# Professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers in Further Education (FE) colleges in Wales: A study of the impact of major change

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration**

**By Robert Walford**

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**Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my wife Helen.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Caroline Rowland and Professor Danny Moss for their excellent guidance and support in relation to my DBA study and their helpful advice on my research study.

I would also like to acknowledge the patience, loyalty and overwhelming support of my wife without whom this journey would not have been possible and my two daughters, Rachel and Catherine, who have been equally supportive. Thank you.

**Declaration of Originality**

The material presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award to this or any other higher education institution except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

**Robert Walford**

Contents

**Appendices**

**Tables**

**Table of Figures**

## Glossary of Terms

- Colegau Cymru.    Colleges Wales   (The representative body for FE colleges across Wales)
- CPD.   Continuing Professional Development
- HMI Estyn.  The Inspection Service for Schools and Colleges in Wales
- M&As.   Merger and Acquisitions
- Middle Manager
- FE.   Further Education
- HE.  Higher Education
- KPIs.  Key Performance targets
- MM.    Middle Manager
- PPD.    Personal Development Plan
- Principal/Chief Executive.  Head of a college organization
- SPH.    Senior Post Holder

## Abstract

Merger organizational change has been prolific across Wales and has significantly affected all Further Education (FE) colleges. The main merger driver was to reduce operational costs, whilst in the pursuit of increased organizational and departmental efficiencies and effectiveness. An imperative to widening access to education, an increase in the quality of curriculum provision and a need to reduce duplication of curriculum programmes were also important considerations. It is these changes that have shaped college organizations and the college middle manager role, post-merger, with a resulting impact on middle managers professional 'lived' experiences.

The author's research examines the effect of merger on the middle manager role and the influence of the college context on the 'lived' experiences of middle managers managing curriculum departments.

The review of the literature highlights key relationships between mainstream management and the college middle manager role, as well as the influences likely to have an impact on this role. The author has developed a conceptual model with key elements consisting of professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers and role construct and behaviour, management and leadership.

This study is exploratory in nature and uses a social constructionist philosophical approach. A subjectivist epistemology was adopted for this study, with the researcher applying a thematic analysis and an investigation of multiple realities.

Data for this research was collected from in-depth semi-structured interviewees, which gave interviewees the opportunity to highlight their specific day-to-day professional 'lived' work experiences.

The research study outlines a number of conclusions, which accord with this study's specific research objectives and recommendations. In the post-merger era, the middle manager role has become more complex and challenging. Conclusions indicate a broader role for the middle manager, and a role defined by the college's professional context, which contributes to influencing the college middle manager role.

This study contributes to the field of academic study, and to professional practice. It provides insights to understanding the role of middle managers in the FE sector and also offers recommendations for college strategy and policy. Finally, it highlights opportunities for further research in Wales and beyond.

## Summary of Portfolio

This research is submitted in partial completion for the Degree, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). The first two years of the DBA programme are taught modules, with assignments, including the following subjects: A personal and Professional Review, Action Learning Module, Global Issues, Business Research Methods. There was also a requirement to provide a 6000 word research proposal to initiating the major research project.

The DBA programme also provided a requirement to attend the annual research conference.

Progress to the research project is dependent upon satisfactory completion of all taught modules which must accord with the necessary standards as required by the University of Chester.

This doctorate is sponsored, in full, by the author of this work. All modules and related assignments relate to the author's experiences over a number of years as a professional practitioner. There is also a value in this work regarding the FE sector in Wales and beyond.

The research topic was fully researched in advance of commencing this course of study and was considered in relation to the operational environment in the FE sector in Wales and what was happening in relation to the merger of colleges across Wales.  A final decision on the research topic was taken once the author had consulted his previous employer, a Principal/Chief Executive of a college in Wales and with a role with the organization representing colleges across Wales, Colegau Cymru/Colleges Wales.

The viability of the research project was then given full consideration before a final decision was taken on the proposed topic and how the research would be implemented.

During this initial stage of the research project the author identified well defined support across the colleges included in this research and particularly with the identified cohort. Given discussions with a number of stakeholders, and the fact that college mergers in Wales are now well established, the author ascertained that now was an appropriate time to initiate an investigation into the role of the college middle manager and the effect of college merger organizational change across Wales might have on this role.

# Chapter One

## 1.1 Introduction

**Research Title:** Professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers in Further Education (FE) colleges in Wales: A study of the impact of major change.

**Aim:** To Investigate the impact of college mergers, and related organizational transitional change, on the professional experiences of middle managers in the further education (FE) colleges of Wales using examples from four large FE colleges.

**Objectives**

1. To gain an understanding of the role and 'lived' experiences of college middle managers within the Welsh College system.

2. To explore internal and external factors influencing college middle manager enactment with specific emphasis on the effects of college restructuring in the Further Education (FE) Sector in Wales.

## 1.1.1 Background

In a career, consisting of ten years in industry, followed by over 30 years in the further education (FE) sector of Wales, the author has observed professional experience as a practitioner in a number of posts. These included lecturer, senior lecturer and as head of several curriculum departments and in a senior position as Head of Commercial Services, responsible for training provision to local, regional and national businesses. The researcher has also developed and implemented various management training projects working in partnership with other FE and higher education (HE) educational institutions in several countries, within the European Union.

The author's considerable practitioner experience and observations in leadership and management roles in the FE sector, suggested to him, that college middle managers, enacting the role of manager of a curriculum operational department, are a cohort that are often highly affected by college merger change. It is this cohort of middle management, and the concomitant associated change brought about by mergers and acquisitions (M&As) in the FE sector, that is of interest to the author. These changes can be both negative and positive.

Negative outcomes of change has resulted in some middle managers being made redundant, loss of job status and influence, reductions in remuneration or no increases in existing levels of monetary reward and increasing and more challenging and complex workloads requiring enhanced capabilities and skills. This can have a negative impact on middle manager confidence and performance. Positive change for middle managers has manifested itself in promotion, increased status and greater influence.

In recent years the author has been involved in three large mergers within the FE sector in Wales, and has extensive experience of the merger transformation process and the impact that mergers have had on middle managers and the organization. The author's interest in this particular research study is borne out of his interest, and expertise, in the subject area of leadership and management. The author's professional experiences and observations highlight an opportunity to investigate and clarify the college middle manager role, so that the outcomes of this study can inform senior management strategic and operational policies and provide subsequent support to help middle managers involved in future organizational transitional change. This would provide an opportunity to enhance middle managers professional 'lived' experiences with the potential to impact positively on their performance at departmental level.

The 'lived' experiences of college middle managers refer to their individual experiences gained within their work environment Stokes (2011). Their day-to-day experiences therefore arise from managing operational departments. In the majority of cases, college middle managers have responsibility for managing specialist curriculum departments and gain valuable experience in managing these departments. There are a number of important influences having the potential to result in positive and negative individual 'lived' experiences, especially during times of organizational change. During organizational change, communication and especially the availability of information, cultural differences, patterns of work and workloads, and degree of managerial responsibilities relating to operational objectives and staffing, all mitigate to influence middle managers 'lived' experiences.

The author has chosen to use middle managers as a unit of analysis in this research as college middle managers are pivotal to organizational operations and hence a conduit for implementing college strategy and therefore strongly influencing the quality of curriculum provision. College middle managers work patterns are both challenging and varied and

encompass teaching duties and, for a number of middle managers, a commercial element involving the planning, provision and delivery of training courses to businesses. All middle managers also have a responsibility for resources and especially human resources within their respective departments. College middle managers, therefore, occupy an important and influential position in the FE sector in Wales and in doing so contribute significantly to the efficiency and effectiveness of their departments and general college operations and therefore ultimately to college success.

### 2.1.2   Purpose of the Research

The author carried out this research study between September 2015 and August 2018.

The central focus, and therefore the scope of this research study, is based on the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers within the FE sector in Wales resulting from the merger transitional change process. The author has used the generic term 'middle' manager as a generalized term to refer to middle managers in FE colleges in various ways namely: Head of Department, Programme Leader, Head of Section, Director of studies and Head of Campus.

Middle managers professional experiences in the commercial sector are well documented and are therefore beyond the scope of this study.

The author has made the assumption that the middle manager can find the college M&A experience traumatic, and that outcomes for the middle manager, can be both negative and positive. Information on college middle managers professional experiences, resulting from college mergers, is extremely limited.

Evidence to support this assumption is contained within a report by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2003). This report concerning the evaluation of college M&As in the UK, acknowledges the challenging work environment in which college managers operate. The context of this report resonates with an organizational view, cited by Harman (2013). Several problems were identified. Firstly, evidence of a disconnect between existing abilities and capabilities of college middle managers and those skills required for new or expanded roles. Secondly, middle managers being over-stretched, whilst dealing with day-to -day duties. Thirdly, having to contend with a plethora of specific problems related to a new entity

namely, financial, integration of new systems and procedures, problems associated with human resource issues, different organization cultures, communication and a general awareness of the merger process.

The study also considers the relationship of middle managers professional experiences in relation to their performance. Middle manager performance is interpreted as, achieving key performance indicators (KPIs). Key targets include budgetary income and operational expenditure targets, student recruitment, retention and attainment targets through a quality curriculum provision.

The author focuses on the professional 'lived' experiences of the middle manager at the pre-merger and post-merger phases of the M&A process. 'Lived' experiences are defined by Stokes (2011) as, an appreciation of how individuals or groups of individuals feel and respond to day-to-day situations. This view is interpreted by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) as individuals in roles as social actors, playing particular parts and interpreting the parts they play and then realize the part they play based on their interpretation.

The researcher has specifically focused on college middle managers leading specialist curriculum teams delivering traditional curriculum core provision and industry training. The author has also taken into account a smaller cohort of middle managers managing support services. The span of control for these middle managers varies according to the structure of each college and the complexity of their department. For the purpose of this study the researcher has excluded middle managers managing support departments, namely, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities, as his professional practice observations indicated that non-curriculum managers are least affected by organizational change.

