived/experienced their general preference seemed to be for a more managed, controlled, consistent, corporate and customer-focused environment – essentially a preference for, and belief in the value of, more or stronger management, which could from a more critical perspective be labelled as managerialism (Deem, 2007). In Bourdieu's (1990) terms there is an argument for considering the durable dispositions of professional service managers towards management as 'habitus', with their leadership work in pursuit of additional social capital within the organisation as a field, building on the positional power and capital afforded to them by virtue of their role. Alternatively, Giddens's (1984) vocabulary could be employed to describe such discourse as work to legitimate the activities of professional service staff thereby increasing their control of resources in the organisation and increasing their relative institutional power (domination).

Given the role of the interviewees as managers in the organisation a strong managerial orientation is perhaps not surprising but it does highlight the tension already noted in higher education between notions of (academic) freedom and collegiality (Ramsden, 1998; Dearlove, 2002) and the desire or viewed need for stronger corporate ties and management. We can stereotype this polarisation using the McNay (1995) culture model by proposing that professional service managers have an orientation to change the organisational culture to one that more tightly controls both policy definition and implementation and is corporate. This will be a source of tension for academic colleagues who prefer a more traditional collegial way of working and for those professional service staff (who have perhaps worked in the institution for a long time) who prefer limited control and light-touch management.

An irony is that there would probably be general agreement between academic and professional service staff concerning the degree of bureaucracy, the source of which was attributed to governance structures and the nature of research activity, as well as a natural tendency to want 'to keep things in nice neat boxes'. (B)

Several of the interviewees recognised pressures for organisational change often as a result of government policies and policy changes with one likening it to a 'tsunami' (M). Four sources of resistance to change were noteworthy including that from staff, the lack of attention devoted to the need for change by some senior managers, the differing priorities of centre, faculty and schools and cultural issues such as the slow and convoluted decision-making processes. This is an interesting range of understandings of resistance extending beyond negative emotional reactions arising from increased unpredictability (anxiety arising from challenges to ontological security – Giddens, 1984) to the latency effect of endemic structural/cultural processes. The way to manage change was, by some people, argued to be slow build (N) and by getting buy-in (I). One response to external change and consequent driver of internal change were re-structures, a source of stress but also an opportunity to re-organise staff resources in a way that potentially offered more structured support for the manager's role (S).

Location in the organisational structure was significant in the understanding of leadership by the managers (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988; Oshagbemi and Gill, 2004). From a structuration/practice perspective care must be taken when discussing 'structure' and how it is socially constructed, especially as Giddens (1984) emphasises it's emergent but institutionalised properties arising from the practices of the knowledgeable agents and Bourdieu (1977) focuses more on the formative impact of objective conditions (language, economy, class) structuring durable dispositions (habitus) that is manifest in practices. Structure as depicted in the organisational chart or organogram delineates formal work-flows, responsibility and pay levels and patterns of communication which inform the activities of organisational members and is thus part of the framework or context in which the understanding of the managers is developed and played out. The creation of the structure is, in effect, a managerial technique that attempts to govern and control the activities of the organisation but which it is interpenetrated by the informal social processes and networks through which organisational power (Ibarra, 1993) and influence can be more fluidly dispersed and energised.

Consideration of such a perspective in the further and higher education leadership literature is evident in the work of Collinson and Collinson (2009) as 'blended leadership', Bolden et al (2008a; 2009) in respect of 'collective' and distributed leadership and Bolden and Petrov (2014) as 'hybrid configurations' of leadership.

Talk of the devolved/matrix structure, hierarchy and layers signalled some of the complexity of organisational structure and interfaces that the professional service managers had to deal with. Linked to the structure was devolution of some decision-making powers, for example aspects of budgeting and strategy that supported a focus on local priorities but presented a potential difficulty in strategic co-ordination. Some of the centrally based managers talked of customers, stakeholders and service delivery as well as a need to sell ideas to people (E) and promote policies and services through champions and critical friends (M). This suggests a particular relational understanding between the 'centre', often seen as the source of organisational direction and control, and other parts of the organisation that are seen to have sufficient power to ignore, avoid, resist or frustrate the centre unless they are sold to and brought on board by diverse means.

The most challenging location appeared to be at school administrative manager level usually classified as a *middle manager*, although from the point of view of professional service/administrative staff working in the school it is the most senior. Across the *school managers* in this study the general experience was of multiple demands on time, challenges around delegation, trying to represent team members and protect them from challenges from staff working at faculty level and from frustrated academic colleagues and 'taking the rap', in fact being all things to all people (P). These pressures, whilst not identical to those encountered by academic middle managers, suggest a degree of vulnerability (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001). In contrast *centrally located managers* talked more of selling, negotiating, engagement and communication in trying to persuade colleagues to implement policies (often generated externally) and adhere to corporate strategy.

This range of understandings suggests that significant political dynamics arise in relation to formal structural position within the HEI (centre, faculty, school, department; senior, middle, front-line) generating the need for political sensitivity and skills (Baddeley and James, 1987) sufficient to make sense of organisational dynamics, emotional intelligence (Sy and Cote, 2004) or resilience to cope with job demands and appropriate application of leadership influencing skills.

Weakness in one or more of these areas (for example self-limiting beliefs that undermine emotional intelligence or political sensitivity) potentially limits effectiveness.

### 6.2 Understanding of challenges

Something perceived as a challenge can be seen to necessitate drawing on cognitive and emotional resources so as to be able to cope with and/or manage the challenge with Judge et al (1999), in respect of coping with change, relating this to a number of dispositional traits including self-esteem, self-efficacy and tolerance of ambiguity. It can also be considered to stimulate a process of sense-making (Weick et al 2005) as people seek to understand and deal with the perceived challenge. Drawing upon Bourdieu (1977) we can regard the challenges that confront established habitus, for example inculcated beliefs about role or professional contribution, as being potentially more problematic and in Giddens's (1984) terms unsettling for practical consciousness requiring a greater degree of reflexive monitoring. Two interview questions stimulated comment around challenges in respect of the mangers' role and work in higher education, therefore the responses, in part, re-affirm some of the conceptualisations relating to context. The impact of the external environment, for example Government policy changes and initiatives, was thematically identified as a challenge as well as organisational culture, structure, processes, relationships with academic staff, the attitudes or dispositions of professional service staff, the nature of the management role and leadership.

As noted in the higher education literature (Ackroyd and Ackroyd, 1999; Clegg and McAulay, 2005), a challenge to effective working with academic managers is the fixed-term nature of their contract resulting in regular changes of post-holder and interruption to relationships and ways of working. In contrast to this academic manager 'churn' was the relative stability and longevity of professional service staff that on the one hand generated a pool of experienced staff but on the other led to potential complacency, best described by person G as being 'cocooned'. Person G suggested that the way to address this was through being challenged: "I like the feeling particularly at that management level that people are challenged and that have their sort of ideas and plans and things challenged…", and the benefit of encouraging staff to change roles and move around the organisation to see the bigger picture and think broadly was also noted.

Moving jobs, taking on significant responsibility and encountering and overcoming the challenge of mastering a new job were seen as perhaps the most significant leadership development experiences, a point generally in line with DeRue and Wellman's (2009) findings for development under optimum conditions.

### 6.3 Understandings of role and relationships

The position of role in the hierarchical structure is an important element in the understanding of leadership as it formally ties the manager into a network of relationships, for example superior or boss to those staff that report to them, peer to colleagues on the same grade particularly those in the same part of the organisation and subordinate to the person to whom they report. In respect of academic managers, Bolden et al (2012) typify academic management roles as having formal leadership in contrast to other informal leadership activities for example, intellectual leadership by professors. However, it is very important to note that this role designation and structural location does not dictate the way in which interactions with others ('leadership style') are carried out, except that there are certain values and general expectations about the appropriateness or otherwise of behaviour (Ranson et al, 1980).

Giddens (1984) has concerns around the profligate use of the word 'role' and conceives of it more as a social position or identity, "that carries with it a certain range (however diffusely specified) of prerogatives and obligations." (p.84) The role therefore encompasses a level of access to decision flows and decision-making fora that can be regarded as affording symbolic and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1990). The authoritative power to intentionally influence, therefore lead or manage, the part of the organisation under the remit of the management post is formally allocated but the practices employed and the nature and style of the role-holder's interactions with others, as well as the nature and outcomes of decisions made that can be attributed to them, will determine how their leadership, or management, is viewed (Giessner et al, 2009). Therefore, attempts to differentiate managers from leaders (for example Zaleznik, 1977) can be seen as spurious as managers necessarily undertake leadership (as intentional influence) but more or less effectively. What is different between managers and non-managers who attempt leadership is that managers are already enmeshed in a social construction (organisational structure) that confers on them a certain degree of authoritative resource (Giddens, 1984) or symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990) that can be applied to exert influence (or in some instances compliance), once again more or less effectively.

A distinct, though not unique (clinical and managerial staff in the NHS, for example), issue for the professional service managers in this study is the abutment of the professional services formal management structure with that in place for academic staff, giving rise to particular issues for those colleagues located in schools, faculty and centrally in terms of how they relate to and effectively interact with their senior academic colleague. Person B epitomised the dilemma in saying, “If you’re in a conundrum like that between your Head of Faculty administration and your Head of School, where should your loyalties lie?” If you choose to follow the line of the academic Head of School you run the danger of alienating your own professional service line manager who has direct formal influence over your work and possibly career, however if you follow a corporate line emanating from your professional service manager you risk alienating your academic Head of School with whom you work on a daily basis and to whom you are also expected to render professional services. Thus we find an in-built potential for conflict and role stress requiring both resilience and political acumen, skill or astuteness (N) (Ferris et al, 2007), evident in the story told by person B of falling out with her Head of school over making what he considered to be the wrong choice; by person S in respect of the politics she saw at faculty level impacting on the way her school was regarded and the need for her to protect her staff and by person Q in his role as ‘Sir Humphrey’ and the fact that he had recognised that he needed to review the relationship with his professional service manager as his natural tendency was to work more closely with his senior academic manager. In Giddens’ (1984) terms the manager as knowledgeable agent operating using practical consciousness of how effectively to operate in a given locale and demonstrating a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990).

Both person S and H talked of the role of protecting their staff and person P mentioned that staff felt the need to be protected whilst person K mentioned being a buffer. The idea of managers acting to provide a space where staff can feel emotionally supported and effective is evident in the literature (Mintzberg, 1971 – disturbance handler; Sutton, 2010 – HBR online article) however, this understanding of being a protective barrier for your staff is problematic as it could generate a potentially unhealthy relationship between manager and staff members if manifested to excess.

The importance of developing an effective and close working relationship between the professional service manager and their relevant academic manager needs to be recognised as without it the delivery of the role for which the manager is responsible for would become very difficult. Drawing on the academic manager’s status and

position can enhance the professional service managers' legitimate power (French and Raven, 1959) by delivering affiliative power (Benfari et al, 1986) to the professional service manager in their dealings with academic staff.

A key issue for managers in terms of both their identity and feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) is the degree of autonomy they have to control their own work and priorities and those of their team such that they can feel a sense of achievement (McClelland, 1985), self-determination (Gagne and Deci, 2005) and effectiveness by virtue of outcomes achieved. Person O expressed this well in relation to the idea of micro-management: "You mustn't do that because it undermines people's abilities, and their aspirations as well." Person D's list of factors team member motivation factors could equally well apply to himself: "Am I getting interesting work coming my way; are my ambitions and goals being fulfilled…am I being tested and pushed, can I be relied on, you know respected…" The issue of autonomy (Gagne and Bhave, 2011) was important for people who had come from other organisations where they perceived themselves to have had more autonomy (S).

As has already been noted the dilemma of who to support, either their professional service line manager or the academic manager to whom they report on a day-to-day basis, raises another challenge concerning the autonomy of the role. Person F displayed the greatest difficulty in his relationship with his line manager and indicated a need to work around her and the formal decision-making process in order to initiate changes that he believed would retrospectively be endorsed by senior managers, and in so doing he granted himself autonomy beyond that formally expected and with attached political risk (attempting to be 'clever' using Baddeley and James's, 1987, terminology). His dilemma of control also extended to the relationship he had with his own team with him indicating uncertainty about how much freedom or 'permissions' to grant. So, a key issue for the understanding of leadership is how the manager perceives the degree of autonomy they have in their role, how they feel about this, how they react if unhappy and what political consequences may ensue.

A key relational dilemma is in choosing who to support when there is a difference of direction set by your local academic manager and your professional service line manager, and a potential way to undermine your own managerial power and generate political difficulties is by failing to build an effective relationship with your boss (or bosses) and circumventing expected decision-making protocols.

Smith (2002) notes that department heads' first loyalty is to the department not the university and this presents a dilemma for professional service managers who are expected to think and act corporately.

The importance of building effective relationships to enhance confidence, credibility and leadership effectiveness was a clear theme amongst the interviewees with person N describing it as 'death' when relationships break down, trust disappears and teamwork/co-operation is replaced by 'warring' with colleagues. For person M building personal contact through face-to-face meetings was part of a strategy to enhance her own credibility and visibility and that of the services for which she was responsible, whilst person G planned regular meetings with her own direct reports, peers and senior academic colleagues in order maintain relationships and keep open channels of communication. Difficulties with relationships were expressed by person F, A and H with person H describing herself as a punch bag, hated and potentially being stabbed in the back. The major importance of effective relationships to underpin credibility and build social capital (Burt, 2000; Adler and Kwon, 2002) was evident to most of the professional service managers interviewed and it is therefore a significant potential problem for managers who are unable to do this or are experiencing difficulties in their belief about the need to do so. Where the orientation towards the building of relationships in general or in particular is absent it can be regarded as a weakness in emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998) and a self-limiting or self-defeating belief (Thau et al, 2007), as it potentially undermines leadership effectiveness and shows either a flawed understanding of the leadership process (as opportunities to influence are lost) or an emotional constraint of some sort.

### 6.4 Understandings of interactions and relationships

The metaphor of the Vice Chancellor being 'meat in someone's sandwich' (M) gives a sense of the hierarchical layers in which even senior managers operate and the feeling of being at and managing the interface, being a buffer and, interestingly, acting as a translator. The need to actively translate messages when communicating with different audiences was noted by a number of the managers and is an important idea for the understanding of leadership given the relevance of good communication for both the close (interpersonal) and distant (symbolic/sense-giving, for example Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) leadership process.