This research study focuses on a conceptual model containing three key areas of interest. (Figure 1. Page 19) Firstly, middle manager professional 'lived' experience, behaviour and role construct, Secondly, Management and Thirdly, Leadership. These interests are considered within the context of organizational change. Change bought about by college M&A is the context for this research study. There is an inter-relationship between these three key interests in relation to organizational change acting as a catalyst and potentially influencing the professional 'lived' experiences of the middle manager whilst enacting the role of manager and potentially, the role as leader.

The Focus of this research highlights the potential relationship between the role construct of college middle managers, their individual behaviours and 'lived' experiences together with the roles of management and leadership. The author considers a potential relationship and overlap between these three key areas of interest within the context of FE colleges in Wales during periods of organizational change resulting from college mergers. The author suggests that these key areas of interest have a potential impact, both positively and negatively, on the day-to-day 'lived' experiences of college middle managers during college reorganization.



**College Organizational Change Environment**

**Focus of the research**

Middle Manager Professional 'Lived' Experience

(Role Construct & Behaviour)

Management          Leadership

**College Organizational Change Environment**
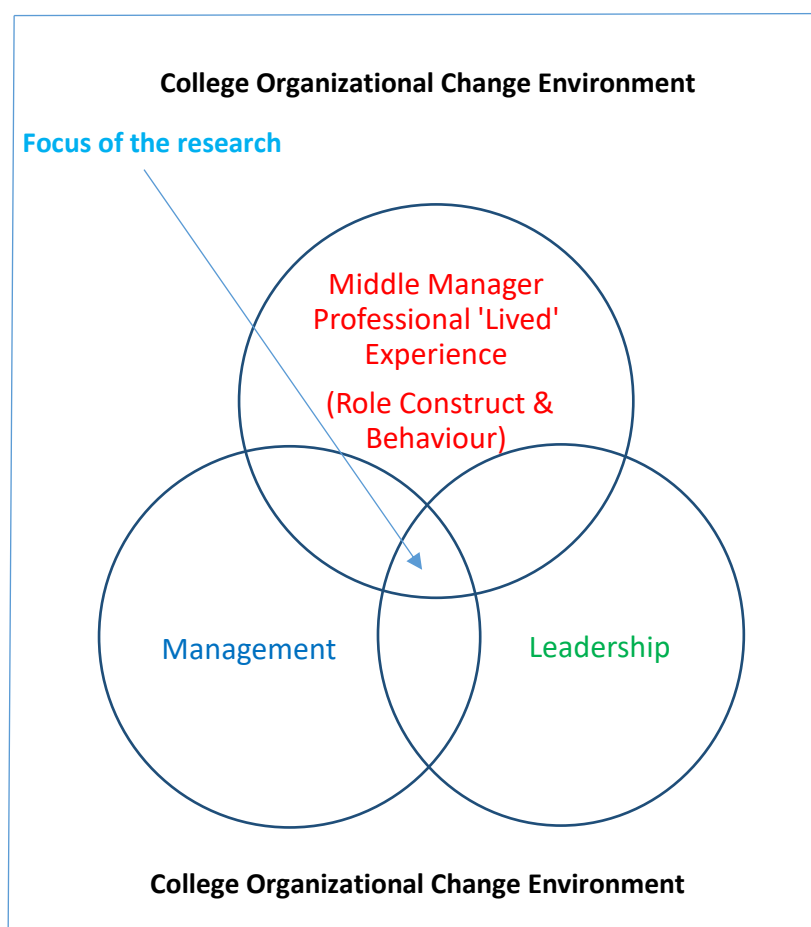
**Figure 1.** Focus of Research        Source author: R.Walford

## 1.1.3 Theoretical Gap & Perceived contribution to Knowledge and Practice

The author seeks to identify potential gaps between the professional 'lived' experiences of the middle manager in the FE sector and the theoretical literature appertaining to

professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers as influenced by merger. The research also seeks to identify a potential gap in the literature relating to the merger of FE colleges across Wales. The author will make a contribution to knowledge in this area of study and will suggest suitable developments to support middle managers within the work environment, who may be involved in future organizational change.

### 1.1.4 Research Approach

This study draws on the middle manager experiences observed across of four large FE colleges, which are geographically located across Wales. Two colleges are located in north Wales, and the remaining two colleges in mid and south Wales. The author's representative non-random sample, of twenty-three middle managers, has been selected from a total population of middle managers employed at these four large colleges and in accordance with certain criteria. Colleges selected for this research study, are representative of the FE sector in Wales, and provide a broad range of curriculum provision to full-time and part-time students and external training to industry.

### 1.2 Context

### 1.2.1 General Mergers & Acquisitions

In recent years there has been a proliferation of Mergers and Acquisitions (M&As) in the UK. In the private sector M&As have been on the increase (McCarthy & Dolfsma, 2013; Wall, 2000).

M&As are defined by Saudarsanam (2003) as two companies combining to achieve strategies and business objectives which have an effect on managers, employees, local community and the economy through the formation of a new identity. The M&A process therefore allows for a sharing of resources. M&As can also be referred to as unequal mergers where the acquiring company becomes the dominant company, which can result in unrest within the merging organizations.

Saudarsanam (2003) supports the views of several other authors, Calvert & Rosner, (2009), La Piana & Hayes, (2005), and Nguyen & Kleiner, (2003) who argue that the main drivers for M&As are predicated on economic and non-economic factors including financial, political, sociological and technical contexts. Whilst Calvert & Rosner, (2009), Deal & Kennedy, (1999), and Kleiner, (2003) support this view that both economic and non-economic factors are both important drivers for merger, they also place a strong emphasise on the need for managers to consider economic or financial imperatives as a priority. Nguyen, and Kleiner (2003) add support to the argument by articulating that cost-cutting is a significant reason for M&As in the commercial sector.

The arguments of the previous authors are supported by La Piana, and Hayes (2005). They reinforce the idea that financial imperatives are a key driver in the M&A process and contributes to ensuring that the commercial company maintains or increases its competitive edge in the market place. Similarly in non-profit organizations such as the public sector similar economic considerations La Piana, and Hayes (2005).

Whilst financial imperatives are paramount in merger change the human resource element is even more critical to ensuring merger success argue Paine, and Power (1984) through their study of Ducker's five rules for successful post-acquisition period, which seem to place a stronger emphasis on non-economic factors associated with M&A.

Similarities between private sector and public sector organizations relates to the climate of M&As. The changing environment seems particularly complex and challenging for management. The former skills Minister, Nick Boyle reinforces the argument that FE colleges face challenging times due to requirements to reduce operational costs which is further aggravated by the control that central Government exerts over its funding arrangements for colleges in the FE sector Boyle (2015) FENEWS.

## 1.2.2 Educational Mergers

College mergers gained momentum following implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Higher and Further Education Act 1992. Within the FE sector over the past twenty years there has been a seismic change. The form of this change has resulted in the merger of a large number of FE colleges. Changes in central Governmental policy to effect

increased efficiencies and effectiveness within the FE educational sector were also key drivers for change. Calvert, and Rosner (2009) concur with the view that the rise in the number of FE colleges merging has been associated with the Government's educational policies and funding arrangements allied to the need to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of college institutions.

According to Calvert (2009) educational mergers can be categorized into two distinct types:

Type A Merger: This involves the dissolution of two or more colleges and the creation of a new college.

Type B Merger: Relates to the dissolution of one or more colleges with the transfer of all remaining assets and liabilities to the remaining college.

Calvert, and Rosner (2009) further develop this view of FE mergers indicating that they can be either strategic or rescue in nature. David Jones, Principal/Chief Executive, Coleg Cambria, Times Educational Supplement (TES) (2016) expands on this view of mergers by stating "College mergers in Wales have been a combination of both 'rescue' and 'strategic' varieties". Strategic mergers relate to mergers on an equal basis to achieve compatibility of provision, share specialist knowledge and to survive. A number of merged colleges across Wales are of this kind. Mergers involving rescue usually involve the merger of two or more colleges where one or two of the merging colleges are facing financial difficulties and therefore their long-term survival is threatened.

Mergers in the higher education (HE) sector also appear have been on the increase Hart (2005) with universities acquiring smaller institutions. Ramsden (2012) reinforces this argument by stating that since 1994-95, HE mergers have involved the takeover of these smaller, yet significant, institutions. In the country of Wales, the overall picture is in contrast to the rest of the UK. The number of HE M&As have been extremely limited due to restrictions applied by the Wales Government's HE educational policy Drowley, Lewis, and Brooks (2013). In the HE sector the loss of identity, the quality of personal relationships, personality clashes between senior management teams and key personnel, a lack of knowledge and understanding and a hostile environment are all associated with HE merger Drowley, Lewis, and Brooks (2013) which suggests change is extremely challenging and

complex. Dowely, Lewis, and Brooks (2013), in their post-merger study, also refer to the influence of culture and human effects in relation to merger.

In the FE sector, the financial imperative of cost-cutting also appears a main priority influencing the decision to merge. However, Stewart (2003) takes a broader view on college drivers for merger. Whilst supporting the importance of economic or financial factors as a major driver for merger, he adds to the contributions of Calvert & Rosner, (2009), Hayes, (2005), Piana & Hayes, (2005) and Saudarsanam, (2003) that non-financial factors, such as quality of curriculum provision, human resource relationships, good communication and management, are equally important, especially in relation to later college mergers. Webb (2009) supports the view that non-economic factors are also a prime consideration.

In a study on college mergers by Kyvik (2002) he argues that mergers in the educational sector can defined as a two-stage process. Firstly, Government objectives for merger focusing on restructuring of the educational sector to achieve economies of scale through cost efficiency measures. Secondly, the responsibilities of the new college entities in implementing measures to attain organizational reform objectives, including re-structuring, improved teaching processes and provision and improved communication. Comparisons between Kyvik's study and evidence pertaining to UK FE sector mergers Calvert & Rosner, (2009), Coulson & Thomas, (2015), and Stewart, (2003) confirms consistency as to the drivers for college M&As.

### 1.2.3 College Mergers in Wales

Mergers in Wales, which commenced in the mid -1990s, were brought about by changes in funding structures and the Welsh Government's transformational agenda Jones (2013).

(Figure 2: Page 24) shows the structure of FE colleges in the country of Wales at the pre-merger stage.

(Figure 3: Page 25) shows the structure of FE colleges in the country of Wales at the post-merger stage.
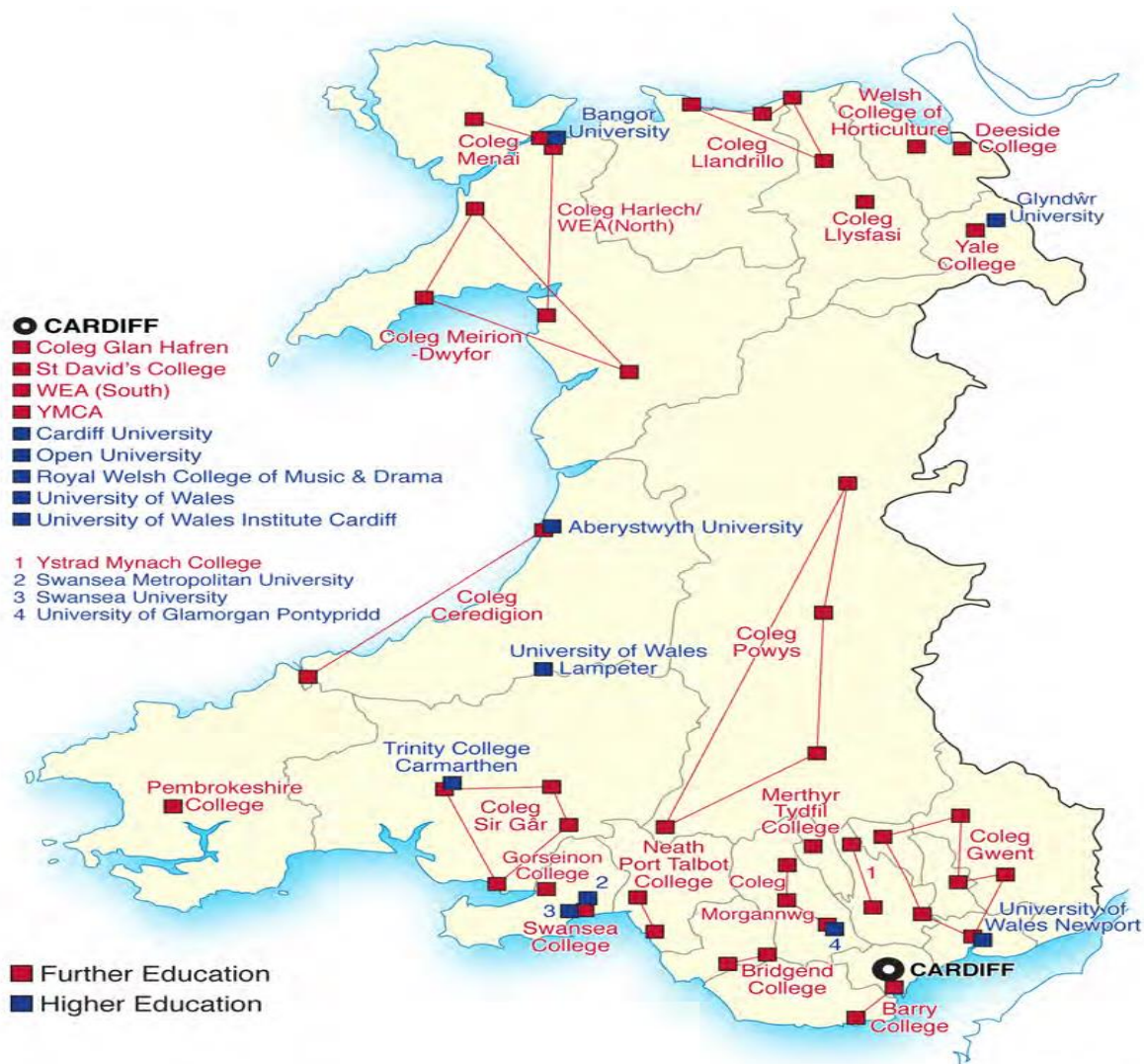
Source: Welsh Government

**Figure 2.** FE colleges in Wales at pre-merger (2008)

**Figure 3.** Shows the structure of FE colleges in the country of Wales at the post-merger stage.



Source:  Welsh Government

**Figure 3.**  FE colleges in Wales at post-merger (2016)

As a direct result of the Welsh Government's policy on educational mergers in the Further Education Sector in Wales, the Welsh Government actively encouraged and supported reconfiguration of the FE sector throughout the 1990s which resulted in an eclectic mix of institutions Times Educational Supplement (TES) (2016) consisting of 14 merged colleges' of FE in Wales, (Table 1: Page 26) with the majority of these colleges offering academic and vocational programmes and also working closely with the industry sector. Colleges vary in

size and the majority of these colleges are geographically spread with education and training being offered at numerous sites.

**Table 1.** Merged Colleges of Wales - Source:  Colegau Cymru – Colleges Wales (2016)

| Name of Welsh Colleges | Location of Colleges Campus Sites |
|---|---|
| Coleg Y Cymoedd | Nine campuses:  south west Wales |
| Coleg Llandrillo Menai | Five campuses:  north Wales |
| Coleg Gwent | Six campuses:    south Wales |
| Bridgend College | Five campuses:  south Wales |
| Grwp NPTC Group | Six Campuses:    south and mid-Wales |
| Gower Coleg Swansea | One campus:      south Wales |
| The College Merthyr Tydfil | Two campuses:  south Wales |
| Coleg Cambria | Five campuses:  north east Wales |
| St David's Sixth Form College | One campus:      south west Wales |
| Pembrokeshire College | One campus:      south west Wales |
| Coleg Ceredigion | Two campuses:  south west Wales |
| Cardiff and Vale College | Nine campuses:  south east Wales |
| Coleg Sir Gar | Five campuses:  south west Wales |
| WEA YMCA CC CYMRU | Community education through branch structure |

According to Reeves (1995) the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) created the potential environment for change. The outcomes resulted in Principals having greater autonomy over operations at strategic and operational levels. However, it can be argued that this autonomy or independence is only a partial independence since the Government remains the main supplier of funding to colleges and universities.

At post-incorporation, in April 1993, colleges became financially independent institutions with autonomy over finances and operations.  However, central Government, and the Welsh Government in particular, remained an external influence and, therefore, took a continued interest in the running of FE colleges especially as the Welsh Government remained the main provider of college core funding to the FE sector in Wales. The Welsh Government continues

to exert influence through their education and funding policies and their drive to see continuous improvements in curriculum provision and training for employers.

During recent years, the FE sector in Wales has experienced a number of college mergers between colleges of different sizes, specialisms and complexity offering a varying range of curriculum provision to both full-time and part-time students. This period has been extremely challenging for these colleges. The FE sector in Wales is therefore a key player in delivering the Welsh Government's aims to widen participation, address social exclusion and encourage economic regeneration.

Bridges (2002) views college mergers from a different perspective by stating that organizational change requires a process of transition. He suggests that the process of transition involves letting go of something and starting anew. Change in education is about a process of reform. Brunson (2009) refers to reform as a process of reorganizing, rationalization and restructuring. It is this change process which can be both a positive or negative experience for middle managers.

Working evidence, from the author's professional experiences, seems to suggest reform can be both positive and negative for college middle managers. Negative outcomes have resulted in middle managers being made redundant, losing status and influence, and in some cases, enduring a forced new role with the middle manager's skills-set not correlating with the skills required for the new role. Positive middle manager outcomes have manifested itself in these managers being promoted, gaining higher a higher status and having more influence. Whatever the outcome for the middle manager from transitional change, change appears to be stressful and can affect middle managers confidence, which ultimately impacts on individual performance.

The researcher's considerable experience working in management and leadership roles within the FE sector has provided working evidence to suggest that during college merger transitional change, it appears the college middle manager is most affected by merger change.

## 1.2.4 Middle Manager Role

According to Rensberg, Davis, and Venter (2014) whilst the term middle manager is well known in the literature it is not a term used in organizations. In the education sector the term

middle manager relates to Head of Department, Director of curriculum Studies or Programme Leader. Rensberg, Davis, and Venter (2014) suggest the term middle manager relates to an operational functional role. This view is reinforced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) report (2003) who state that middle managers manage functional curriculum departments. It also denotes a position within an organizational hierarchy.

Middle managers seem to have been the level of management mostly affected by restructuring as the result of college merger Jones (2013). They are key players in the transitional change process, as they lead and direct operational teams to achieve organizational objectives at each of the merger transitional stages. Whilst a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) report (2003) suggests middle managers are pivotal to merger success, Jones (2013) argues that the impact of merger on middle managers was underestimated and inadequately prepared for.

The role of the middle manager within the educational sector has been the basis of studies by (Balogan & Johnson, 2004; Briggs, 2004; Floyd & Wooldrige, 1994; Gleeson & Shain, 1999). Consensus appears to suggest that the middle manager role is based on planning, organizing and controlling and as implementers of policy decisions Middle managers are also viewed as professionals Rensberg, Davis, and Venter (2014).

Briggs (2014) concludes the college middle manager role embraces interaction with others across the organization. The role of middle manager is complex and this complexity is potentially accentuated when consideration is given to the challenging environment that surrounds the college merger transitional change. Studies by Bologan & Johnson (2004), Briggs (2004), Gleeson & Shain (1999), and Rensberg, Davis & Venter (2014) provide evidence which confirms complexity of the middle manager role.