This sense of active effort in the role to interact with people and communicate meaning in an appropriate way resonates well with the idea of leadership as an intentional process undertaken by 'knowledgeable agents' (Giddens, 1984).

Interaction with academic colleagues was a topic of particular note to the managers with accounts of difficult, driven individuals, focused on their own research and agendas, sometimes with unrealistic expectations of professional service staff, preferring not to be managed, using income from research grants to build Empires and resisting re-structures that centralised control of resources. Not all stories of interaction with academic colleagues were negative – some of the managers who were organisationally interdependent with an academic colleague, for example E and G, spoke positively of the relationship which suggests that under different circumstances, and with different people, the nature of the interactions and relationships can be more or less positive or negative. As person L comments, "You can't stereotype, draw a line down the middle and say well, that set of behaviours belongs to that group."

The orientation and ability to effectively communicate is a way of building relationships and facilitating engagement, a particularly important aspiration for person M. Engagement implies awareness, interest and a degree of commitment, the kind of elements often associated with the idea of leadership (Drath et al, 2008 – direction, alignment commitment). The development of trust (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002) is regarded as an important aspect of leadership although it is not always clear how trust comes about. It is clear from this study that trust building practices for managers include building rapport and engagement through face-to-face meetings, making the effort to translate information using a choice of words that has more salience and meaning for the intended audience, demonstrating team work and positivity and delivering what you are expected to or say you will deliver - keeping promises.

Two other opportunities for relationship building and interaction worthy of note in relation both to leadership, its development and the acquisition of information are networking and mentoring. Networking (internal and external) was seen as a time-effective way of keeping up to date with developments and acquiring new ideas whilst mentoring was a useful method for focused development, and when acting as a mentor it provided a mechanism for developing others and building contacts.

For a couple of the managers (C, N) interaction with a role model or mentor had proved pivotal for their leadership and career development, although there was no indication of a gender effect as found by Tharenou et al (1994). These chance or planned encounters are time-effective and focused ways of receiving useful information, new ideas and leadership guidance, and sometimes inspiration.

### 6.5 Understanding identity as managers of 'professional services'

Issues of identity in relation to self-perception of worth and value of self as an individual and self in role are important for self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and self-determination (Gagne and Deci, 2005) and are also potentially important in relation to the perceived relative value, contribution, status, power and symbolic capital of your professional group (manager or staff, non-academic or academic) in a given field (Bourdieu, 1990), in this case higher education.

It is worth commenting as to the perceived importance of the title afforded to administrative staff. In one university the decision had been taken to call non-academic/administrative staff, professional services whilst in the other they were titled professional *support* services. To maintain confidentiality I have removed all reference to *support* services when presenting the results, however I did ask some managers from each university whether they felt the designated name affected how staff were perceived and their identity. Person M felt that the name was important and emphasised the idea of being seen as professionals. To the contrary, Person J stated that, "I don't think it matters a jot," and that, "it's not what we're called that matters, it's what we do that matters." Person D also felt the name was unimportant but for a different reason: "You know, I think PS is a construct that we give it, you know from the outside looking in…sometimes it can be unhelpful because it sort of gives a sense of this huge amorphous mass." The implication here is that being seen as a monolithic mass of non-academic staff is unhelpful; better to construct identity in some other way, for example in relation to service area and, drawing on other comments he made, to construct a narrative of distinct contribution and worth. We thus find ambivalence around the idea of professional services identity and discursive efforts to solidify it a position that might facilitate the boundary blurring proposed by Whitchurch (2008).

## 6.6 Understanding managerial identity as credibility through delivery

Person S summarises the importance of credibility and trust well: “it’s about trust, it’s about credibility, it’s about consistency and it’s very much for me, success in my role…” Understanding of the importance of delivery and being seen to deliver encompassed not just work undertaken by the manager but that delivered by their team. In effect a manager and their team develop a ‘brand’ based on the generalised perceptions of the manager and their team to deliver timely, reliable and effective service in line with the prevalent expectations of organisational stakeholders (Herbig and Milewicz, 1993). Being seen to deliver personally, and through making effective use of the resources allocated to you, is a key foundation for the credibility of the manager, which builds trust and confidence with service users, stakeholders, colleagues and other managers and earns reputational capital (Ferris et al, 2000). Several of the managers talked not just of operational delivery but of delivering against the organisational strategy, which became an issue when the devolved structure and culture of freedom got in the way. Although I asked specific questions about service delivery the strength of response from the interviewees demonstrated its importance in their understanding of effectiveness in their role. Conger (1989) talks of credibility being founded on expertise and relationships and whilst both were recognised as important by the interviewees the sense was of relationship building acting as a mediator in developing visibility (M) and trust (G) with credibility as a manager more directly related to delivery.

## 6.7 Understanding identity as a manager undertaking effective leadership

As already noted, the professional identity of this group of managers is very much tied into service delivery by the manager and their staff, and perceptions of delivery by others. For person J, accountability was an important issue the ramifications of which for the understanding of leadership and management are significant. Instilling accountability among his direct reports was seen as a way of moving the organisational culture forward and encouraging people to take responsibility for targets and the achievement of objectives. This can be seen to be developmental and empowering not just a controlling managerial practice (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997), indeed person R describes the leader as being, “indebted to the people they led and they had accountabilities of leadership not just trappings of leadership.” However this chain of accountability and empowerment is psychologically constructed it has important implications for a manager’s degree of stress and possible tendency to take direct control. Person R emphasised the accountability of

his direct reports; he would sign off their ideas and decisions and would hold them accountable for how well they were delivered, but ultimately his reports were responsible for their own performance not him. This empowering approach has two potential psychological benefits for the manager – firstly, it should tend to generate a feeling of autonomy, personal responsibility and commitment (empowerment – Conger and Kanungo, 1988) from the reports and secondly it liberates person R from the stress of feeling fully responsible for the actions and possible failures of his reports. By liberating himself from the feeling that he is responsible for everything he can better focus on what he sees as being strategically important, and resist the temptation to over-manage and over-control with the negative and disempowering consequences that would tend to have on the relationship.

Professional identity can be linked to perceptions or otherwise of effectiveness with Van Knippenburg and Hogg (2003) linking it to group proto-typicality, which could be interpreted as meeting the expectations of senior managers or other established cultural norms. Responses to questions about effectiveness were thematically organised as 'implied criteria' of effectiveness that in other studies may be represented as a list of competencies or practices. Here they are self-reported beliefs about what constitutes effectiveness and therefore form a key part of the managers' understanding of leadership in context. In respect of perceived *service effectiveness* the following themes were determined:

- Service delivery: Timeliness, how the service is judged (meet targets, keep promises, deliver benefits, value, innovative products) by whom the service is judged (meet clients wants) and reduce costs/efficiency – do more with less
- Service style: Minimise problems or complaints, well organised, proactive, seen as responsive, friendly, good
- General effectiveness: strategic focus, effective infrastructure, confidence of key people, relationships with stakeholders and maintain communication

As I have already noted, the credibility of the manager and associated reputational capital (Ferris et al, 2000) can be directly linked to personal and team service delivery, therefore the criteria that the manager reports as relating to service effectiveness are performance indicators of the manager's activities including decision-making, general organisational skills and capacity to build commitment to service delivery (interpersonal leadership) from amongst their team. An added

dimension of challenge is added when we remember the adverse aspects of organisational context that the managers believe they have to contend with.

Responses to the question about perceived effectiveness in their *role* generated an even more specific set of themes/criteria which at the manifest level of interpretation depict the managers' understanding of leadership:

- Self-focused: Strategic focus, politically astute, able to balance pressures, stamina, know own contribution, know key contacts, comfortable in different situations, undertake partnership working, achieve impact and work-life balance and demonstrate interpersonal effectiveness

Given the significant work/role demands as already noted the aspirations to have sufficient stamina and be able to balance work and life demands seems very appropriate. However, we also see a number of criteria linked to politically/contextually sensitive ways of operating.

In relation to the *activities* they needed to perform as a manager in order to be effective a skew towards those typically associated with management are found but with some elements of leadership:

- Own activities: Target/objective setting, managing service delivery, monitoring and review, trouble-shooter, information and advice provider, communication, inform key people, difficult conversations, persuading people to change

In considering their role in relation to the effectiveness of their team the managers' beliefs gravitated more towards leadership including providing appropriate structure, planning and direction but empowering and supporting staff to deliver service themselves and achieve pride and ownership in their work, leading to the development of respect, mutual trust, good team morale and good team performance:

- Team/direct reports effectiveness: Good team work/shared values, management structure, shape activities, take ownership of and pride in own work, empower staff, enhance ability of staff, support to overcome barriers, plan rather than detail, achieve outcomes

Beliefs about the *expectations of team members*/direct reports are equally interesting revealing an orientation towards providing friendly but quick and decisive support, acting as a buffer for stress, advocate with difficult colleagues and (two-way) information conduit:

- Daily interactions with the team: Provide management/direction, sort out issues, approachable, accessible, quick decisions, solution oriented, stress buffer, information conduit and intervene on staff behalf

The hierarchical position of the role together with proactive support and representation of team members was also reinforced:

- Representing the team/backing-up members: Status of the role, credibility with senior management, actively represent the team, take the rap, back-up team members

The final bundle of presumed expectations built on the advocacy role and emphasised support, development and recognition:

- Focus of interactions: pathway for ambitions, provide challenge and energy, general and emotional support, team emotional connections, give credit and recognition

In a way it is hardly surprising that managers focus both on the management and leadership activities they feel need to be performed in order to feel themselves, and be seen, to be effective. However, this understanding is important as it challenges leadership models that attempt to separate the two. The understanding of leadership shown here goes beyond interpersonal leadership aimed at generating motivation and commitment (for example, Goleman, 2000) and also beyond Kotter's (1990) strategic model of leadership as strategic direction setting and management as producing and problem solving, to politically astute and skilled (Ferris et al, 2007) leadership that wins the loyalty of team members and builds credibility with other professional and academic managers and staff/stakeholders. However, there are echoes of the managerial roles identified by Mintzberg (1971).

### 6.8 Understandings of the differences between leadership and management

Having made the claim that the composite of the manager's comments concerning effectiveness go beyond a simplistic separation of leadership from management, do we find that the manager's articulate it similarly themselves? Yes and no. In respect of leadership many of the criteria articulated are the praise-worthy ones that might be expected from setting a vision, rallying the troops, leading by example and coaching and encouraging people sharing some similarity with the Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2005) transformational/engaging leadership model.

However, a harder edge was also displayed in that setting a framework and expectations provided a benchmark against which to check that people weren't getting away with anything and a belief that sometimes it was necessary to cajole people.

A mixed picture was also found for management emphasising the daily grind of service activity including setting structures in place getting things done, following standard processes and keeping the handle turning/balls in the air. However elements of leadership were also included such as getting people motivated, supporting people to achieve tasks and shuffling alongside people and asking questions. Views on the difference between leadership and management varied from being two sides of the same coin, requiring a different mentality or skill set to leadership being an innate spark or quality. Therefore, the managers hold a range of understandings of the differences, if any, between leadership and management. This result is potentially important if we take the view that what we believe frames or structures the way we see the world and in turn how we behave (Hogg and Vaughn, 2002). For example, if as a HRD professional I take person C's position that leadership operates at a 'higher level', I may structure my curriculum progressively commencing with management development and then moving to leadership development. On the other hand, if I take person Q's position that an 'innate spark' is needed I may put effort into psychometrically testing participants and streaming those possessing the spark towards leadership development and those without towards management development.

### 6.9 Different managers, different understandings

The general orientation of most of the managers in the sample towards increasing managerial consistency and control can be theorized as a habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) generated through previous experience, particularly in more managed organisations or as attempts by managers to effect greater organizational predictability so as to manage their own ontological security (Giddens, 1984). From a critical standpoint it can be perceived as the endorsement of an ideology of new public management or managerialism (Deem, et al 2007) and to some extent as identity work in support of attempts to increase the relative power of professional service staff in relation to their academic colleagues given pressures for greater management and changed Governance (Kogan, in Kogan and Teichler, 2007).

Issues around trust (Dirks and Ferrin, 2001) and control were evident in the accounts of several of the managers both in terms of developing trust (and credibility/reputational capital) in the manager and in respect of trusting others (direct reports, peers, boss, academics). The idea of accountability and incorporating management practices that support acceptance of accountability were evident in some accounts and indicative of reflection concerning delegation and empowerment (Conger and Kangungo, 1988).

A significant insight, obscured in many studies of leadership, is the notable differences between individual managers that are quite apparent amongst this purposive sample. Owing to the in-depth and repeated reading of the transcriptions, a sense of the personality and issues for each manager emerged with this being stronger in respect of the more vocal interviewees with an affinity for communicating meaning through stories and the use of evocative metaphors. In figure 13, I represented the difference by single words and phrases and categorised the managers broadly in relation to their confidence or perceived self-limiting beliefs and personal agendas.

Noteworthy for several of the managers was the manifestation in stories told of what I have termed self-limiting beliefs - that is ways of viewing self and others that potentially impact adversely on the leadership effectiveness of the individual. This contribution can theoretically be linked to limitations in political sensitivity (Baddeley and James, 1987) or political skills (Ferris et al, 2000 and 2007), under-developed aspects of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), aspects of self-evaluation (Judge and Bono, 2001) and in some cases narcissistic thinking (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006) and leadership's dark side (Kets de Vries and Balazs, 2011). The potential reduction in effectiveness for managers holding such self-limiting beliefs is of concern both for the individual and the organization, particularly those staff members who have to work closely with the managers.

Such unhelpful 'idee fixe' are potentially self-limiting or self-defeating. This suggests that an important element of the understanding of leadership is the understanding of self and related self-control. This is an unsurprising revelation given the volume of literature devoted to the issue, for example, emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), but it is an important one for the leadership development of professional service managers in higher education. Although it cannot be inferred that the 25% of the sample of managers in this study is representative of the numbers in UK higher education as a whole their presence in this study signals the need to review

recruitment and selection and development and training processes in an attempt to identify such individual and implement appropriate action/support. Managers with such self-limiting belies could potentially benefit from individual support from a coach, mentor or even counsellor to address particular intra-personal and inter-personal issues.