The impact of college merger on the professional 'lived' experience of the middle manager is potentially wide-ranging due to the challenging and complex merger environment and issues associated with organizational restructuring, human resource considerations, potential conflict, behavioural issues, cultural differences, cost-cutting and new systems and procedures. Hart (2005) recognises the requirement for middle managers to demonstrate

strong and decisive management. The views of Paine, and Power (1984) are complementary in that they advocate a strong requirement for managers to have the right skills to effectively manage in a new environment.

The contribution of the college middle manage to successful organizational change, may be quite significant.

An outcome of the merger process often results in organizational change and potential restructuring leading to the merged colleges becoming a new entity.

## 1.2.5   Organizational Change

An outcome of M&As is organizational change leading to a new entity. Change also involves the identification of key factors associated with change, namely, cultural differences between management and academic staff, personal ambitions, increased organizational bureaucracy and the impact of new operational structures (Gudrun, 2002; Levin, 200); Marsh, 1981; Waddock, Waddell & Denton, 2015).  Marsh (1981) indicates that it is difficult to control change which is surrounded by an environment which is both challenging and complex.  Gudrun (2002) argues that congruence between certain factors was critical to merger success.  Gudrun (2002) adds a further dimension to organizational change. He recognised that Government is an important external influence. In the FE sector, Government provide curriculum and capital funding for the sector, thus confirming an on-going influence impacting on strategic decision making.

The themes of challenge and complexity, are further examined by Levin (2002) who adds to the argument on complexity when he states that change impacts on organizational purpose and processes. Whilst challenge and complexity prevail during mergers Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, and Denton (2015) consider the view that the starting point for M&As is for managers to address the purpose of change. Is the purpose of change predicated on improvements in performance or to change organizational systems? They also suggest power and relationships are a key factor in M&As.

Carnell (2007) pursues the importance of organizational purpose. He poses two inter-relating questions critical to change:  What are we going to change? Why do we need to change? Carnell (2007) also suggests that managers need to consider an appropriate operational

model for the new entity which is based on the reason for change. In the FE sector the key driver, or major reason for merger, seems to be based on financial considerations translated by colleges as performance targets.

Bergquist (1998) also recognises the complexity and fragmentation of the merger environment within which managers must manage operations. He concentrates on the importance of mission as part of the change process. Mission, as espoused by Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, and Denton (2015) and Carnell (2007), seem to have a direct relationship with organizational purpose and both seem to be a catalyst for major change. These two key factors are initial management considerations, which need to be considered before other factors highlighted by these authors. Bergquist (1998) offers a further component to change that embraces shared vision by all stakeholders, including managers and other staff, are critical to successful change. This may suggest that mission and vision may be unachievable unless managers and staff understand and support the mission and vision of the new college entity.

Carnell (2007) attempts a wider view of organizational change, which focuses on the role of leader. The importance of the leader in merger transition is highlighted by Cerych, and Sabatier (1986) who state that strong leadership can lead to reform with the leader being totally committed to reform and related change. Within a challenging merger environment, there can be conflict anxiety and uncertainty. Bergquist (1998) argues an overwhelming need for strong leadership. Carnell (2007) supports the notion of strong leadership where the leader is the catalyst for driving change through the involvement of staff.

## 1.3 Importance of the Research Study

Central Government's drive to progress merger policy within the further education (FE) sector over recent years, which was reinforced by the Welsh Government, has resulted in significant change for the FE sector. The merger transitional process seems to have been mainly predicated on financial drivers including demands to make financial savings through cutting costs. Cuts in Welsh Government funding for college core curriculum provision has also resulted in a number of challenges for college managers. The pace of change and related uncertainty, particularly for college middle managers, has compounded the role of the middle manager. This research study, therefore, considers important factors which

ultimately impact on their experiences, and consequently, their role as middle manager. The outcome of this research provides an operational development and support paradigm, which prepares middle managers for future potential transitional change.

## 1.4 Structure of Thesis

Following on from this introductory chapter, in chapter two of this thesis, the author engages critically with historical and contemporary literature in relation to the research topic, aim and objectives. In chapter three, an outline is given of the various research approaches and methods and the reasons for choosing the particular research methodology and research method are justified. Chapter four considers and addresses the findings, and relevant data, associated with this empirical study. In chapter five, findings are analysed taking into account information gathered from the semi-structured interviews as provided by the non-random sample. Chapter six addresses conclusions and recommendations. In chapter seven the author considers limitations, personal reflection, contributions and opportunities for further research.

## 1.5 Summary

### 1.5.1 General

College M&As in the FE sector in Wales have been prolific over recent years Welsh Government Report (2012) as driven by the influence of the Wales Government drive through rationalisation of curriculum programmes requiring colleges to achieve high quality curriculum provision, within a climate of reducing core funding and pressures to reduce operational costs. Change, as a result of college mergers, have been significant throughout the Wales FE sector and have strongly influenced the management structure of colleges and also contributed to important changes to the college middle manager role and how individual curriculum departments are managed. Mergers and changes resulting from mergers have also been pivotal to shaping the FE sector in Wales for the future.

The transitional challenge and complexity of the merger process often results in restructuring, the introduction of new systems and procedures, clashes of different cultures,

and reviews of organizational roles (Bologun & Johnson, 2004; Harper, 2000; Saraswat, 2015), all of which have the potential to impact on the 'lived' experiences of college middle managers.

The author explores potential influencing factors, arising from merger, including: human resource issues, cultures and behaviours. Management and leadership will also be explored as organizational change has the potential to influence management and leadership role.

The focus of this study is on the pre-merger and post-merger phases of college merger. This study enables the author to determine, and compare, any potential significant changes in the day-to day 'lived' experiences of the college middle manager between the pre-merger and post-merger periods. The author will also ascertain the potential impact of these 'lived' experiences on middle manager performance and the potential contribution of middle managers to post-M&A success.

According to Coulson, and Thomas (2015) individuals working in co-ordinated groups, sharing a vision, assuming responsibility and collaborating on activities can have a positive impact on motivation during organizational change.


## 1.5.2 Proposed Contribution

There is a paucity of literature in relation to the availability of information on FE mergers in Wales. Whilst literature exists on the role of middle managers in the FE sector, information seems to be limited and non-specific in nature. A 'gap' has also emerged in the literature relating to available knowledge on the professional 'lived' experiences of the middle manager at the pre-merger and post-merger phases. This research aims to contribute to knowledge and theory in this area.

This research also intends to make a contribution to practice by the dissemination of this research to the Principals/Chief Executives of participating colleges, to established educational contacts in the Welsh Government and Colegau Cymru, the representative body for FE Colleges across the country of Wales. Research outcomes will be fully transferable into the college workplace environment, thereby making a significant contribution in knowledge thus preparing and supporting middle managers involved in potential organizational change within the workplace.

In the following literature review chapter, emerging related themes will be discussed in the context of organizational change. This will provide the contextual framework for underpinning the author's empirical research study.

# Chapter Two

## 2.1 Literature Review

### 2.1.1 Introduction

This chapter considers to what extent the management literature, examined in this research, informs the debate about the role of leadership and management in relation to the day-to-day professional 'lived' experience of college managers within a college management context.

Leadership is considered an integral part of the management role (Glover, Gleeson, Gough & Johnson, 1998; Kotter, 1990; Mintzberg, 1989; Nonaka & Takeuchi 2011; Rowland, 2016; Zaleznik, 1986). In order to explain the management and leadership practice of the college manager, the study is undertaken in an environment of change.

This review examines, albeit limited, current literature relating to the college manager role, occupying a middle manager position within the management structure, and as influenced by major organizational change and the Merger and Acquisition (M&A) process within further education (FE), and more specifically in relation to merged colleges of Wales. Here the review explores a range of issues, including: work patterns of college managers, individual behaviours, the application of a business management approach to managing, organization cultures, role complexity, professional identity and college manager development, identified with merger and organizational change within in the college context (Bennet, 1995; Briggs, 2005, 2007; Lumby, 2001; Pepper & Giles, 2014). The review explores to what extent these issues might impact upon the day-to-day professional 'lived' experiences of the college manager.

Differences in professional 'lived' experiences are examined at the pre-merger and post-merger phases of the college merger process. For the purpose of this study, the term, middle manager, is used to describe people who are designated managers, with responsibilities for the operational management of specialist curriculum or support departments, in FE colleges and occupying a 'central' position, located between senior college managers and subordinates managed by college middle managers, within the organization's hierarchical structure.

An initial review of the literature revealed three key areas of interest and debate as outlined in the author's conceptual model Focus of Research (Figure 1: Page 18) in the Introductory chapter. Firstly, the college middle manager's professional 'lived' experience and role tasks and behaviours; Secondly, Management and Thirdly, leadership. These areas of interest are relevant to turbulent organizational change, as they potentially exert an influence on the outcomes arising from the creation of a new college entity Briggs, (2001, 2005, 2007).

The author chose a traditional literature review for this research study rather than a systematic review. The author felt more comfortable with a traditional literature research method given the period of time the author has spent outside of academic study. The traditional literature review helped the author to develop his reviewing skills and gain some valuable insights into the available literature Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011). The application of a traditional review methodology enabled the author to be flexible in the review of the literature and also provided an opportunity to explore ideas, which can be both insightful and original Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011). The author was aware his subjectivity was implicit in this particular research methodology. However, through the use of a traditional literature review, the author adopted a critical approach by critically examining the methods of primary studies, with an emphasis on background and contextual material Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011). The author was also mindful that his potential contribution to the knowledge base.

The author accessed a broad range of literature including scholarly journals and books drawn from academic literature and also articles accessed from professional literature. Key core websites accessed included: Web of Science, Ebscoe, Google Scholar, Wiley Online and Welsh Government Reports and management and leadership articles from Colegau Cymru.

The research study context (Figure 5: Page 65) illustrates the broad scope for this study.

### 2.1.2 Mergers and Acquisitions in the Further Education Context

M&As in the FE sector, provide the context for this literature review. M&As in the FE sector arose from central Government's educational policy changes, which included implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988, which released colleges from the control of local authorities and the Higher and Further Education Act 1992 which enabled FE colleges to adopt a more commercial and marketed-based approach to managing the organization.