Person H appeared to be suffering from confusion around how best to lead and also to be experiencing significant relationship and self-esteem issues while person B had recognised issues relating to how she understood and interacted with people and had initiated training (NLP) aimed at developing skills in these areas. Person P saw herself as a perfectionist and control freak and felt that she had had to modify her expectations of the standard of work possible from her staff, and Person A valued consistency and was frustrated by the unrealistic demands of academic and professional service staff. Person K and O, aspired to have a seat on the top table, recognising the importance of their service having access to this decision-making forum but modestly suggested that this was not related to personal ambition. Person S was coping with being relatively new to the role and having to deal with the effects of a re-structured school with no induction and had become acutely aware of the political nature of the organisation, whilst also grappling with her preference for greater autonomy. Person T, like Sir Humphrey in 'Yes Minister', saw himself as the power behind the throne of his academic senior colleague whilst person G emphasised academic and professional service manager partnership. Person R was an arch-story teller exemplifying unhelpful practices in several organisations in which he had worked and noting that his straight-talking in which, "They get bored with me or I get bored with them after about three or four years," had led to a number of job changes.

Persons D, E, N and M were all confident in their work and positive about their role and contribution talking of being an advocate for the service, selling ideas, and building reputation through conversations. Persons C, G, J, I, L and Q were all confident and composed building partnership working, trouble-shooting, developing accountability, building management processes and abiding to leadership principles. Whilst there were some similarities and common themes across two or more managers each is shown to be a unique individual understanding leadership in particular ways founded on their particular experiences and life-history and state of self-confidence and emotional self-control. The unveiling of such differences, even amongst a relatively small sample of managers, highlights a distinct benefit and contribution possible using qualitative research.

For the more confident and assured members of the sample learning by experience, particularly of job changes and challenges, was reported to be the most significant in terms of management/leadership development; also notable for some was the impact of a significant role model or mentor, coaching and networking with experience on leadership development programmes perhaps of value at the earlier career stages and in relation to providing background knowledge. Drawing upon Bourdieu (1990) and others (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999; Burt, 2000; Adler and Kwon, 2002) the importance for managers in developing and effectively utilizing a range of capitals is another important contribution arising from this study. Incorporating a focus on political sensitivity and skills and methods by which various capitals can be developed and appropriately used in leadership and management development courses is an important conclusion and contribution arising from this study.

**6.10 Summary**

The managers' understanding of the organisational context forms a back-drop against which their beliefs about how leadership and management should take place can be contrasted. The managers' preference for greater management control and consistency is a potential source of tension and frustration given the culture they observe for their HEIs, made vivid in some of the metaphors used. A further source of tension was the perceived pressure for change, hampered by a range of sources of complexity and resistance in part arising from organisation structure and decision-making processes. Particular positions in the formal organisational structure give rise to challenges requiring emotional intelligence and resilience and political sensitivity and skill. The parallel or matrix organisational structure (for academic and professional service staff) can give rise to potential conflicts of authority with professional services managers working closely to/with an academic manager sometimes facing a dilemma as to whether to follow the corporate (professional service) line or accede to the wishes and direction of their academic manager.

For some managers, especially those coming from organisations in which they perceived themselves to have had significant autonomy, the desire for autonomy is an important element in their perceived self-efficacy. Building relationships and trust and building credibility through effective service delivery was recognised as key to perceived leadership effectiveness. How 'accountability' is perceived can be a source of anxiety and potentially lead to micro-management but may also lead to empowerment and less managerial stress.

Managers hold different views concerning the nature of management and leadership and describe a range of practices that can be attributed to either or both. For example, achieving credibility (and therefore potential leadership influence) through successful service delivery implies that the services are being well managed. Self-limiting beliefs potentially undermine leadership effectiveness but with the more confident managers being oriented towards developing a range of capitals, for example social and reputational, that supports their potential for influence.

# 7 Conclusions, contributions to knowledge, limitations of the study and areas for further research

## 7.1 Conclusions

The purpose of my study was to investigate how professional service managers in higher education understand leadership, or as I consider it managerial leadership, within higher education institutions and my study reveals a number of important things about this. There are strong indications of an orientation or durable disposition/habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) towards implementing traditional Fayolian management practices; Pugh and Hickson (1996) list five as forecast and plan, organise, command, co-ordinate and control which align with my findings (figures 11 and 12) as forecast and plan – management and leadership (figure 11), organise – structure, co-ordinate – management and decision-making and control – management. 'Command and control' was referred to by a number of the managers as they articulated its relative lack in higher education and the most interesting element to consider in relation to leadership is therefore the style of command as, 'maintaining activity among the personnel.' (Pugh and Hickson, 1996: p.98).

Nuances of style can be linked to understandings of role and relationships, interactions, self-identity and motivation and leadership within the higher education culture and sub-cultures, however with an aspiration for more command and control evident in some of the concerns around academic staff and organisational culture. This managerial orientation can be theorised in a number of ways – it could be seen as direct evidence of 'managerialism' (Deem and Brehony, 2007) with professional service managers seeking to strengthen managerial practices that curtail beneficial aspects of collegial academic culture; it could be envisaged as identity work (Pratt et al, 2006; Luhrmann and Eberl, 2007) and sense-making within a dynamic institutional context (Weber and Glynn, 2006), partly directed towards coping with work challenges in context and possibly as a general orientation towards increasing the status of non-academic staff (Whitchurch, 2004), their professionalism (Evetts, 2003) and their power (Simon and Oakes, 2006; Magee and Galinsky, 2008), or it could be regarded as a managerial 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) with the durable and transposable dispositions towards consistency and control seeking to find stronger expression in the field of academia that resists them and in which the most valued capital is accumulated through academic endeavour and prestige (Blackmore and Kandiko, 2011) and suggesting an orientation towards the corporate quadrant of the

McNay (1995) model and diametrically opposed to the more traditional, academic collegium.

Arguably a ‘managerial habitus’ may have been acquired through professional training and experience (Noordegraaf and Schinkel, 2011), for example in the private sector, where a more ‘command and control’ approach was socially acceptable but there is no clear evidence of this in this study with managers from both private and public sector backgrounds expressing similar cultural and managerial concerns. What is revealed in the study is the recognition of contextual factors that necessitate a number of intentional influence/ leadership responses, though these may arise from experientially and culturally informed implicit leadership theories (Keller, 1999; House et al, 2002) and ‘practical consciousness’ (Giddens, 1984) rather than always as deliberative rational decisions.

As previously noted a source of both difference and potential tension between academic and professional service staff is the main focus of interest of their work with academics’ primary interest orienting towards academic discipline and in a research-intensive university contribution and credibility beyond the employing institution within a wider academic community (Blackmore and Kandiko, 2011) – working at rather than for the university, and professional service staff focusing on the contribution and effective delivery of university activities and services. There may be some professional service staff who, in a similar way to academic colleagues, also contribute more widely to their profession, for example acting as a chair on regional working groups for HR professionals, but such work is a subsidiary interest with professional membership and certification acting as a passport to appointment to particular roles and a way of supporting work credibility. In respect of professional identity and career development the academic field can be regarded as extending beyond the boundaries of a particular HEI to encompass discipline-focused activities both nationally and internationally. The field of interest for professional service staff is much more strongly, though not exclusively, activities within the HEI in which they work.

Drawing on the findings of this study, figure 16 highlights the different general orientations and interests of academic and professional service staff depicted as ‘habitus’ or durable dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990):

**Figure 16**: Elements of academic and professional service manager habitus

| | Academic habitus | PS manager habitus |
|---|---|---|
| Core purpose | Research and teaching | Delivery of service area |
| Primary focus | Academic community or students | Internal organisation |
| Career progression | Publications, citations, grants | Job performance, successful job applications |
| Decision-making | Collegial | Managerial |
| Working relations | Individual | 'Team' |
| Relation to institution | Working at | Working for |
| Power over | Students | Service area |
| Students as* | 'Conferees' | Customers |
| PS staff | Service from; barriers from | Service to academics; students; organisation |
| Handy (1993) cultures | Power, people | Role, task |
| McNay (1995) cultures | Collegial, entrepreneurial | Corporate, Bureaucratic |

**Conferees as a term is coined to signify the power of academic staff to confer or not degrees on students, although this is not the sole relational aspect*

In relation to the identity, interests and capital of staff, contextually universities can be regarded as comprised of two intersecting fields (Bourdieu, 1990) – the academic field which is inwardly oriented towards discipline, but for academic prestige outwardly focused, and the corporate field encompassing professional service staff and formal academic managers who tend to be inward looking (senior roles and some 3rd sector roles being a partial exception) and concerned with organisational operations. It is within these respective intersecting fields that the habitus identified in figure 27 are enacted as 'practices', for example, processes of performance management (managerial) and graduation ceremonies (academic).

Most (15 of the 20, see figure 13) of the professional service managers demonstrate political skills and sensitivity and recognise the importance of building strong collaborative relationships with peers, academic managers and staff and also recognise the need to translate messages in a way that has meaning for the audience. When successful this intentional relationship building and positive interaction builds trust, confidence and social capital. However, several of the interviewees reported difficult interpersonal interactions with academic colleagues and attributed this variously to the nature of academic work, organisational culture and the personality traits of particular academics though it could also be seen as part of a discourse of managerial professionalism (Whitchurch, 2004) directed towards enhancing the professional status and power/symbolic capital of professional services staff and managers (Noordegraaf and Schinkel, 2011) or as implicit identity regulation (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002) aspiring to align all staff with corporate/managerial goals.

Professional service managers' understanding encompasses awareness or practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) of organisational culture, structure, decision-making and issues relating to academic staff. However, in regarding leadership as an intentional process of influence stimulated by a leader as agent, Gidden's (1984) notion of power as encompassing the ability to act or make a difference is particularly relevant. My argument here is that an aspect of intentional leadership that some managers enact better than others is the development of bases of power, or as I prefer to refer to them, capital. Bourdieu's (1984) scheme is particularly relevant here as he extends the notion of capital beyond that of an economic resource to include the advantages gained from background and upbringing (cultural/symbolic) and those arising from social interactions (social).

In recognising that capital can be acquired and developed, we can see the liquidity of the asset and it's agentive value in the sense that it can be used to effect influence to the advantage of the capital holder.

A multi-faceted understanding of what comprises leadership effectiveness is demonstrated by the managers including that of ensuring service delivery whilst maintaining a strategic focus, being politically astute and informing key people, supporting, empowering and protecting staff and provide structure and quick decisions. A key concern for managers is service delivery and being seen to deliver. Successful delivery by them and their staff is seen to win credibility and reputational capital. Thus implicit within their accounts is clear evidence of concern to develop and maintain a range of capitals, or power bases (French and Raven 1959; Benfari et al, 1986) upon which they can draw when instigating leadership as a process of intentional influence. The word capital is preferred here rather than power to avoid the negative connotations of 'power over' (Berger, 2005) which as positional power or authority aligns with only one relational dimension (manager to direct reports/staff), and rather to emphasise the idea of a range of resources (of different liquidity and volatility) available to the manager as agent (Whittington, 1992) to undertake leadership as shown in figure 17.

An important element apparent in Bourdieu's theoretical framework is that of context or field in relation to capital. Owing to the importance of habitus in Bourdieu's (1990) scheme he is keen to emphasise a link between individual acculturation and the understanding of how to operate in a given field to such an extent that, "the functioning of the field becomes misrecognised" (P. 68) However such a naive 'state of body' (as Bourdieu describes it) is unsatisfactory if we regard leadership as an intentional process of influence as it is precisely the reflexive ability to read context and be politically sensitive to culture that facilitates the development and application of various capitals.  But the insight that some capital is to a greater or lesser degree context/field dependant is significant.

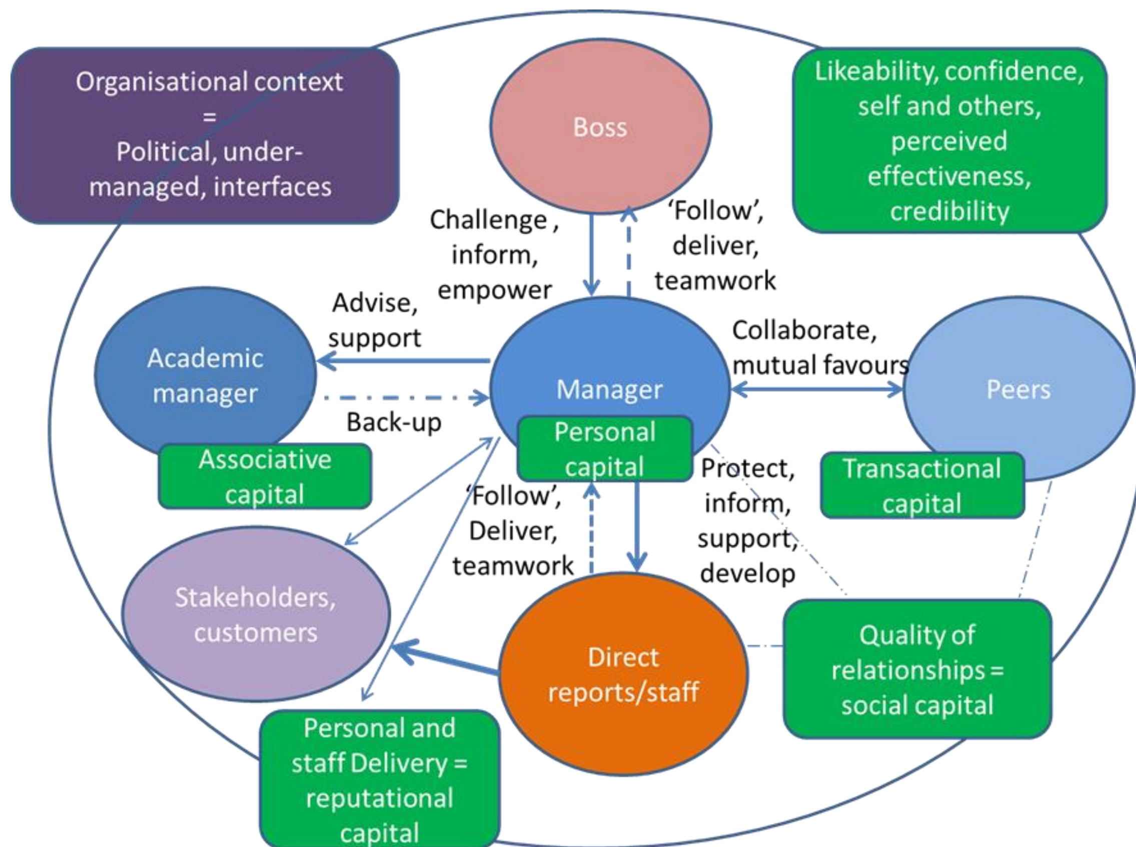
Personal capital equates to the sum of experience, knowledge and expertise that the manager can draw upon some of which, specific language or jargon, is situationally defined.  Associative capital is that available for use by virtue of identification with an influential other, in my study primarily the close academic manager but potentially including one's own boss and other senior managers.  Transactional capital is identified as the balance of reciprocal favours with peers but also in this study as gifts

to staff in the anticipation of this being recognised favourably thereby generating positive regard for the manager by the staff and potential for being influenced.