College M&As gained momentum during the 1990s. A key driver for college mergers relate to financial imperatives Calvert, and Rosner (2009). However, their studies also highlight the fact that non- economic factors especially human resource issues and leadership styles, may also effect the professional 'lived' experience of the college middle manager involved in M&A organizational change. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of colleges Calvert, and Rosner (2009) was also a prime consideration.

The UK Central Government, and the Welsh Government, continue to be a strong external influence on the FE sector through their funding and educational policies and spending reviews Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS), (2015) and Jones (2013) National Assembly Research Paper, Further Education Structure in Wales. Mumford (1988) refers to these external influences as more difficult for managers to control, yet play an important part in a manager's performance.

This review also investigates the impact of merger change on college manager performance. An examination of the role of the middle manager in the private sector is outside the scope of this study.

### 2.1.3 Introduction to Extant Research

The roles of management and leadership, and their potential impact on the work practices of the college manager during major change is the focus for this research study. The discussion considers the challenging and changing organizational environment, which occurs from college M&As and the creation of a new entity. Literature sources accessed by the review include: Professional publications, Government reports, Scholarly journals and On-line journal databases.

The notion of the college middle manager 'lived' experience was defined and examined in chapter one. Though the literature contains much about management and leadership, there is a paucity of literature relating to the role and professional 'lived' experience of the college middle manager during merger transitional change.

### 2.1.4  Management and Leadership in General in the Further Education Sector

## 2.1.4 i) Management

Much of the debate and discussion about management originates from studies carried out in the private business sector and is, therefore, not specifically orientated towards the FE college environment. However, the principles of management are generic and are, therefore, equally important in both the private and public sectors. In this study, the author specifically focuses on management and leadership as it relates to the role of the college manager within FE college environment.

Organizations traditionally structured consist of a set of core functional elements including planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding and controlling. It is these functional elements that organizations are traditionally focused. Fayol (1949) argued that these functional elements were surrounded by managerial authority, status and power, which implies a bureaucratic approach to management. This highlights a controlling element within the management role, thus implying management is orientated around a set of functions tightly regulated by a framework of rules, regulations and procedures Taylor (1947). This traditionalist evidence on management seems to suggest formality, central command and a degree of inflexibility underpinning the role of management.

Management has been defined by a number of scholars. Definitions of the role of management can be traced back to earlier work carried out by Taylor (1947) who applied a scientific stance to his study based upon an analysis of work tasks to establish the best way to control work and eliminate waste.

Drucker (2007) defines management as a function and, therefore, requires supervisors, middle managers and senior managers, at the top of the organization, to direct the work of their subordinates. Kotter (1992) study defines the management role as evolving around systems of work based on management functions of planning, controlling and the directing of the work of others. Fayol (1949) refers to the management function, as directing others to carry out specific tasks. Quinlan (1992) succinctly describes the manager role as "A manager is one who has responsibility for others".

In a small scale study carried out amongst Chief Executives, and criticised by some other scholars, Mintzberg (2011) identifies three distinct generic roles for mainstream managers, namely, Interpersonal, Informational and Decisional, which form a fundamental part of the

management role and is surrounded by power and authority. He argues that beyond the generic elements of management each area of work has its unique characteristics that set additional specific challenges for managers. The role of manager takes place in a changing environment where the variety of work tasks, job pace and fragmentation of work, are all prevalent. This suggests management provides order and control within a specific structure, aligned to systems and procedures Bennis (1999).

Earlier traditionalist views of management implied an organization managed from a 'top-down' perspective suggesting a hierarchical or systematic approach to organizational management incorporating a command and control approach, favouring a centralized style of management. A controlled approach to management.

An interesting dimension to the manager role is based on the manager as being proactive and entrepreneurial Fondas, and Stewart (1994). They argue that the manager's role is based on expectations, which potentially emerge from the job description. This seems to suggest that managers can modify part of the management process resulting in changes to the role. This indicates that the proactive and entrepreneurial aspects of the role creates fluidity of the manager role which is evolving. However, a contrasting view by Kotter (1999) suggests managers have little time to be proactive. They are more likely to be reactive or 'fire-fighting' in their manager role.

Later scholars, Hale (1986), Kotter (1982, 1992), Mintzberg (1973, 1989, 2011), and Stewart (1975, 1989) offered a major change in views on management. Hale (1986) argues the management role is variable and not suited to the application of a static approach, whilst Kotter (1992) suggests managers are reactive and non-reflective. Mintzberg (1989) argues a contemporary focus should be on what managers actually do. However, he also raises the importance of manager performance but suggests that performance is dependent on how well the manager understands and responds to the processes and dilemmas of the job. Studies by Kotter (1992) based upon a small group of senior executives, widens the debate on the formal role of manager beyond a set of functions carried out within a controlled environment. His study suggests the manager role is not a static function, and involves limited reflection and is not well organized. His study supports Mintzberg's view of the manager having and informational role, but also included manager understanding, which he judged crucial to effectiveness. It was interesting to note that Kotter's (1992) study also

highlights the 'accidental' experiences of managers, which form part of the manager role. This confirms that the manager role is flexible and most certainly unpredictable. This adds weight to Kotter's view of the co-existence of an informal agenda consisting of managers pursuing own agenda allied to specific goals. According to Kotter (1992) there is potential for conflict between formal and informal agendas. Stewart's (1975) study into the role of the manager, appears more compelling. Her large scale study supports the views of Kotter that managers do not work to neat and well organized themes, but rather that managers work at a fast pace, deal with a substantial variety of work objectives and whilst working, make a number of personal choices which actually impacts on what actually do.

Over recent years there appears to have been no significant change in how managers actually carryout the role of manager. Later scholars confirm this view and suggest that it is the organizational environment that has been the significant factor of change. Scholars such as (Berguist 1998; Briggs 2004; Drucker 2007; Hale 1986, and Minztberg (2011) consider the work environment as being complex, difficult and challenging and therefore a significant influence on the middle manager role.

The manager's role also consists of a series of complex and fragmented work patterns, influenced by duration of managerial activities and time available to undertake these activities Kotter (1982). A later study by Stewart (1989) asserts the working patterns of middle managers can also be influenced by certain ambiguities including, categorizations of different management roles allied to different cultural settings. These have a strong influence on how we define the role of manager Stewart (1989).

The importance of management in the FE sector, highlighted by the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership (2002) refers to management as a critical success factor. Success being measured in relation to key performance indicators (KPIs). For example, student recruitment, retention and attainment. Management of budgets and staff are also identified as (KPI) targets for college middle managers.

The notion of the middle manager seems at times difficult to qualify in the FE college sector Risk, and Stewart (1992). This view is accentuated during periods of transitional change, such as college merger, and where flatter organizational structures are evidenced. The positioning of the college middle manager seems to be located between senior manager posts and first

line supervisors Risk, and Stewart (1992). This suggests a potential ambiguity as to the status and responsibilities of the middle manager.

Mintzberg (1975) argues that the manager's role is much broader and to focus simply on a set of functions is unsuitable. The view of Mintzberg (1975) infers is that modern management has become more complex in nature. This is a view supported through studies by Hale (1986) who also recognised the increasingly complex nature of the role of manager. This might suggest this complexity leads to role inconsistency and uncertainty. According Stewart (1976) uncertainty is part of the manager's role given the emergence of unexpected issues. This complexity can lead to managers being reactive rather than proactive. Brigg's (2001) interprets this reactiveness as the middle manager role involving 'spinning plates'.

The role of college middle manager seems to contain two distinct elements, a professional role and a managerial role Thompson, and Wolstencroft (2015). Their studies identified a conflict of values between the college middle manager role expressed as professional, consisting of a major curriculum focus with a concern for students and the role as manager, likened to a systematic process, linked to the achievement of financial and non-financial targets, thus contributing to role efficiency and effectiveness. An important observation is that enactment of the role seemed to be accompanied by a lack of power and authority Thomson, and Wolstencroft (2015).

## 2.1.4 ii) Management Characteristics and Competences

The manager role contains a broad set of characteristics surrounded by complexity, which has become a feature of modern day management Hale (1986). His study was critical of earlier studies by Fayol (1949), and Taylor (1947) and argued their views contained limitations, focusing primarily on achievement translated as outcomes, expressed as organizational objectives, rather than a focus on future direction. He argued that the broadness and complexity of the manager role was enhanced by four key characteristics and managerial behaviour. Emerging themes included, variation and contingency, choice and negotiation, pressure and conflict and reaction and non-reflection.

Studies carried out by Stewart (1989) question the focus of Hale's study by stating that degree of ambiguity exists in his study. She argues that it is not clear whether identified themes relate individually to management work, managerial jobs or managerial behaviour or

are inclusive of all themes. A more direct focus on the management role is afforded by Stewart (1989) in which she prefers a less ambiguous focus based on 'managerial jobs' rather than 'managerial work', arguing that the definition of 'managerial jobs' is a more effective way to define posts described as managerial. This clearly defines the manager role as being carried out by managers rather than by people who undertake some management tasks within a non-management role.

There is a commonality of managerial work when considered from a number of specific categories including: specialist, technician, general and administrative (Hale 1986). The variability of some tasks also create a degree of commonality Mintzberg (1994). The management role is further compounded by the potential for role confusion arising from this categorization and also by the different work activities and behaviours associated with the role and whether the work and activities is exclusively a management role Hale (1986). The idea that the management role has a behavioural focus is strongly supported by Stewart (1982). However, whilst Hale (1986) recognises that the manager role incorporates a behavioural perspective, he is less convinced that management behaviour accounts for a significant part of the manager role.

Management competences including, for example, manager behaviours, attributes and skills are needed to perform the manager workload effectively Mumford, and Gold (2004). However, there appears an ongoing debate on generic approaches to management. Miller et al (2001) suggest that generic approaches do not take into account the diversity of managers. Another study by Tovey (1993) whilst supporting the views of Miller et al (2001) argues that these generic approaches do not take account of specific business needs and critical success factors. An incomplete picture may therefore be drawn of management performance.