Reputational capability can arise by virtue of personally being seen to deliver on promises, deliver work of organisational/strategic importance in a timely manner and being seen as an effective manager/leader by virtue of the delivery of your direct reports/staff. The quality and range of positive social relationships generates social capital and potentially valuable information through networking and mentoring/being mentored. The global outcome of capital acquisition in these areas is a perception by others of leadership and managerial effectiveness leading to credibility and confidence which potentially opens the doors to work on important projects, invitations to important meetings and promotion as well as the ability to lead and influence a range of people. Leader energy therefore needs continuously to be devoted to positive impression management (Bolino et al, 2008) to develop the resources (Giddens, 1984) or capitals (Bourdieu, 1977) to be able to undertake leadership.

I have omitted positional power as capital from this model owing to its particular illiquid/structural nature giving it a contextual or field quality as well as the potentially negative consequences of over-using managerial authority as an element of leadership as a process of intentional influence. However, hierarchical position offers the potential for the development social capital by, in some cases, facilitating access to decision-making groups and processes that provide a forum for the development and application of influence and therefore leadership. How well such opportunities are realised depends partly upon the managers’ orientation to participate and social and political skills (Ferris et al, 2007).

**Figure 17**: Sources of capital supporting managerial leadership



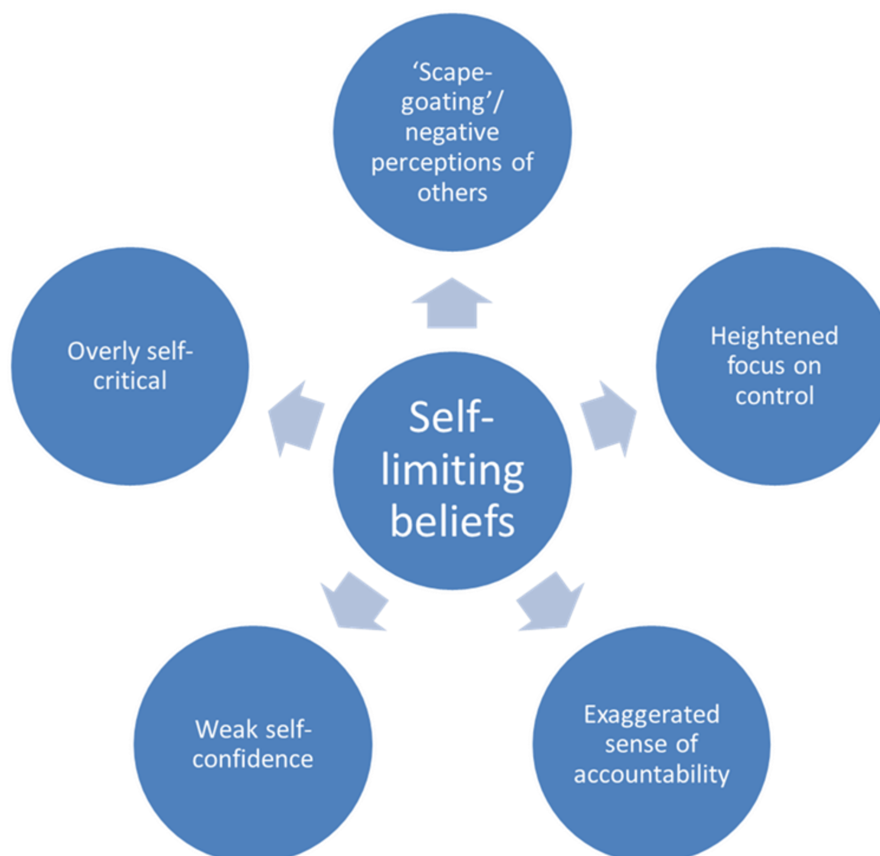

In figure 17 the manager is placed at the centre of a network of social interactions, some formal and structurally dictated and others emerging through circumstantial and purposive interactions, and Bourdieu's (1990) concept of field is again relevant here as the utility of some of the capitals is field dependent. Advantage and influence arising from membership of, or even centrality in (Ibarra, 1993), one particular network may confer little or no social advantage amongst unrelated networks. Also, cultural knowledge and status recognised in one particular field, for example academia, may hold little sway in another, for example the world of landscape gardening. Localised social capital carefully nurtured with senior managers evaporates if those managers move on to other organisations and the process of relationship building would need to resume with incoming replacements if influence is to be restored. Therefore, another aspect of the liquid nature of, particularly, relational/social capitals is that they can flow away quickly if effort is not put into sustaining them and due account is not taken of the 'doxa' of the context/field in which the capital is bother developed and utilised.

Issues of autonomy are important elements of the understanding of their role with a key dilemma for some managers being the extent to which they interact with and take direction from their superior professional service line manager compared to the relevant, proximal academic manager. This desire for autonomy could be theorised as a psychological pre-disposition, or habitus, arising from childhood/adolescent development experiences (Weiss, 1991), as a meta-theoretical mode of motivation in self-determination theory (Gagne and Deci, 2005) or a heightened sense of the need to achieve (McClelland, 1985) or feel empowered and solely accountable for the outcome of one's efforts (Quinn and Spreitzer,1997), or have a significant locus of control (Judge and Bono, 2001). The key issue identified here is the dilemma facing the manager concerning how to balance the expectations and demands of their close academic manager (with associated academic capital and organisational power) with the need to maintain a viable working relationships with their (usually more distant – Waldman and Yammarino, 1999) direct professional service line manager through keeping them duly informed and being seen to follow the corporate line.

A key issue at the intersection of management, leadership and organisational culture is accountability and how it is perceived, for example as an aspect of psychological ownership (Pierce et al, 2001). At an organisational level accountability offers transparency of action and a route to determine how failure or success may have arisen. For relations between managers and their subordinates accountability offers clarity about what tasks have been delegated or devolved and to whom. In relation to the understanding of leadership, accountability links to empowerment and feelings of responsibility (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). If a manager understands accountability as taking responsibility for the full range of the actions of their staff, then feelings of pressure may increase leading eventually to the need to take greater control, thereby undermining empowerment. If, on the other hand, a manager understands accountability as being the judge and supporter of the actions of their staff and locates responsibility for actions with the staff themselves then feelings of pressure are likely to be reduced. Thus the way accountability is understood can link to the type of interactions undertaken, the nature of the relationship formed and perceptions of leadership style, a version of the constructed notions of 'good leadership and bad micro-management' identified by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003).

Whilst this study has thematically constructed some common manifest and latent understandings of leadership it is important to note that leadership is understood in different ways by different managers and that this has implications for how managers might act on given issues e.g. recruitment, selection, training and development of managers. Their explicit articulation of the understanding of leadership tends to paint leadership favourably and draws on commonly available discourses of leadership in a way similar to Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe's (2005) transformational and engaging leadership model but also includes transactional elements present in the original Bass (1999) transformational leadership model. Very significant individual differences, given interest in the literature in the dark or shadow side of leadership (Kets de Vries and Balazs, 2011), are the implicit self-limiting beliefs indicative of self-defeating behaviours (Baumeister and Scher, 1988) in the accounts of around 25% of this purpose sample of managers. Where managers appeared locked into a negative emotional state regarding another individual, a state of affairs or themselves (frustration, antagonism, anxiety, fear, lack of confidence or doubt about own power) then the enactment of such self-limiting beliefs will undermine their leadership to a greater or lesser degree. Figure 18 depicts the beliefs identified in this study:

**Figure 18**: Self-limiting beliefs of some of the professional service managers



Given the methodology adopted in this study it is not possible to presume that such self-limiting beliefs are in place amongst a quarter of the professional services managerial population as a whole, however it does give reason to question how many professional services managers (and consequently their staff and organisations) might benefit from specific support and development targeted at addressing elements of their 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 2000) and relational understanding (Popper, 2004) that could, if not effectively developed, undermine their personal and leadership effectiveness.

The individual differences that I have labelled self-limiting beliefs in this study could be considered in psychological terms as unhelpful attributions (Eysenk, 1998) or as transactional analysis 'rackets' (Stewart and Joines, 1987). As they appear to be chronic reactions or states not under conscious control, they represent unconscious motivations in Giddens' (1984) scheme. In Bourdieu's practice theory (1990) the self-limiting beliefs could be regarded as a type of personal habitus that predisposes an individual to undertake negative practices, however in focusing on individual dispositions not necessarily related to social conditions a key element of Bourdieu's scheme may be absent. Thus, when considering individual dispositional differences, Gidden's (984) tripartite scheme of discursive and practical consciousness and the unconscious better serves my narrative.

Giddens's (1984) structuration theory offers a different way of considering *leadership as a process of intentional influence* as it obliges us to consider what aspects of leadership as enacted by leaders truly are 'intentional', in comparison to those arising relatively un-reflexively from practical consciousness and aspects of leadership that might be traced back to the unconscious. As my study reveals, some managers appear to hold self-limiting beliefs and whilst the source of such beliefs requires further investigation it is feasible to suppose that they incorporate unconscious elements. Assuming that the managers in this study wish to be effective then aspects of their thinking that impede such effectiveness can be presumed to be outside their conscious control and derived in some way from their unconscious.

The managers' orientation towards consistency and control could be inferred to link to the unconscious but can also be explicated in relation to the situated practices necessary in order to perform a managerial role, that is practical consciousness. Arguably, once the initial transition to role has been accomplished and presuming no substantial challenges to regular routines, then operation at the level of practical consciousness can be assumed to be generally sufficient to the delivery of relevant

practices. In Bourdieu's (1977) scheme the orientation to regularized practice can be regarded as habitus.

Critically, for the performance of leadership, conscious intent is brought to bear when deliberately building social relationships, when seeking to persuade and convince and when articulating visions, goals and plans all of which necessitate the operation of discursive consciousness. It is here that the notion of leadership as an intentional process of influence has its root, accepting also as Giddens (1984) emphasizes, "the importance of the unintended consequences of intentional conduct (p.12). An aspect of intentional leadership in context is Bourdieu's (1990) 'feel for the game' which at the level of practical consciousness implies an awareness of the game in a particular field and acceptance of the requirement to play, but at the level of discursive consciousness suggests the ability to articulate the rules of the game and perhaps consciously bend or break them. The point here is that intentional leadership supposes a level of leader consciousness concerning people and the context in which they work such that attempts can be made to influence them (direct reports, peers, more senior managers and others) in some way or another. In Giddens's (1984) scheme it is not the intention per se which confers agency but the ability to choose to do or not to do something, thus it is in the choice to influence, or not, that the agentive status of the manager as leader is realized.

When considering *leadership effectiveness*, Bourdieu's (1990) ideas of the availability, development and application of capitals in a given context or field are especially valuable as they illuminate the foundation upon which the leadership process is enacted, not in terms of the attributes, traits, or merely the competencies of the leader, but in respect of the capitals they have successfully nurtured or to some extent have been endowed. A positively regarded leadership style can thus be recognized not as a quality of the leader per se, but as an asset for influence generated by the positive perceptions that have been cultivated in others by virtue of actions and interactions of the leader with, to and for them.

The net effect of the application of the structuration and practice theories of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977, 1990) is to reintegrate the various elements that are both necessary and sufficient for the process of leadership as intentional influence by managers to occur - the leader as agent, those influenced - whatever their role, position in the organizational hierarchy (offering a structurally founded authoritative resource, legitimate power or capital) and the dynamic socio-physical context that constitutes the site within which leadership occurs.

### 7.2 Contributions to knowledge

The most distinct contribution to knowledge arising from this study is an explication of the understanding of leadership by non-academic managers in a research-intensive university setting that challenges understandings of leadership and management as being substantially different spheres of activity. Consideration of the leadership perspective of professional service managers is largely absent from the literature, although a notable amount of work has been devoted to academic managers. This study begins to redress the balance, however the knowledge contribution is of a particular type as it relates to perceptions, beliefs and understandings of, for example, effectiveness rather than demonstrating how leadership is actually performed.

Four theoretical contributions are offered: firstly, arising from my broad ranging literature review, I offer a perspective and summary model (figure 3) that shows that for leadership as a process of intentional influence to be properly considered many of the diverse streams of leadership research need to be recognised as complementary perspectives on *aspects* of leadership not as incommensurable theories or models. Adopting this position opens up a way to reconcile some of the essentially contested (Grint, 2005) definitions of leadership.

Secondly, I offer a model of sources of capital, rather than power, (figure 17) to support effective (managerial) leadership. This is a significant re-framing of the usual discourse which moves the discussion of what resources are available to leaders to support effective action and the development of influence away from unhelpful notions of domination (power over) towards the idea of leadership capitals as different kinds of potentially 'neutral' resources that can be developed and utilised in given contexts. Thus the acquisition and application of such resources/capitals can be viewed as positive or negative according to critical/political standpoint.

Thirdly, I make a contribution through the identification of a number of 'self-limiting beliefs' (figure 18) that potentially undermine effectiveness. The idea that leaders and leadership can become derailed (Einarsen et al, 2007) or narcissistic (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006) is not new but consideration is usually in relation to negative behaviours or aspects of personality. In this study I have linked potentially unhelpful or self-limiting beliefs to unconscious mental schema thereby opening up the possibility that they may be addressed through appropriate interventions such as counselling.

Finally, I offer a conceptualisation of intentional leadership that encompasses Giddens's (1984) tri-partite notion of discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and unconscious motives/cognition. We can regard discursive consciousness in operation when leaders intentionally seek to persuade and influence others, practical consciousness being the acculturated state in which managers generally know how to get things done and 'play the game' in a particular context and the unconscious as being the realm of self-limiting beliefs that, to a greater or lesser degree, can hamper and undermine the other two. This is an important model from a leadership development point of view as it offers a rationale for varying the provision of leadership development for new managers, experienced/confident managers and managers experiencing difficulty (owing to self-limiting beliefs).

A methodological contribution is made in profiling a multi-technique approach to a less 'fuzzy' thematic analysis that triangulates on both manifest and latent themes. I propose that such a multi-technique approach offers potentially more analytical rigour in qualitative studies than the application of just one technique as, within the inevitable limits of researcher perspective and understanding, it provides a process to check and re-check interpretations.

Finally, a contribution to professional HRD practice is offered as the findings provide a logic or rationale for orienting the formally provided development and training interventions for experienced and self-confident/aware professional service managers away from taught knowledge or competency based ones towards problem-focused, participant-led and time-light ones, such as networking, mentoring, coaching and action-learning. Newly appointed managers, especially from other sectors, would be exposed to induction and development processes that best acquaint them with the structure and culture of the organisation and how best to get things done in a HEI context. Managers identified as holding self-limiting beliefs, through diagnostic processes such as assessment and development centres and 360 feedback could be supported and challenged through dialogic development techniques such as coaching and mentoring and possibly counselling.

### 7.3 Limitations of the study

All studies are limited by theoretical position adopted, methodology employed and practical constraints of available resources and time. In the case of this study limitations that are apparent to me are:

This study has focused on the *understanding* of leadership by professional service managers not its practice. Researching the *understanding of leadership* has merit from certain epistemological stances and my position here is that as knowledgeable agents (though not wholly rational in our deliberations) how we perceive and understand the world influences how we interact with it. The narrative presented here is a double hermeneutic one (Giddens, 1984) in which I present my understanding of the understandings of the managers. Arguably different methodologies could reduce the researcher's voice and enhance those of the managers.

In several cases I have extrapolated ideas from both the literature reviews and the empirical study when making comments about leadership in higher education that would need to be examined in further research, for example in respect of the list of academic and professional service manager habitus in figure 16.

The literature review presented in this study is more diverse than might usually be expected, in relation to identifying a gap in the literature susceptible to empirical investigation for a doctorate, but was conducted to reveal and assess the range of understandings of leadership apparent in the academic literature. Arguably this strengthened the research process by providing a framework (figure 3) for understanding elements of the empirical data but at a cost of time and a less precise focus than might have occurred had a specific leadership theory, for example transformational leadership, been embraced for the literature review and for the rest of the study.

Attempting to weave together elements of the two structuration theories (Giddens and Bourdieu) drawing on different sociological traditions leaves my study open to challenge from adherents of both, however I would argue that the idea of leadership as an intentional process of influence emerging from my literature review requires both knowledgeable agents (Giddens, 1984) and the influencing practices identified in my empirical study as building capital (Bourdieu, 1990).

The sample size of twenty managers would be regarded as a limitation by scholars adopting some epistemological positions, however I have provided arguments from the research literature that around 20 interviews is sufficient for a qualitative study of this type and I have made frequent efforts to contextualise the sample (twenty middle-to-senior professional service managers in two research-intensive universities in the UK in 2012) so that there is alignment between the research question, research process and analysis and narrative of the results and findings.

Given the nature of the research question and the commonality of themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews of the managers in both sites, I have chosen to rely on the data constructed from the interviews couched against contextual issues concerning higher education in general emerging from the literature review, and this limits the conclusions that might be drawn concerning any specific local differences between the two HEIs in this study. The initial sampling strategy of seeking to enlist matched samples of managers in two comparable research intensive HEIs offers the opportunity, subject to much more extensive collection and analysis of organisational data, of adopting a qualitative case study methodology for a future study.

In this study I have chosen to focus on generalised manager understandings of leadership rather than differentiate them by gender which therefore restricts the conclusions that might be drawn. There is scope for further work in this area by extending the study to include a larger sample of female (and male) managers and to include additional trigger questions that will better highlight gender related leadership issues.

My arguments regarding the importance of context, epistemological position and methodology means that the findings are of most relevance to UK based research-intensive HEIs and I would argue that the contribution to knowledge is justified owing to the rigorous way in which the data analysis was carried out and the very limited literature currently published in this area. The knowledge is capable of being extended through both qualitative and quantitative research, for example to further investigate self-limiting beliefs, how they might undermine effectiveness and also identify how many managers may be operating under them so that the impact of self-limiting beliefs on HEIs might better be assessed.

A variety of interesting metaphors were used by the managers when responding to my questions that indicated aspects of their understanding, for example of organisational culture, and this study could potentially have been enriched by reporting their analysis. I did, in fact, undertake a fairly rigorous metaphor analysis but chose not to present it here owing to limitations of time to complete it satisfactorily and space to present it convincingly.

Some of the interview questions generated interesting data around the managers' perceptions of important developmental influences on their understanding of leadership and their managerial careers not all of which has there been space to present here.

The interpretive approach I have adopted in the analysis has been un-critical in the sense that I have chosen not to create a narrative of the professional service managers' perceptions of power, or the lack of, and implications arising from this, for example in respect of the institutional balance of power between academic and professional service staff.

As I currently work as a member of the professional services there is a danger that this approach may be interpreted as me not being sufficiently critical about my colleagues and their role and contribution within a HEI, however in this thesis I have made efforts to present the managers' different perspectives in a balanced way and not to be partisan and reinforce the perception of them (academics) and us (professional services staff) sometimes reported in the literature (Dobson, 2000).

Using more than one form of analytical technique (key word, story, thematic response to interview questions) could be seen to be redundant. Whilst there is some duplication of information as a result, I believe that this triangulation approach demonstrates rigour and fills in gaps in information that could arise from using just one approach. Also, by undertaking a multi-technique thematic analysis I aim to reduce allegations of 'fuzziness' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

### 7.4 Areas for further research

As this study focuses on the understanding of leadership by professional service managers the most obvious extension would be to investigate the actual leadership practices employed by the managers. My inference in the study is that managers would to some degree act in a way similar to that indicated in their accounts, however this needs to be tested. An ethnographic observational study supplemented by interview and performance data would help to confirm the actual practices employed by the professional service managers and the degree to which they accord with the understandings reported in this study.

Another worthwhile project would be to conduct 360 degree interviews with the manager, their team members, their boss, peers and perhaps other staff to generate a rounded comparison of the presumed and observed leadership practices of the professional service managers. This design was considered at an earlier stage in the process but rejected owing to the time and resources required to deliver it.

If an existing 360 feedback survey process was in place, an alternative would be to negotiate confidential access to the results and use those as the basis for the investigation (accepting the epistemological implications of drawing upon this kind of data) to be supplemented by targeted, perhaps longitudinal, interviews with the manager and relevant others.

A very interesting extension to this study would be to select a matched sample of academic and professional service managers and investigate their respective experiences of working alongside each other within different HEIs. It would be valuable to seek to identify if there has been further cultural and practice convergence (Bargh et al, 2000) amongst pre and post-1992 universities and how academic and professional service managers view that convergence.

Given the continuing importance of gender issues in society as whole and in higher education, for example in relation to gender pay gaps and relative occupation of senior roles, there would be value in extending this study by significantly increasing the sample size of both male and female managers and investigating differences in the understanding of leadership that may emerge from the larger data set.

Missing from my study is any real consideration of the impact of the role and staff diversification identified by Whitchurch (2008) and Whitchurch and Gordon (2011) on leadership by professional service managers. A large purposive sample across the full range of professional service functions would be desirable to better investigate the extent to which this reported diversification is leading towards the formation of a 3rd space professional identity and the possible impact, for example on leadership understanding/activity, this is having on more mainstream professional service roles.

In terms of leadership development approaches, there is scope for further action research to assess the pedagogical benefits of structuring leadership development along the lines of the Giddens (1984) influenced tri-partite model of discursive and practical consciousness and the unconscious (self-limiting beliefs) suggested here.

Finally, although issues of social and human capital have been much discussed in the literature, and there is a considerable body of social psychological research concerning self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-defeating behaviours, there is scope for building on the initial models of capital and self-limiting beliefs that I have presented here in respect of leadership within higher education, and perhaps beyond.

**Reflexive review**

I will resist the temptation to offer a long and cathartic account of my learning journey connected to the 12 years of part-time work that has been undertaken leading up to the production of this thesis; suffice it to say that it has at times been a tortuous and frustrating process. Based on my experience as a *very* mature doctoral student I would advise considerable caution for anyone thinking of undertaking part-time doctoral study who is anything other than single and without other substantial commitments. So many things can happen to the student, their dependents and work and personal circumstances that what will always be a difficult process can become impossible, or almost so.

There are so many difficulties I have encountered during the process that have affected the conduct of the study that it is difficult to know where to begin, however a good point is when the academic vetting my application, who I thought at the time was being extremely difficult, told me I was far too old to do a PhD and that it wouldn't contribute to my career at my age. I wonder now if he was actually trying to do me a favour. A second seminal moment was when I applied for funding from a leading higher education research organisation, thinking I could align work for the grant provider with the PhD, and actually won it. This resulted in a significant diversion away from the trajectory of the PhD, a tremendous amount of effort over several years and, sadly, almost no result. Finally, having at last surmounted the transfer barriers and devoting major amounts of time and energy to producing and submitting a thesis, it was beyond upsetting to have it roundly rejected first time round. More sensible people might have called a halt at that point – clearly I'm not sensible. I am also tremendously selfish as getting to this stage has had major costs including not spending time with my wife, family and friends and not completing more commonplace activities such as the many DIY jobs now outstanding for four or more years. On the positive side, I now do have sufficient books with which I could build a house extension.

Besides the difficulties outlined, the most significant challenge for me as a practitioner has been adopting an academic mind-set and way of working. Over the years I became used to writing short reports aimed at agreeing a decision or adapting, and occasionally writing, training materials for use in courses. I have struggled mightily in trying to produce a fluent and concise academic narrative that pays due credit to the vast volumes of research that have gone before. I stand in awe of the writing talent of colleagues who started at the same time as me and who

are now senior lecturers and readers.  I also note that I am the only one of the part-timers, even full time academics, who started in my cohort and didn't drop out at a much earlier stage – perhaps more evidence of my lack of good sense.

Whatever the weaknesses in my writing and flaws in my logic and methodology, I have made an earnest attempt to deliver a thesis that has some merit and meets doctoral requirements. I believe that I am now much more self-critical than I was and that work on the doctorate has improved the quality of my professional practice. I have found many aspects of the process fascinating and, although it has been a struggle, enjoyed trying to engage in the broad range of leadership, social psychological and philosophical literature.

Having undertaken two time-consuming research projects during the last ten years I now have a much better understanding of what both quantitative and qualitative research entails and can see benefits of both depending upon the research question and intended outcomes.  Of most interest to me philosophically over the last few years has been phenomenology as a way of thinking rather than a philosophical school, as it has highlighted the pre-understanding and prejudices that we all carry with us whatever process of scholarship we undertake.

Having completed this learning journey, I now have a much better understanding of some of the challenges that academic colleagues face and why they value the research time allowed in the workload allocation models that, unfortunately, I as professional services member of staff don't get. No longer fully in the professional services camp, and not yet accepted as an academic, I exist in some hybrid hinterland awaiting the judgement of the examiners. I also realise how unbelievably lucky I've been to have support at work, from my family and friends and especially from my wife who has had to tolerate disorder in the house and me spending many, many leave days, weekends and evenings on the doctorate for several years.  All of them, including my long-suffering academic supervisory team, will be hoping that I have now, more or less, finished.

M.R.Harper. March 2015

## **Appendix 1:** Email to potential interviewees sent on my behalf in University B

Dear

Colleague, Malcolm Harper, who works for the University of Manchester is conducting research into the leadership of Professional Service HE managers as part of his PhD. He's interviewing a number of Professional Service managers at XXXX and would like to do the same here at XXXX. A particular interest within the research is to consider if the impact of the organisational context affects leadership style. An outline of his research proposals are provided below.

He advised me of the names and roles of people in XXXX who've agreed to take part so I am contacting you to see if you would be interested in being involved in the project.

The roles of the participants from XXXX include:

- A senior professional service manager (University senior management team)
- Two directors of professional functions
- Two heads of professional service areas
- Two heads of Faculty administration
- Three heads of School administration

I have focused on your role as you are in a similar position to those in the XXXX group. I have also tried to reflect a range of people in the group including those that have worked outside the sector as well as other HEI's as I thought this would add to the richness of the research.

Malcolm would appreciate an hour of your time to conduct a semi structured interview and a follow up process to check back with you his interpretation of your contribution. I was interviewed several weeks ago and found the discussion useful as it allowed me to reflect on how my work contributes to the leadership and organisational development within the University as well as how the culture and environment of the University has affected my leadership style.

If you would like to take part in this research then it would be easier to contact Malcolm direct, his details are Malcolm.harper@manchester.ac.uk, Office telephone number: 0161 275 2525. Malcolm will e mail you again in a few weeks time to offer you the opportunity to discuss any questions you may have regarding the research and confirm or otherwise if you or your nominee want to be involved.

I know you are really busy but there is so little research into leadership specifically in HEIs and particularly in relation to Professional Services leadership roles. Thank you for considering the opportunity and there is no obligation to take part. Please feel free to nominate someone else if you feel they are more appropriate.

**Appendix 2**: Schedule of interview questions linked to the research question

1. Can you please tell me about the management/leadership roles you've had to date?

2. How long have you worked within the higher education sector and how long in this role?

3. What do you see as the most important leadership/management challenges within your current role?

4. Do you think there are any particular issues or challenges that arise as a consequence of work within a higher education institution?

5. Have you modified the way you work in order to operate effectively in a HEI? If so, in which ways?

6. Are there particular challenges that administrative/pss managers face when undertaking their work within a higher education institution?

7. Are there particular people you feel it necessary or helpful to work closely with in order to be effective in your role?