### 2.1.4 iii) Internal and External Environments

A study by Kotter (1999) reveals the concept of the internal and external environments. The external environment consisting of the economy, competition and Government influence. In the (FE) sector this is exercised through their educational policies and provider of core funding related to the numbers of students recruited and retained, all contribute to creating increased complexity for management. Mumford (1988) refers to these external influences

as more difficult for managers to control, yet they play an important part in a manager's performance. This may be further evidence of the complexity surrounding the middle manager role.

External influences on the middle manager role was also recognised by McConville (2006) as an important and common element affecting middle managers in both sectors. In the FE sector, a change of emphasis in inspection frameworks and requirements by Ofsted and Estyn were influential, in a re-focusing the work of college middle managers Randel, and Brady (1997). The requirements of examining and validating agencies have also influenced the work of college middle managers.

Complexity caused through organizational change is highlighted by Bergquiet (1998). His study supports the findings of Mintzberg (1989), and Kotter (1999) and highlights two important perspectives. Firstly, recognition the establishment of a new entity produces complexity and fragmentation. Secondly, there seems to be an added complexity that change creates both uncertainty and anxiety for the middle manager. Whilst these findings indicate a relationship between organizational change and role complexity, they might also suggest organizational change is counter-productive. Organizational and environmental factors seem to influence manager outcomes suggesting a degree of flexibility in the manager role Stewart (1989).

The internal organizational environment, in addition to the daily work activities of the manager, can potentially influence the role of the manager Hale (1986). He relates these factors to function, level and type, structure and size of the organization. This might suggest that during FE College merger change the role of the college manager has the potential to become even more complex and challenging.

Good quality management is congruent of merger success and therefore has a positive effect of actually reducing organizational trauma Chadwick (1997). Sir Adrian Webb in his independent review on Further Education in Wales (2007) reinforces the importance of high quality management to the success of colleges. Stewart (2003) concludes the key factor emerging from her findings on management application, is the stability gained from management acting as a foundation during transitional change. However, stability can be compromised during M&A due to redundancy and the inexperience of middle managers

promoted into new and enlarged roles. This has the potential to enhance levels of anxiety and create uncertainty for middle managers Stewart (2003).

Dowley (2013) pursues the line of argument by Stewart (2003). He refers to a lack of knowledge and understanding experienced by middle managers of the M&A process. His findings suggest that this lack of knowledge negatively impacts on how middle managers manage operations. It is this lack of knowledge that produces a barrier to understanding what needs to be done. The findings of the DES report (2003) reinforces the work of Dowley (2013) and suggests that knowledge gaps and understanding, might be symptomatic of a lack of communication between senior managers and middle managers. Within the flux of merger change, additional factors seem to compound the role of college middle manager. Limited influence on policy-making and high levels of responsibility and accountability, but with limited powers seem to be prominent features of the role Pepper, and Giles (2014). Their view that the college middle manager role is, at times, overwhelming, is perhaps more evident during merger transition. This might suggest middle managers attempting to manage competing priorities.

The findings of Kotter (1990, 1999) concurs with the traditionalists views of management promulgating the importance of structure and management functions. For example, planning, organizing, motivating and controlling. This evidence suggests that a degree of stability is a necessary component of the management role and certainly important during M&A transition. According to these findings, the traditional perspective still seems influential by contributing a degree of consistency, as exercised through a system of rules, regulations, structure and set agenda.

The findings of Prye, and Taneja (2010) support the importance of Fayol's theories to modern management. However, their line of argument suggests that Fayol's studies fail to take into account of the fundamental differences between managers and the variability of different organizational environments. In this sense, their findings support those of Kotter (1999) regarding the importance of organizational and external environments to the management role and their contribution to manager role complexity.

There seems to be general agreement between Kotter (1990), and Mintzberg (1975, 1989, 1999) that the functions of management, as espoused by Fayol and Taylor, are a critical and necessary foundation, providing a degree of stability to the management role. Complexity

may be accentuated during college M&A. Kotter's (2012) later study further reinforces his earlier views on complexity and echoes the views of Hale, (1986), and Mintzberg, (1989) associating management complexity to organizations operating within challenging internal and external environments. A number of themes arise from a review of the management literature. The traditionalist views of management scholars Fayol, (1949), and Taylor, (1947) continue to provide a solid foundation for defining management. However, later authors Hale, (1986), Kotter, (2000), and Mintzberg, (1975, 1989, 2011) argue a wider perspective on the management role, incorporating a broader set of characteristics. Internal and external influences have also contributed to the manager role becoming more challenging Kotter, (1999) and Mumford, (1988). The role of management is also surrounded by uncertainty and manager behaviour is also an influence Stewart (1986). The literature suggests that the middle manager role can be ambiguous and that the college middle manager operates within environments that are both complex and difficult. The contrasting themes of professionalism and management are important themes impacting specifically on the college middle manager role Wolsfencroft (2015). Increasing staff interaction and negotiation, through effective communication, suggests that leadership might be an integral part of the manager role.

The author now discusses the theme of leadership and explores a potential relationship between management and the role of leadership.

## 2.1.5 Leadership

Leadership is explored through several interrelated themes. For example, competences and characteristics, the potential relationship between leadership and management and leadership styles.

Leadership has been defined by a number of scholars. Mumford, and Gold (2004) who suggest that leadership is discrete and is about vision and charisma. The findings of Kotter (1990) argue that leadership is about coping with change. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2001) promulgate the view that leadership is about the application of emotional intelligence. These views expose the complex nature of leadership and the potential importance of leadership when managing organizational change.

A critical part of the college middle manager's role appears to embrace particular tasks that are considered supportive, negotiative and implementative Briggs (2001). This suggests a feature of the role involves staff interaction and the manager reconciling differences and mediating tensions. This might infer the presence of a leadership element to the manager role.

During periods of transitional change and increasing complexity, empowerment of subordinates to take responsibility and authority of decisions affecting them is paramount Millar, and Millar (2001). The harnessing of groups of employees becomes an effective force in implementing successful change and ensuring successful leadership Hatcher (2005). Blanchard (2007) concurs with this view by inferring that participation is an essential element of leadership. Kouzes, and Posner (2012) refer to participation as enabling employees by the leader. Their studies place an important emphasis on relationships, trust and competence to engendering participation. The building blocks of leadership.

Commonality of evidence from a number of studies by Bennis (1989) highlighting the importance of leader pro-activeness and change Ibarra, and Hansen (2011) correlating relationships and communication Everard, and Morris (1990) linking leadership to participation Carnell (2007). He states that leadership is an inherent and therefore a necessary function of change. Overall, their studies seem to advocate a strong case for leadership.

Other scholars such as Everard & Morris, (1990) and Mintzberg, (1989) suggest interpersonal skills and interactive communication are important. This suggests a potential complementary link between leadership and management roles.

According to Hatcher (2005) the style of leadership adopted during change is mainly transformational in nature. Leadership styles such distributed leadership Bush, and Glover (2014) and transactional leadership Crawford (2012) appear less prominent. Millar, and Millar (2001) argue leadership is crucial to organizational success. According to Lumby (2013) leadership style has the potential to influence the effectiveness of the middle manager. According to Lumby (2013) leadership style has the potential to influence the effectiveness of the middle manager.

In the following section the author considers the competences and general characteristics of leadership.

## 2.1.6 Competences and Characteristics of Leadership

A study by Bennis (1984) attempts to define leadership through a competency approach. He contends that leadership requires the leader to have a number of competencies, or inter-personal skills, consisting of communication, trust and management of self. A similar line of argument, outlined by Hersey, and Blanchard (1988) also argues the importance of communication to the role of leadership and introduces the relevance of trust and self-management when defining leadership. Studies by Bennis, (1984, 1989), and Ibarra & Hensen, (2011) debate the importance of leadership characteristics and echo the findings of Hersey, and Blanchard (1998) in which they conclude the importance of the impact of leadership during a period of organizational change.

Two studies by Bennis, (1984, 1989) trust is a pre-requisite for building dependency of the leader where vision, integrity and communication are essential elements. This suggests that leaders have to be responsive and proactive to organizational change, especially with regard to major change associated with M&As. Studies by Honey, Passmore, and O'Shea (2010) on leadership concur with this view by asserting that leadership needs to be responsive and adaptable to certain situations, created by organizational change.

Bennis (1989) paints a wider picture of leadership. This broader canvas introduces the notion of innovation, development and influence. Studies seem to suggest the leader requires a positive influence over subordinates and senior management, yet at the same time has the vision to develop and innovate. Everard, and Morris (1990) concur with the view of Bennis (1989) by confirming that leadership involves interactions with people, therefore, demonstrating a humanistic side to the role. This infers the importance of participation by subordinates in decision-making and the leader's ability to influence behaviours, thus pivotal to progressing reform of the merged organization. Their study has significance to the argument pursued by Stewart (2003) when she states that human resource considerations have become more important in later college M&As. Bergquiet (1988) makes the suggestion that complexities of management might potentially impact on the leadership role through

the leaders involvement with personnel, as outlined by Stewart (2003). This line of argument also gains the support of Ibarra, and Hansen (2011), when they also demonstrate the interaction of the leader, with employees, as being complex. Their position adds further support to the argument of Bennis, (1989), and Everard & Morris, (1990), that leadership should be participative through the empowerment of individuals. Communication is crucial process to effecting participation and result good relations Ibarra, and Hansen (2011). Hatcher (2005) also recognises the correlation between the leadership role and subordinates by suggesting that wider employee participation contributes to increased effective organizational change. Leadership is an effective conduit for instigating effective organizational change Carnell (2007).