8. Perhaps, touching on what we've discussed already are there any factors that you keep at the forefront of your thinking when leading/managing the development of your service within XXXX University i.e. looking outwards from your team/service?

9. Are there any issues/factors that you feel important to keep in mind when leading/managing your team of direct reports and delivering your service i.e. looking inwards towards the team/service?

10. How would you define 'effectiveness' in your current role? Do you feel that this definition would be shared by other significant people/stakeholders within the organisation?

11. Similarly, how do you (and they) judge the effectiveness of the services you and your team deliver? Are there any issues associated with this?

12. How do you think your team members/direct reports would judge the effectiveness of your role? Do your team members/direct reports share your view as to how service effectiveness should be judged?

13. In terms of your own leadership/management development to date, what do you see as being the key activities or development opportunities you have undertaken?

14. Do you currently have a plan to develop your own leadership/management? What does this entail?

15. Have you a view as to the most significant things that can be done to develop leadership/management within an HEI?

16. On a general note, do you see leadership and management as being different? If, so in which ways?

17. Are there any points relating to leadership and management by administrative/pss managers including you in your role, or the development of leadership and management, that you'd like to highlight/emphasise?

**Appendix 3: Extract of the test analysis of the pilot interview, December 2011**

| Story | Purpose | Influencing Strategy | Influencing Tactic/technique |
|---|---|---|---|
| Create desirable/prestigious services (p13) | Demonstrate OD initiatives that have 'made a difference' | Build prestige through restricting access/competition | Identify allies who have been granted prestige through association |
| Stakeholder group linked to HR manager – critical friends | Demonstrate success of partnership approach with XX manager | Build influence through key allies/critical friends | |
| Assumptions about approaching senior managers (p14) | Challenge status quo part of OD process | Provide a forum for people to deliver their ideas | Ask people to be involved; sell benefits of co-operating |
| Use different ways of influencing upwards | Demonstrate thinking on how to influence upwards | Develop a process of upward influence through key individuals; groups | Work to influence upwards through critical friends; boss and more senior managers; committees |
| De-personalise the source of influence | Shows a way to draw on formal authority to influence rather than tie to particular individual/level in hierarchy | Create influence through reference to an organisational agenda | Call on authority of endorsed texts/discourses |

## **Appendix 4**: Briefing note for interviewees

### Understanding leadership by 'administrative'/professional service managers in UK HEIs

Purpose of the project

To illuminate how professional service managers in two UK Russell group universities make sense of and undertake leadership, which then may usefully inform future leadership development initiatives.

Aims of the research

There are two key aims for this research:

1. To understand how 'administrative'/professional service managers in higher education institutions experience and make sense of leadership
2. To investigate how the experience and 'effectiveness' of leadership by higher education managers could be improved in/through university leadership development programmes

Background

There is an extensive body of research and literature on the subject of leadership. Some work has been done on the challenges of academic leadership but there has been little work, to date, focusing on the leadership undertaken by **professional service managers**. This project will contribute knowledge of potential value to professional service managers/leaders and development and training professionals operating within UK Higher Education. By selecting matched groups of senior managers from two Russell group universities it is anticipated that organisational contextual factors of importance will be highlighted. The idea sharing workshop in summer 2012 will be an opportunity for participating University managers to consider/benchmark priority issues relating to leadership and propose leadership development actions that should address them.

Methodology

A qualitative approach will be adopted involving the following elements:

- A semi-structured interview of about **1 hour** with respondents in the target Universities
- An opportunity for respondents to comment upon, and expand information within, the interview transcriptions (*estimated time about 45 minutes)*
- Subject to agreement, periodic recording and email communication about 'critical incidents' that may take place which highlight relevant leadership/management issues (estimated time *15 minutes per critical incident email*)

- The opportunity to take part in a developmental idea sharing workshop in summer 2012 involving the respondents in the two universities, the outcomes of which will be integrated into the research report

Benefits/outcomes

*For Respondents* – Participation in this project will be an opportunity to reflect on and develop your own practice as a leader/manager

*For the Institutions* – primarily through the idea sharing workshop, there will be an opportunity for participating managers to 'benchmark' leadership and management practice in two leading Russell group universities and propose actions for future leadership development

*For the Higher Education Community* – This project will highlight important leadership and management issues and potentially inform leadership practice and future leadership/management development programmes

The Researcher

The research is being conducted by Malcolm Harper, currently working as a Staff Development professional at the University of Manchester. This empirical research is a key component of Malcolm's PhD and follows on from earlier research (part funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education) that gathered data on the experiences and insights of managers who had joined higher education from other sectors.

Malcolm has worked at the University of Manchester since 2003 following a period of 3 years working as an independent consultant primarily with public sector clients. Between 1988 and 2000 Malcolm worked as Training and Development Manager in a North West Local Authority, following earlier work developing, bidding for and delivering business and training projects supported by the European Union.

Contact details

Malcolm Harper

Staff Development and Training Unit

Floor 2 Humanities Bridgford Street

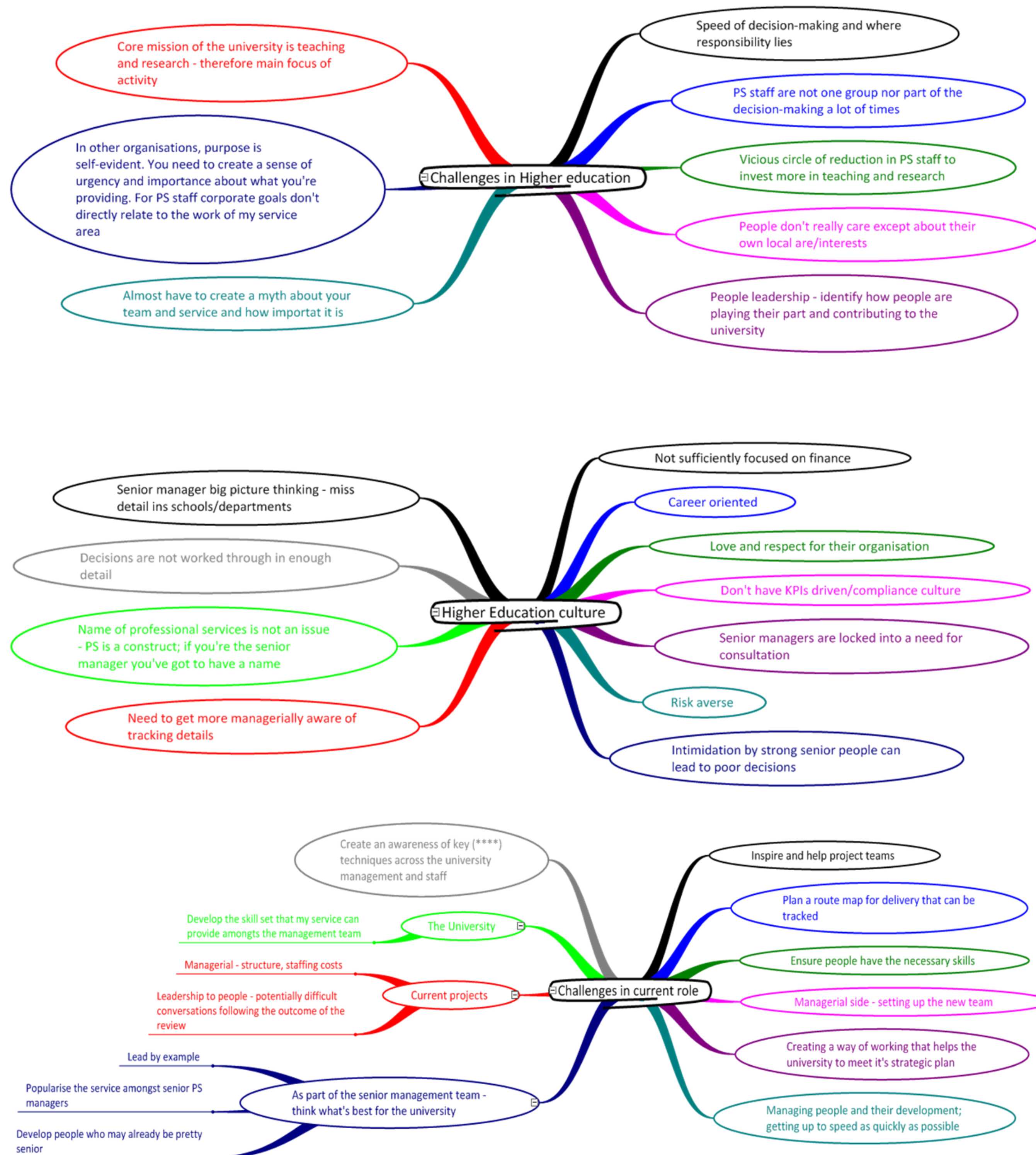
University of Manchester

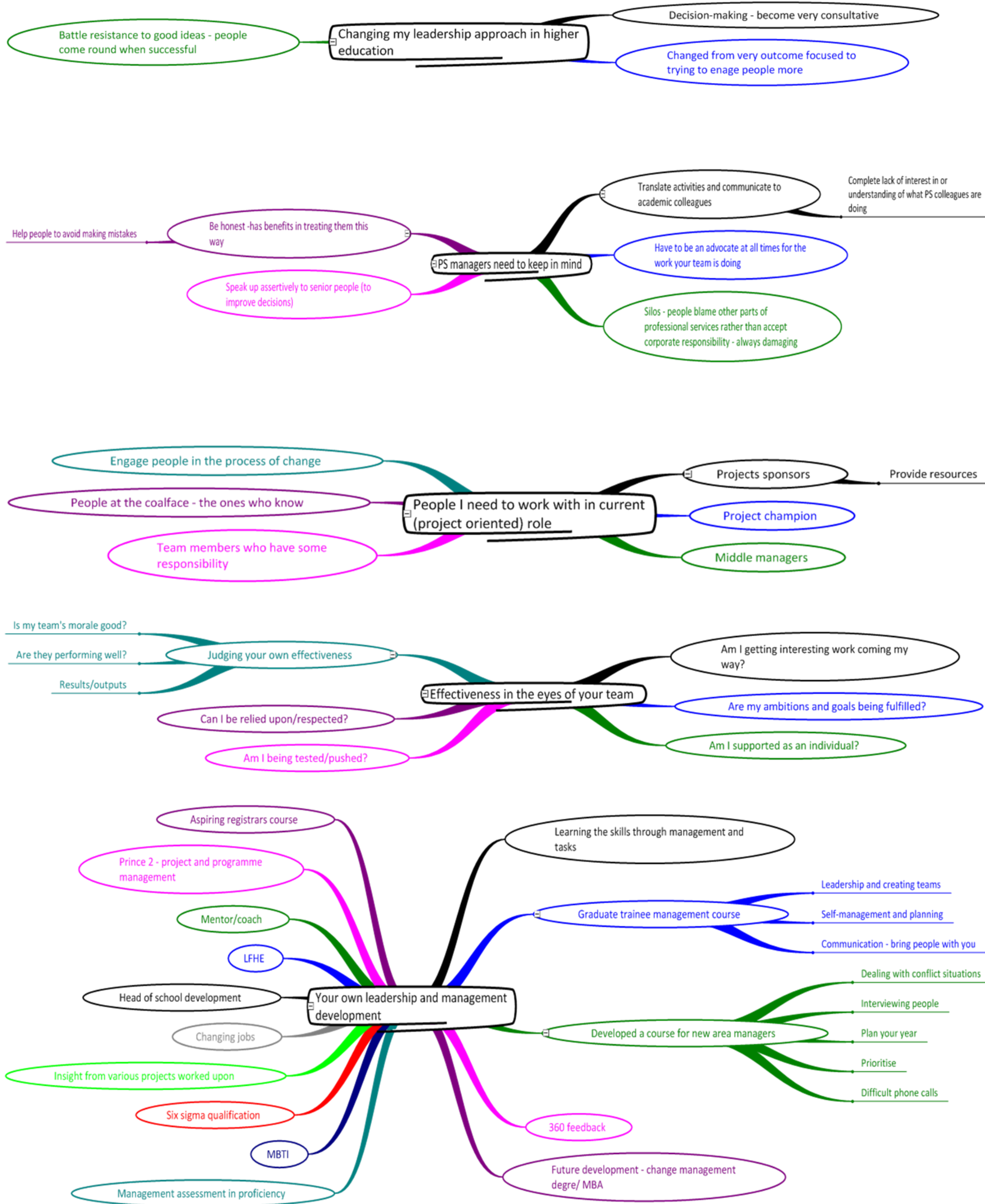
M 13 9PL

Daytime phone – 0161 275 0502

Email: Malcolm.harper@manchester.ac.uk

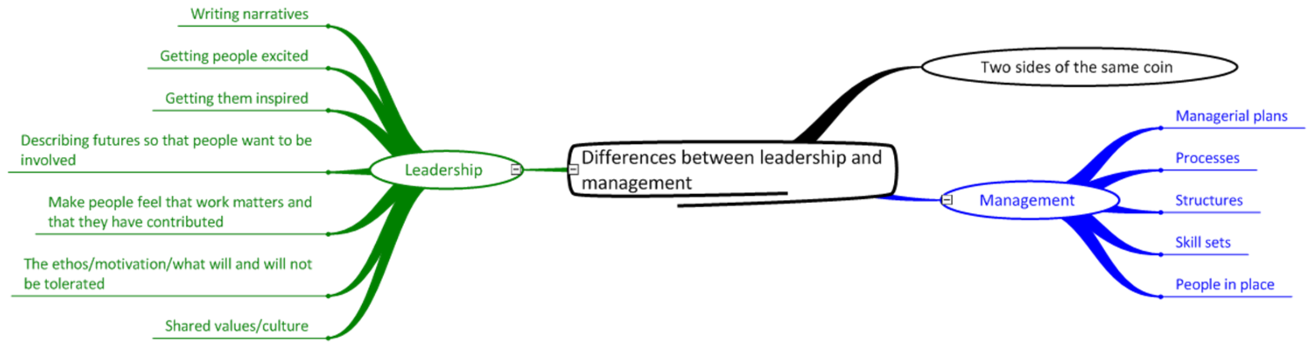
**Appendix 5**: Example concept-map – interview responses summary – person D





Changing my leadership approach in higher education
Battle resistance to good ideas - people come round when successful
Decision-making - become very consultative
Changed from very outcome focused to trying to enage people more
PS managers need to keep in mind
Help people to avoid making mistakes
Be honest -has benefits in treating them this way
Speak up assertively to senior people (to improve decisions)
Translate activities and communicate to academic colleagues
Complete lack of interest in or understanding of what PS colleagues are doing
Have to be an advocate at all times for the work your team is doing
Silos - people blame other parts of professional services rather than accept corporate responsibility - always damaging
People I need to work with in current (project oriented) role
Engage people in the process of change
People at the coalface - the ones who know
Team members who have some responsibility
Projects sponsors
Provide resources
Project champion
Middle managers
Effectiveness in the eyes of your team
Is my team's morale good?
Are they performing well?
Results/outputs
Judging your own effectiveness
Can I be relied upon/respected?
Am I being tested/pushed?
Am I getting interesting work coming my way?
Are my ambitions and goals being fulfilled?
Am I supported as an individual?
Your own leadership and management development
Aspiring registrars course
Prince 2 - project and programme management
Mentor/coach
LFHE
Head of school development
Changing jobs
Insight from various projects worked upon
Six sigma qualification
MBTI
Management assessment in proficiency
Learning the skills through management and tasks
Graduate trainee management course
Leadership and creating teams
Self-management and planning
Communication - bring people with you
Developed a course for new area managers
Dealing with conflict situations
Interviewing people
Plan your year
Prioritise
Difficult phone calls
360 feedback
Future development - change management degre/ MBA

Developing leadership in higher education
Psychometrics
Reasoning
Scenarios
Robust assessment and appraisal
Project and performance management
Closer working between academic leaders and people in central professional services
More movement (different jobs in the university)


Differences between leadership and management
Leadership
Writing narratives
Getting people excited
Getting them inspired
Describing futures so that people want to be involved
Make people feel that work matters and that they have contributed
The ethos/motivation/what will and will not be tolerated
Shared values/culture
Two sides of the same coin
Management
Managerial plans
Processes
Structures
Skill sets
People in place

General observations about leadership
Everyone has fair access to resources
Be honest about what you are aiming to achieve
Keep the prime purpose of the organisation in mind
Think corporately not just about own area
Work for common goals

**Appendix 6**: Key word analysis table

| People | Word | Mentions | Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M,N, O, P, Q, R, S, T | Academics | 100 | 5 |
| **J**, S, O, | Accountab(le)ility | 36 | 12 |
| F, O, R, **S** | Autonomy | 15 | 4 |
| B, G, F,I, L, R, T | Bureaucracy | 10 | 1 |
| M, O, P, D | Bigger picture | 12 | 3 |
| **Direct question** | Challenge(s) | 263+135 | |
| D, E, M, O | Champion(s) | 10 | 3 |
| D, E, F, G, I, J, M T | Coach(ing) | 41 | 5 |
| C,I, Q **R** | Collaborate (ive) (ing (ion) | 13 | 3 |
| E,F | Collegial(lity) | 4 | 2 |
| B, D, F, G, R | Complex/complexity | 32 | 6 |
| F, K, M, O, R | Command and control | 7 | 2 |
| A, B, C, D, G, J, K, M, **N**, P, T | Confidence | 42 | 4 |
| C, K, O, Q, S, T | Consistent | 8 | 1 |
| **B**, D, F, G, H, K, M, O, P, R, | Control(led) | 29 | 3 |
| D, F, G, J, L, **M**, N, O, Q, R,S,T | Conversation(s) | 94 | 8 |
| B, D, G, I, J, L, M, Q, R, S, T | Corporate | 22 | 2 |
| A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, R, S | Culture | 82 | 5 |
| C, G, I, **S** | Credibility | 10 | 2 |
| C, D, F, G,I, K, L, M, N, **O**, **Q**, R, S, T | Customer | 85 | 6 |
| B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J, K, M, **N**, O, P, Q, R, S, T | Deliver | 160 | 9 |
| E, C, K, R | Devolve(d) | 9 | 2 |
| F, M,O, Q | Empower(ment)(ing) | 13 | 3 |
| D, **M**, O, P, Q | Engagement | 28 | 6 |
| B, C, F, N, O, R, S, T | Hierarch(y)ichal | 17 | 2 |
| F, **M**, S | Language | 18 | 6 |
| C, D, E, I, L, P | Layer | 10 | 2 |
| B, L, Q, | Mandate/Mandatory | 13 | 4 |
| C, D, E, F, G, I, K, M, P, S | Mentor | 39 | 4 |
| B, F, G, J, K, **M**, P, S, T | Network (ing) | 43 | 5 |
| C, **G**, I, J, M, T | Partner(ship) | 20 | 3 |
| A, C, F, N, R, **S**, | Politics (cal) | 21 | 4 |
| A, B, D, F, G, **I**, M, R | Principle | 16 | 2 |
| D, **G**, J, L, M, **Q** | Project management | 22 | 4 |
| **H**, K, **P**, **S** | Protect(ing) | 12 | 3 |
| | | | |

| People | Word | Mentions | Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **B**, C,D, E, F, G, I,J, K, L, M, N, O,Q, R, **S**, T | Relationship | 103 | 6 |
| N, P | Risk averse | 3 | 1 |
| D, J, K, N, O, P | Silo | 14 | 2 |
| C, D, E, F, J, K, M, N,O, P, Q, T | Strategy | 48 | 4 |
| C, D, L, M, N, O, Q | Translate (translation) | 15 | 2 |
| D, G, **N**, P, R, **S**, | Trust(ing) | 18 | 3 |
| D, **E**, H, J, K, M, N, **O**, P, Q | Vision | 50 | 5 |

Letters that have been highlighted (**bold**) indicate that this word had particular significance for that individual.

**Appendix 7**: Table of themes identified in the stories of the interviewees

| Person | Key points interpreted from the stories |
|---|---|
| A | • HE culture and sub-cultures – lack of consistency; them and us; sub-cultures; cottage industry that owes me a living<br>• Academic staff – unrealistic expectations; impetuous behaviour; bullying |
| B | • Research-intensive university culture – bureaucratic/complex<br>• Organisational structure – the matrix structure created occasions when loyalties were divided or seen to be divided<br>• Nature of her role and interactions in relation to the senior academic manager with whom she most closely works<br>• Self-identity and the nature of interpersonal relationships |
| C | • Academics – bonkers to do a PS role; superior status to PS staff<br>• Leadership development – early job challenges<br>• HE culture – managerial challenges the same as other sectors; two classes similar to other organisations; difficult to solve problems; frustration for some entering from other sectors |
| D | • Self-identity/motivation – aspire to larger role/bigger challenges; tested/pushed, goals fulfilled; respected; team morale good; delivering results<br>• Leadership –creating a narrative regarding contribution and that this is noticed; can be negated by staff suspicion; symbolise interest by ensuring most senior people are involved |
| E | • Structure – centre versus faculty/schools – suspicion concerning the central agenda; close working relationship achieved in schools working alongside academic colleagues on a day to day basis<br>• Role – key link with senior academic manager; accessibility and advice |
| F | • Relationships – with his line manager, peers and team; preference for his own autonomy yet uncertainty about how much autonomy to afford direct reports<br>• HE culture – culture dissonance on entry; bureaucratic, slow decision-making; too many un-coordinated and short-lived initiatives; over-reliance of PS staff on bureaucracy<br>• Leadership bids– subversive; planned and serendipitous; main challenge is to work with people |
| G | • Role – strategic and maintain operations; prepare own team for change to address strategic objectives; partner to senior academic manager; critical friend to own team; expectations of staff concerning you as an individual and the managerial role<br>• Relationships; partner to senior academic head; critical friend to own team; link to other faculty |
| H | • Role and relationships – position in hierarchy<br>• HE culture – locally 'owned' staff/resources and resistance to central service provision; entitlement culture, e.g. sick leave – contrast with private sector |

| | |
|---|---|
| I | • Leadership – three pragmatic and ethical principles; activation energy; guide/coach to achieve solution themselves<br>• HE culture – need to get buy-in, can't dictate<br>• Academics – respond to colleagues who have a PhD |
| J | • Leadership (development) – through job change, job challenges, transformational steps; technical skills in context are important<br>• Role – accountability but delegated downwards; begin from a position of trust<br>• Relationships – PS staff can be too subservient; need self-confidence to achieve a healthy relationship with academic colleagues |
| K | • He culture – some similarities (two cadres staff) to uniform service but not common purpose<br>• New to HE – need support/mentoring to understand the culture |
| L | • Role – trouble shooter, fixer; expertise appreciated |
| M | • Leadership – key strategy of building influence through personal contact and conversations; indications of success are when people proactively contact you for advice/service; development of a network of critical friends who will act as advocates (upwards in the hierarchy) on your behalf; tactic of displacing potential animosity by reference to formally agreed strategy<br>• Role and relationship with own team – managing their expectations through hard conversations to ensure they take responsibility of delivery, and realise the limitations of managerial time to provide support |
| N | • Leadership development and practice – impact of an inspirational role model<br>• Research-intensive HE culture – traditional, hierarchical; different sub-cultures<br>• Role and relationships – expectations of staff to conform to behaviour expected in a particular role; managing multiple directional interfaces<br>• Social identity/credibility – developed through building effective relationships and being seen to deliver; building trust and confidence |
| O | • Decision-making – slow, resistant to accepting evidence for change |
| P | • Academics – lack of understanding of PS work and what is required to provide support to them<br>• Own role – volume of work at different levels; prioritising and delegation<br>• HE culture – tolerance of lower standards/performance |

| | |
|---|---|
| Q | • HE culture – changing becoming more commercially oriented and minded; influx of people from other sectors; must retain research freedom<br>• Role – accountable – buck stops here; take risks and therefore earn the rewards<br>• Leadership skills – holding difficult conversations; evidence based decisions |
| R | • Leadership style – straight-talking, combative; move-on when completely frustrated with people and processes<br>• HE culture – weak decision-making, unnecessary paper writing and consideration; bureaucratic governance in research-intensive universities; hierarchical; resistant to change - dogmatic; unnecessary posts that get in the way<br>• Staff – (some) academics have a difficult balance to achieve; many dedicated PS staff frustrated by the systems they are obliged to use<br>• Role – expectation from staff that senior managers ae decisive; subordinate; have the potential power to remove the frustrations to enhance performance |
| S | • Role – diversity of issues; role transition – difficult to understand HE operation and language when new to the sector therefore induction needed; representational role for the school and her own team e.g. with faculty; protect<br>• HE culture – large beast small animal – potentially reputation damaging gossip; political; politics between school and faculty<br>• Matrix structure – school manager role with divided commitment – work with senior academic and work/liaise with own PS line manager<br>• Relationships – nature of the relationship varies e.g. close and trusted with academic manager, more distant with own PS manager and combination of transactional and personal with own staff; close with planning and development and management accountant<br>• Management structure – building and developing a team of direct reports/team leaders<br>• Identity – value autonomy; credibility –sit on management team and invited to be involved in academic issues not previously granted to PS managers; constant scrutiny from direct reports; academic manager happy if the service is working well<br>• Academics – them and us; PS staff make tea |
| T | • HE culture – civil service/Yes Minister; grow organically and own local resources<br>• Relationships – PS as subservient to academics but him as senior civil servant and the power behind the Minister<br>• Academics – work at not for the University; ambivalence towards academic management roles as there is a cost to research ambitions and a potential choice to make regarding following a different career path |

**Appendix 8**: Table of quotes linked to individuality diagram

| Quadrant | Person | Key word | Indicative text |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | H | Punch-bag | "So, it's a kind of managing the expectations and then link the two sides together and I am a kind of a, you can say, more like a punch bag. You can be punched by the academics but at the same time you are protecting the support staff from being punched and sometimes you might be hit by the support staff occasionally." |
| 1 | F | Conflict | I'd raise an objection to that, but actually I've given up. Because it's clear, that that's a blinkered view about life and what's happened now instead of challenging the views, a number of people within that group contrive around them and they all kind of contrive in that defensiveness and stupidity by having jokes about XXXXXX who are, "Oh yeah, and he can't hardly write his name," and all this other stuff. Which to me, for a senior team is, quite frankly, ludicrous,. But, anyway, that's a different issue. |
| 1 | P | Perfectionist | But trusting other people to do it as well as you would do it and the other thing I find is that I've had to really train myself to accept a standard of work from other people that isn't, necessarily, the standard I would have produced, which is acceptable, their standard is okay, but it's not spot on and it's not how I would have done it and that has been very difficult for me, you know, to delegate something and have it done not as well as I would have done it, but it's been done to a level that is fine, but it's just not brilliant and that I have found very difficult… I am quite picky, I am a bit of a perfectionist, but I also think that the institution accepts a lower standard of work than, I think, it should. |
| 1 | A | Consistency | Umm, when I'm developing new procedures and what have you, I very much bear in mind some of the subject areas and how things are going to be interpreted by them…<br><br>You know, there's; at the moment there's one individual in particular who just doesn't seem to interpret things in the same way everybody else does. I find it difficult working with this individual as well |
| 1 | B | Complexity/ time | We create our own complexity by wanting to be clever, and by wanting to keep things in nice neat boxes. On top of the inherent massive complexity there is already…For me |