An interesting line of argument outlined by Kotter (1990) makes a distinction between the generic roles of management as outlined in Mintzberg's model (Figure 4: Page 48) identifying Interpersonal, Informational and decisional roles of the mainstream manager and a leadership role. He suggests leadership is a distinct function quite separate from the management role, yet due to the complexity of organizational change leadership is required for effective change. Studies by Bennis, (1984), and Everard & Morris, (1990) imply leadership involves interactions with people, therefore, demonstrating a humanistic side to the role and the importance of inter-personal skills. Their studies suggests a leadership role clearly emerges from Mintzberg's (1989) model, through the interpersonal role, thus demonstrating both management and leadership roles. The case for a leadership role is strengthened in a later study by Kotter (2000) in which he provides a convincing association between organization change, developing a change strategy and the importance of involving staff in implementing change. Inspiring and motivating staff is a leadership characteristic Kotter (2000). Drucker (2011) supports this view and states that whilst managers are pre-occupied with objective setting, planning and measuring, they also communicate and motivate staff. A leadership activity.

### 2.1.7  The relationship of Leadership to Management

Zaleznik's (1986) study recognized a relationship, albeit separate, between the manager and leadership role. He suggested differences, could be explained by how a manager thinks, acts and motivates others. His study considered them as two separate roles. The manager role, being a process surrounded by order and control, whereas leadership involved an emotional interchange with the leader having a personal and active attitude. In a similar way, whilst Mintzberg's (1989) management role model (Figure 4: Page 48) highlights three distinct generic manager roles, the presence of an inter-personnel role might suggest the manager's role incorporates a leadership element. The over-arching formal authority, and status, accords with the management function.
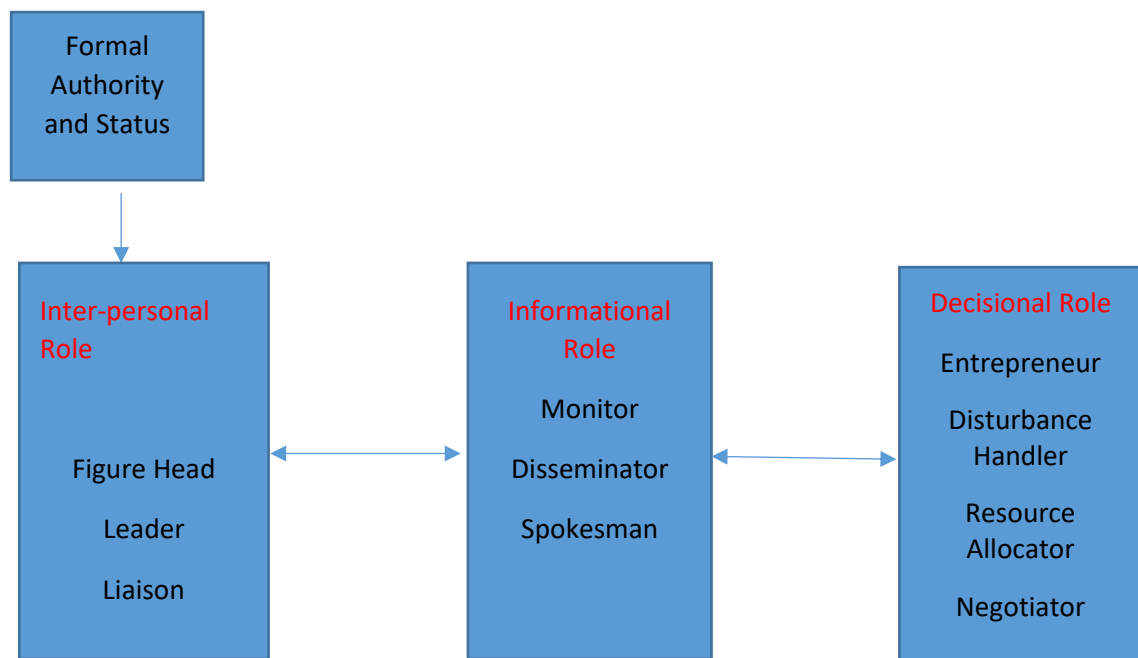


**Figure 4.**  The Manager's Role - Mintzberg (1989)

Mintzberg's model implies the manager is enacting primarily three distinct generic management roles within the generic manager role. The interpersonal role appears to have a potential relationship with a leadership function. There is also a strong link with authority and power, which is indicative of the management role. Managers are vested with power through formal authority, whereas leadership is the determinant of how much power will be realized which places a strong emphasis on the leader as a motivator and encourager

Mintzberg (1989). Mintzberg's study provides strong evidence to support a holistic view of an integrated manager.

An important point is raised in a study by Glover, Gleeson, Gough, and Johnson (1998) who state that the middle manager role integrates two roles, that of manager and leader. Nonaka, and Takeuchi (2011) contribute to the debate on leadership and management. They add value and argue an important distinction to the debate on the potential complementary position of both management and leadership roles. Firstly, the process of management drives managers to rely on explicit knowledge, within a systematic and controlled context, which by nature requires generalization and measurement. Secondly, leadership, as associated with change, which seemingly gravitates around participation and informality. From the evidence, the author contends conflict is symptomatic of an interdependency between management and leadership roles, especially when taking into account various authors views on what constitutes the a manager and leadership. This difference in views might have a potential influence on the professional 'lived' experiences of the college middle manager.

Traditionalist scholars Fayol, (1949), and Taylor, (1947) and later scholars Kotter, (1990, 2000), Mintzberg, (1989), and Zaleznik (1986) and argue the importance of both manager and leadership roles as being distinctive yet potentially complimentary.

Strong and positive leadership during times of organizational change is a critical factor and associated with successful change Cerych, and Sabatier (1986). Their argument seems to suggest that reform of an organization might be compromised if leadership is not evidenced. Gleeson, and Knights (2008) whilst supporting the arguments for leadership, focus their findings on utilising a social practice approach to leadership. This seems to generate a positive effect on enhancing management in the FE sector through adopting both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to management. The evidence of Cerych, and Sabatier (1986) and outcomes of a later study by Gleeson, and Knights (2008) seems to suggest both management and leadership roles are not only complimentary, but also conducive to situations requiring major change, such as organizational mergers.

Having examined management and leadership the author now explores the professional experiences of college middle managers responsible for managing change.

## 2.2 Middle Manager Professional 'Lived' experience

### 2.2.1 Work Practice

According to Bennet (1995) the middle manager role implies a hierarchy or formal structure where senior managers assume responsibility for strategy. The implication from this view is that middle managers take responsibility for operational matters.

The responsibilities of college middle managers have expanded significantly since incorporation. Beresford, and Michel's (2014) argue that the role has transformed beyond a pedagogical role, to a role influenced by a market-based managerial perspective focusing upon income generation and the application of an entrepreneurial approach to management. This has transformed the role of the college middle manager Gleeson, and Shaun (1999). Evidence in the study by Gleeson, and Shaun (1999) also indicates that increased competition for students in the market place is also a significant factor associated with the middle manager becoming more business-like. M&A drivers by central Government and the Wales Government have also progressed a commerciality agenda since incorporation of colleges in 1992.

Within the FE sector, the role of the college middle manager seems to be a source of contention due to the increased workloads and increased responsibilities. Jensen Van Rensberg, Davis, and Venter (2014) contrast the clear recognition of the middle manager role in the literature against the vagueness of the term middle manager within the organization. However, Jensen Van Rensberg, Davis, and Venter (2014) seem to draw a conclusion when they suggest middle manager terminology accords with a functional operation and purpose. Clarity of the manager role is offered by the views of traditional theorists such as Fayol, (1947), Fiedler, (1967), and Taylor (1949) where they confirm the management role is consistent with a set of functions, regulations, control and procedures. The functions of planning, organising, directing and controlling, provide an explanation on the generalizations of management and is useful to understanding the manager role from a generic perspective. A study by Kotter (1982) extends this clarity by arguing that whilst management is about managing a number of functions, it is also about managing people. It seems that these functions of management provide a foundation to the role of the middle manager. Middle managers are held accountable for all operational outcomes Hale (1986).

A plethora of complex factors have also influenced the college middle manager role. These have included: professional and manager status, the attitude of senior managers and the value placed on the middle manager role by others Briggs (2005). A far greater influence, highlighted by her studies, is the potential conflict that is evidenced between the autonomous nature of the role and whole college coherence. A disconnect, between the requirement for cross-college compliance, and the autonomous nature of the middle manager role appears to be evident.

## 2.2.2 Middle Manager Responsibilities

In an early study by Briggs (2001) she states that the majority of middle managers in the FE sector lead curriculum departments, with a smaller number of managers taking responsibility for support departments. College middle managers have responsibility for curriculum provision, management of subordinates, departmental administration and potential teaching duties. Evidence from Briggs, (2001), Jensen Van Rensberg, and Davis & Venter (2014) identify these as functions of the management role. The nature of these functions suggest a role surrounded by communication in relation to inter-department and communication with subordinates and senior management. According to Stewart (2003) these operational functions provide role stability.

In a later study by Briggs (2004) she concludes that the middle manager role is operational and administrative and, therefore, acts as a conduit for strategy formulated by senior managers. This suggests that the middle manager's subordinates implement strategy through work procedures, via the middle manager. Briggs (2004) also espouses the criticality for college middle managers to have clarity of role.

In a subsequent study by Briggs (2005), she undertakes a more challenging critique of the middle manager role. Whilst recognizing the complex and challenging organizational environment that middle managers operate in, she also refers to the complexity of the middle manager role. Her view progresses the extent of complexity, as outlined by Bergquiet, (1998), Kotter, (1999), and Mintzberg (1989, 2000, 2011) beyond a general discussion on organizational change.

A study by Thody (1991) appears to suggest middle managers adopt a reactive stance, rather than a pro-active stance in their work. Thody's (1991) observations help to shape a view of middle manager work as fragmented surrounded by a 'busyness' culture which does not allow for planning and reflective practice. This could impede progress as a manager.