| | | | about being effective is being able to not drop the spinning plates; is to, if I'm being really effective, then I'm really delegating everything I need to I'm really giving time for the important stuff; I'm managing the balance between talking time and writing time. Umm I'm managing myself effectively. Umm…. And… I'm managing the balance and there's some development time in there. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | S | Politics | I'm more careful. I have realised as well that the university is a very small animal, although it's a very large beast it's a very small animal. It is run by gossip and reputations can be won and lost on the turn of a card and I've realised that. I've watched it. So I'm quite careful that my opinions - I'm honest but I'm careful about the way I express myself. So yes, especially in faculty meetings. |
| 2 | T | Yes-Minister | The other one that I see, and I don't know whether it's a XXXXX phenomenon or more generally across higher education, is that it still feels, I suppose, the very description is, very civil service like, in terms of the professional services. It's very deferential. Very much the sort of…and again I compare it at this level to sort of, the 'Yes Minister' role. My Executive Pro Vice Chancellor thinks he runs the faculty, but he doesn't really, I do! And it's that kind of relationship |
| 2 | K | Top-team seat | So that's where we are at the moment and our director has, very recently, just left, so at the moment, I'm reporting directly to the chief operating officer, so, again, that presents a good opportunity for me to develop and take on extra responsibilities. |
| 2 | O | Role status | Having said that, I'm not actually on the senior leadership team in the university, and my boss is, and I understand the hierarchies and things like that, but I wonder if, in the future, not for me personally, but if…given the pressure and the change in culture, and the…demand on the income stream for recruitment, whether or not they might want to think about having the XXXXXX on the Senior Management Team, for example, in the university. That's not me aiming for promotion, that's just my observation, yes. |
| 3 | N | Reputation | I suppose gaining that confidence because yes, you deliver, but also that you anticipate those sorts of things, so that you're seen as being quite a proactive member of the team; not kicking and screaming or, you know, sitting there with a long face and complaining |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | all the time, and sucking your teeth about how…you know, and I do have one or two colleagues who behave like that, and over time, you see that they lose people's confidence. And that's just death; death, because very slowly, they will get less and less resource, or less and less, you know. |
| 3 | D | Advocate | So it's finding…it's creative a narrative and a story as to how a) that people are watching and care about what you're doing, but that the university is grateful and, you know, that it is having a positive impact.<br><br>Well, I suppose it's being able to translate the activities of the particular operation and communicating it regularly to their academic colleagues, or certainly to academic leadership. Because I think there's some…there's very often a real, you know…a complete lack of interest or a lack of understanding in what it is that PSS colleagues are doing. And I think you have to be an advocate at all times really for the work that your teams are doing. |
| 3 | M | Conversations | So, the challenge is about getting into the conversation about it, I think, that's the biggest. Yeh OK, the main thing I did when I first got here was I actually made a point of going round and meeting every single head of Department… So, if somebody's saying to you at the end of that conversation, "That was really helpful.", then you know you've got some kind of connection around that. So, that, yeh, so that's probably what I would summarise it really. |
| 3 | E | Selling/ influencing | So, I've got to do a role, I've got a role in influencing them, but, you know, I think, you know, I did a presentation last week, for example, to people from schools, heads of school admin, school academics where, you know, it was me talking directly to them, and, you know, doing a, giving them a positive spin... so, yeah, so, it's both, it's how I work with them directly, but then how I, kind of, choose, or find champions to work with on specific projects. It makes me sound very manipulative [laughing], but, you know, it's just, I think, you've just got to be very savvy |
| 4 | R | Hard-talk/stories | Now it's that sort of stuff that is everywhere in the universities and yet you still go to the meetings and they go and you lot are f**** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | crap. You go, oh God, they are as frustrated with the barriers that are in their way as anybody, but they can't change them and that's why me, as a leader, as a senior manager, a key element of my role is to be subordinate, is to let them come and talk to me about what it is that frustrates them about their job, because I don't understand the detail, I don't deal with it day in and day out and if we can fix half of what makes their life frustrating in this place, the performance will rocket. |
| 4 | I | Principles | There are two kind of...well, three kind of abiding principles, really. One is a slightly flippant one, which is, you know, don't look to upset anybody on your way up, as the saying goes, because sure, they'll be there when you come back down again. But that is true, to a point, actually, with some of the...I feel you come across people, sometimes, who aren't that interested in the staff they're managing at a particular level, because actually their eyes are on looking ahead. And actually for me, it's rather important, actually, to keep those staff and carry them with you, almost. And so just because you might have been elevated to a higher position doesn't mean that you shouldn't now still be associating with, and encouraging and motivating, and so on, the staff you used to work with. |
| 4 | G | Dean-duo | The other side of it really then, because that's almost a more operational side, the other side is working closely with the Dean and the much more strategic element. And, you know, a lot of the things that we deal with are longer-term plans… It's a bit like, you know, filming a film and by the time it comes out, you're on your next film and everyone else is watching that one. It's sort of, we're often working on the next project by the time people are celebrating the one that's just been announced. So you're kind of constantly trying to look forward and not rest on your laurels. |
| 4 | C | Composed | It's interesting, you know, Russell Group comparators or other XXXXX, or particularly Russell Group, you know, I go along and there's 20 people, half of us have worked in HE and the other half have come from investment banking or airlines or whatever |

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| | | | but we're all very similar people, very similar. And that always strikes me as, you know, has that come about because of, is it nature or nurture kind of thing. |
| 4 | L | Trouble-shooter | So our section is a very much come to section. I was saying that to somebody. The information comes in, we do something with it and push it out again to whoever needs to do it or we turn it into something else and push it out. I said to somebody the other day I'm a bit of a trouble-shooter in some ways, so that's the way my role is developing at the moment. |
| 4 | Q | Service management | I suppose the most important thing is are we still delivering what our customer wants? That is the single thing. Because I'm responsible for delivering certain services to the institution. We have an assumption that we understand they are the right services, and we check that by talking to our user base and our customer base to make sure what they're getting is what they want. That's always balanced with what the institution actually needs as an institution as well as what individuals need as individuals<br><br>I suppose ultimately the measure of my success is my ability to be able to manage and lead a team of 120 plus people plus the associated stakeholders and the customers to a point where the services that we deliver are enhancing their ability to do what they need to do |
| 4 | J | Accountability | But I will hold you accountable for delivering what you say you do and if I find that you're not able to do that then don't give me the confidence then I'll behave in a different way. But I'll start from the premise that you know what you're doing, you're a sensible experienced leader and that I'll treat you as such. And that's the way that I operate and nobody's let me down in that process to date and therefore a lot of the detailed interrogation that historically I think people had experienced has gone from the role and that you start creating time to spend in a way that is better. And I think the other thing is that I will hold people accountable for their areas of responsibility. |

**Appendix 9**: A summary of interview responses to the questions around challenges

The table below summarises the responses to the question as well as other salient challenges identified via a key word search of the transcripts:

| Person | Challenge summary |
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| A | • Getting people on board; breaking down barriers of two previous cultures; all one team:<br>• Academic staff rude; difference of culture research-intensive and post-1992 – 'collegiality' attributed to coming from industry:<br>• Expectations of academic staff and trying to chase up administrative tasks; lack of assertiveness to tell people to conform; no clear direction: |
| B | • Managing workload and multiple demands; take workload off senior academic manager; not alienating people<br>• External pressures on HE not dissimilar in some respects to other sectors:<br>• Complexity partly driven externally but also internally created owing to administrative need for consistency:<br>• Need to tolerate outspoken colleagues whose behaviour would be unacceptable elsewhere; cultural tolerance of more extreme behaviour<br>• Size of the organisation, change, complexity of processes and who to ask to resolve an issue<br>• Matrix structure – divided loyalties, pressure for local focus against university pressure for corporate decisions to be applied, a regular issue<br>• Structural/role issue - managing people for whom you do not have direct line responsibility but appear to have accountability:<br>• Lack of enforceability/willingness to enforce/mandate decision and give instruction |
| C | • Devolved structure – tension between university strategy and local strategy<br>• Size of the university:<br>• Dealing with academics but similar to other sectors |
| D | • Not used to managing a service that isn't the core purpose of the business; PSS a necessary evil:<br>• Challenge of leading and managing the team – inspire them and plan a route map |
| E | • Organisation size and devolved structure combined with position in the centre<br>• Academic freedom, people who don't necessarily want to be managed or led – it's just the way it is:<br>• Challenge of working in central admin<br>• Managing own team – keep people motivated and challenged, making sure they deliver, supportive environment |

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| F | • Personal and institutional challenges – getting the service taken seriously; challenge of working with a dynamic group; personal challenge – maintaining enthusiasm and creativity, not different than other jobs; culture different – people have more freedom and discretion:<br>• Developing relationships with different audiences; flex style to meet different agendas, lack of joined up thinking – new initiatives; multiple interests:<br>• Attitude of PSS staff, accept that there are shades of grey; can't rely on legitimate power; chaotic and unwieldy: |
| G | • People management; meetings and influencing; operational and strategic:<br>• Doing things for academic reasons rather than bottom line or merely compliance<br>• Competing interests each seen as a priority<br>• External environment - government makes things complex<br>• Working with academics but more difficult when working at the centre<br>• People not following the rules:<br>• Challenge staff to avoid them becoming cocooned – should rotate roles |
| H | • Processes, procedures, sense of ownership of resources<br>• Culture and tradition of entitlement e.g. to sickness absence and lack of managerial authority to enforce/tackle under-performance:<br>• Getting staff who are in their comfort zone to change |
| I | • Keeping staff motivated, especially given the lack of reward systems and difficulties in developing people through moving them around, plus admin and academic staff interactions<br>• Coaching people who haven't got a PhD to interact successfully with those who have:<br>• Academic freedom – now coming more under managerial control and becoming less fluid<br>• Relationship with industry – subservient:<br>• Transient funding – staff on short term contracts, integrating people from outside the sector to interface with academics:<br>• Transition to roles having greater managerial responsibility |
| J | • Responsibilities/accountability of senior management team in terms of determining and promoting strategy and getting people engaged. Senior management team presentation<br>• Assessing structure of management team when joining and deciding how best to proceed:<br>• Government generated challenges e.g. visas:<br>• Challenge of acclimatising to traditional HE culture – lack of accountability for targets |

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| | • Relationship with academics – not subservient; silo thinking and blame of colleagues<br>• Personal development through job challenges/transformational steps: |
| K | • Devolved structure – faculties focus on own issues rather than broader strategic ones<br>• Not having a seat on the senior management team<br>• People working to their own agendas:<br>• Lack of command and control requires a different approach to gain agreement – selling the benefits, influencing and negotiating<br>• Senior academics in particular roles can help with co-ordination of key issues but working with them can be a challenge:<br>• People need to move around in order to develop, get new ideas – a bit static here, few opportunities for 'acting up' |
| L | • Nature of the role as co-ordinator – no direct staff<br>• Need to take the time and effort to translate the message for particular audiences e.g. academic<br>• Understanding the work and frustrations of academics helps<br>• Layer of bureaucracy beyond what you see elsewhere but is there for a reason, but not in itself a reason not to change:<br>• Nature of the role as co-ordinator – no direct staff<br>• Need to take the time and effort to translate the message for particular audiences e.g. academic<br>• Understanding the work and frustrations of academics helps<br>• Layer of bureaucracy beyond what you see elsewhere but is there for a reason, but not in itself a reason not to change: |
| M | • Talking about the challenges of changing the roles and mind-set of her team as part of a re-positioning of the service:<br>• Trying to persuade them of their obligation to the organization; the priority is servicing and developing the organisation not the individual – a bi-product. Legitimacy is achieved by serving strategic objectives.<br>• Issue of following due process to recruit people 'fairly' who by virtue of going through an appropriate selection process can demonstrate you are the right person for the job – someone who ca be effective, efficient and give good value for money.<br>• Challenge for PS managers of coping with changing academic managers owing to short term nature of their appointments.<br>• Comparison with other sectors – HE weaker managerially e.g. staggeringly inappropriate behaviours: |
| N | • Trying to institute organisational change that involves bringing different parts of the organisation with different |

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| | cultures together to form a single entity all effectively working together:<br>• Issue of managing change – looking to the future and trying to re-focus people on this when they are concentrating on the day to day operational work:<br>• A challenge in HE is the lack of a clear profit motive that drives activity/performance |
| O | • Leadership challenges include – keeping up with wider changes affecting the sector, motivating staff who are under constant pressure, persuading senior managers of the effect of new big challenge<br>• A big challenge is to persuade people of changes that are coming that you are close to but others fail to see:<br>• HE culture requires persuasion as command and control isn't in place, however high calibre well-educated people:<br>• A challenge is that she perceives her service to be disconnected/ having a low profile; she shows tension in her perception of the need to improve engagement although people react negatively to too many meetings with her team; she is looking for different ways to engage.<br>• Leadership in HE difficult as people feel the need to debate the vision; some of the differences are structural; exhort people to see where they contribution fits into a bigger picture. (*Unitarist view of organisational life going to back to Peters and Waterman,1982*) |
| P | • Challenge of being in the middle and having to address diverse expectations from above and below, may not be achievable<br>• Challenge of keeping staff happy/motivated and having to pick up unfinished work and deliver work within tight deadlines:<br>• Challenge of working with academics, no concept of the contribution of support services, very focussed on their own research:<br>• Risk averse organisation that prefers to find work-arounds rather than tackle staff under-performance<br>• Variety of contacts, rules and regulations tied in with grants, endless reports for HEFCE, lack of clear management information, lack of financial resource:<br>• Challenge of keeping people motivated – seen as linked to job change/progression in roles in the school or elsewhere in the University |
| Q | • Re-orienting staff thinking to recognise people as customers<br>• Changing staff attitudes to be prepared to challenge things to generate improvement; if this takes place staff will be listened to<br>• People pulling in different directions, don't align with |

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| | university goals, need strong management to challenge:<br>• Less formalised targets in HE – wasteful; re-set each year<br>• Importance of personal challenge in different work environments to develop supplemented by training – be able to make mistakes: |
| R | • The traditional culture of the research-intensive HEIs and their decision-making process resulting in papers being considered too many times – linked to statutes and ordinances:<br>• Process and timescales for gaining and using research income<br>• Difficult and time-consuming to change/change direction; inertia of processes and people<br>• Changing the conceptual approach to work towards systems thinking; procedures that encourage 'work arounds' rather than doing things well:<br>• Apply the scientific method to management – assume that things will not always work out first time and learn from the issue, try again; blocked if failure is stigmatized<br>• Political machinations re. structures and change |
| S | • Diversity of issues that the role is expected to deal with and the challenge of undertaking a successful re-structure whilst brand new to the job:<br>• Understanding HE jargon and university culture whilst undertaking the re-structure and being new to the role:<br>• Political culture and challenge of working with temporary senior academic managers; conflict of priorities: |
| T | • Identity of staff and achieving shared sense of corporate direction:<br>• Service and identity integration of devolved PS functions<br>• Status and relationship with academics; career path for PSS staff and objective to free up academics to do academic work<br>• Challenge to understand HE culture people coming from the outside:<br>• Uncertainty around student numbers; funding; mind-set – my grant/resources<br>• Matrix management – balance two directions of interest/demand<br>• Motivation/opportunity to undertake academic management as a career: |

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