In a study by Gleeson, and Knights (2008) focusing on the potential middle managers, the study findings are invaluable in exploring issues surrounding the middle manager role. The authors paint a picture of the leadership role as participative, yet at the same time they expose an expectation for middle managers to maintain their autonomy as a vehicle for connecting with students. Their studies also suggest that recognition of values and identity are paramount to the role of the middle manager.

There appears to be a commonality relating to 'managerialism', with its focus on targeted outcomes and financial accountability, between the FE sector middle manager role with that of other public sector middle manager roles McConville (2006). Whilst management roles in the FE and public sectors encompass management functional elements, additional commonalities seem to emerge McConville (2006). Business imperatives and organizational change seems to be the catalyst for the convergence on drivers. A major commonality is the shift away from a public sector ethos to an environment of commerciality, which has influenced the role of the middle manager McConville (2006). He states "Role dissonance is a very real issue for middle line managers, who in many respects embody the tensions, which exist between the organization as an entity, and the individuals who work within it".

### 2.2.3 Commercial Focus

Role dissonance McConville (2006) is influenced by a shift in emphasis from a professionalism stance to one of commerciality Randell, and Brady (1997). Their findings imply that the focus for middle managers has moved away from a high priority of concern for student learning and academic standards or community of practice, towards a position where student numbers and income become prevalent. What the study does not detail is the degree to which this shift has taken place. However, the shift does appear to have had an influence on the middle manager role and performance.

Managerialism is considered an ideology Hoyle and Wallace (2005). Whilst they distinguish between management and leadership from a general perspective, which reflects he views of both traditionalist and contemporary scholars, they suggest that managerialism is an ideology which translates to an over exposure of the management function. This implies an excess of control which might have the effect of further reducing the effectiveness of leadership. Managerialism has its foundations in a set of beliefs and practices, which have a relationship to manager accountability and change effectiveness Exworthy, and Halford (1999). Stewart (2003) refers these accountability factors, translated as financial targets and outcomes, as 'hard' measures. A form of control.

Pollit (1990) articulates a new professionalism for public sector managers appears to be predicated upon a 'new' managerialism focusing on strict controls, efficient use of resources and an extensive use of KPIs to measure performance of managers. Lumby, and Tomlinson (2000) refer to managerialism and professionalism as separate cultures. This has the potential for conflict with college middle managers whose primary role is curriculum focused.

### 2.2.4 Behaviour, Influence and Authority

Whilst Drowley (2013) makes a persuasive argument, that power in colleges seems to suggest that power is restricted to a few people, namely senior managers. In a study by Lumby (2013), in which he concurs with the findings of Dowley (2013), he makes a persuasive argument, that in reality, power is retained by a small group of people, usually senior managers, whose behaviours impact on middle manager influence. This argument also gains support from Crawford (2014) who asserts that managerialism and centralization are drivers of influencing

change, which may be counter-productive for middle managers focusing on a particular behaviour supportive of participation.

Findings by McKinney, McMahon, and Welsh (2013) acknowledge the position of the middle manager in the 'new' organization, when they propose that the middle manager is a major driving force for implementing organizational priorities. However, the measure of the influence of middle managers in the new organization might be overstated. Beresford, and Michaels (2014) offer a contrasting view which seems contradictory to the findings of McKinney, McMahon, and Welsh (2013). They claim there is a dearth of information on what college middle managers contribute during all phases of transitional change.

The concept of the middle manager, as a change agent during organizational re-structuring, is highlighted in a study by Balogun, and Johnson (2004). Their studies suggest a perceived level of influence which appears to be reduced during this transitional change. Balogun, and Johnson (2004) identify the root cause of this reduced level of influence might be related to a more directed style of management rather than a participative style as encouraged by a leadership role. The importance of inter-relationships has an important part to play in contributing to enhancing leader influence Taffinder (2002). This study highlights the importance of influence and how the leadership role contributes to increasing the influence of the middle manager. Influence has the potential to take precedent over power thus heightening the credibility level of the middle manager enacting a leadership role McGrath and Bates (2013).

Studies by Salem, & Williams, (1984), and Lumby (2013) provide a discernible shift in focus from the views of Balogun, and Johnson (2004) on the potential reasons for this reduced level of influence. Salem, and Williams (1984) interprets this lack of preparation to middle managers as having a lack of ability to interpret and disseminate information regarding change. There is also an inference that this inability might impact negatively on the middle manager's ability to predict potential outcome of change.

Leadership has a greater propensity towards influence, rather than authority Bush, and Glover (2014). This outcome might be considered from two differing, yet interesting, perspectives. Firstly, middle managers may agree with the view of Lumby (2013) that power and authority resides with the senior management group, a prerequisite of the management

role. Secondly, if middle managers perceive themselves as leaders, then the subject of leader influence becomes a paramount factor when interacting with employees. Both perspectives can result in conflict as argued by Bologun, and Johnson (2004) and create anxiety and uncertainty for the middle manager.

An interesting point is made by McKinney, McMahon, and Welsh (2013) when they suggest a close correlation between influence and empowerment of employees. They relate new entities, resulting from M&A with flatter organizational structures. Whilst this leads to an increase in middle manager responsibilities, which can potentially overburden the manager, there is a potential positive outcome. Smaller teams and more personal interaction, suggest a greater opportunity for the leader to demonstrate greater influence. This can lead to a change in culture and an increase empowerment of subordinates. This participation directly impacts on leader influence. Whilst the views of Millar, and Millar (2001) make no reference to organizational structure, they do assert that empowerment is inherent in organizations affected by accelerated change and complexity.

Boocock (2013) provides evidence of an external influence impacting on the role of middle manager. Central Government, through their funding and inspection policies, exert external influence and control. According to Boocock (2013) Central Government influence a managerial response conducive of a management style predicated on centralization and control. This view reinforces the conclusions of a study by Lumby (2013) with the effect of potentially minimizing the impact of both influence and empowerment.

The degree of influence and authority held by the college middle manager at the pre-merger and post-merger phases of college merger change, has a relationship with the professional identity of the middle manager.

## 2.2.5 Professional Identity and Responsibility

Briggs (2007) argues organizational change has an impact on professional identity. Her study suggests that changes in professional identity of middle managers commenced at post-incorporation in 1992. In a later study, Busher (2005), pointed out that reduction in professional identity become more progressive in successive years. This might be indicative

of on-going change during college M&As. According to Briggs (2007) the resulting outcome of diluted professional identity was role ambiguity.

In his study, Busher (2005) concludes that a person's professional identity is based on personal perceptions of self-image and self-efficacy within the work context. Dowley (2013) supports the view of Busher (2005) through his study which also identified middle managers feeling a loss of professional identity. An important finding from this study adds to feelings of a loss of professional identity, and includes middle managers personal values.

Taffinder (2000) emphasises a key point when he states that leadership is "An action of committing subordinates to contribute their best to the purpose of the organization". This suggests that if subordinates are key players in change, then the behaviour of middle managers is paramount to effecting positive M&A change. This might also suggest an association between middle manager behaviour and level of influence. However, when taking into account the evidence on professional identity as highlighted by Busher, (2005), Briggs, (2007) and Dowley (2013) then the behaviour as highlighted by Taffinder (2000) might be compromised.

The role of the college middle manager appears multi-faceted and complicated, and yet seems to have been influenced by organizational change resulting from college M&A. This seems to have diluted the professional identity of the manager and potentially has a negative effect upon middle manager influence.

In the following section the author progresses discussion of the middle manager role as influenced by organizational change.

## 2.3 Organizational Change

### 2.3.1 Influence of Merger Change

Organizational change requires a degree of consistency Kotter (1990). He asserts that consistency is achieved through the implementation of practices and procedures, within a controlled environment, reflecting the role of management. During M&As there is a suggestion that consistency of management contributes to stability. At times of turbulent organizational change a degree of stability becomes a necessary prerequisite. His views on

leadership, relate to leadership acting as a catalyst for organizational change. Earlier findings by Mintzberg, (1989), and Zaleznik (1986) imply that the management function provides a degree of stability within a challenging and changing environment. Their views on leadership also reflect the view of Carnell (2007) that the leadership role is a catalyst to effect organizational change. The question arises whether effective M&A college change can be effective if solely based upon the function of management.

The M&A of FE colleges has involved a number of colleges of different sizes. The consistent factor for all FE colleges has been their necessary involvement in the Wales Government transformational agenda for change Jones (2013). According to Gleeson, and Shaun (1999) incorporation of colleges in the FE sector provided an opportunity to review organization structures. Invariably, structural reviews result in the implementation of new management systems which are designed to replace traditional operational management systems no longer fit for purpose Kotter (2012).

There appears to be a number of influences, focusing on both macro, external and micro, internal changes, which can have the effect of increasing pressure on those leading change Lumby (1997).

Key factors driving organizational change focus on financial imperatives such as cost-cutting exercises driven by the policies of Government Nguyen, and Kleiner (2003). Other relevant non-financial factors encompassed political, technical and sociological Calvet, and Rosner (2009). These studies seem to suggest a single focus, prior to merger on the attainment of particular objectives. According to the findings of Bridges (2002) this view is too narrow. He advocates college mergers are a change process viewed from the perspective of a continuum of change. This suggests a longer term view of change is required beyond the merger stage.

A study by Hannagan, Lawton, and Mallory (2007) similarly supports the view by Nguyen, and Kleiner (2003) that economic imperatives are a key driver which influence the middle manager role. They argue that the sole imperative is not only the need to cut costs, but also resulted from changes in funding mechanisms, as influenced by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Colleges currently receive 80% of their income from the FEFC. This availability of core college funding has continued to decrease since the start of these studies. Their studies also offered a further insight into the non-economic factors raised by Calvert,

and Rosner (2009). An important outcome of their study focused upon the importance of leadership to manage effectively, M&A change. Carnell (2007) supports this view by emphasising the role of leadership to successful organizational change.

A supporting perspective on organizational change has been comprehensively discussed by a number of scholars. Studies by Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, and Dentoni (2015) continue the theme of change. Whilst recognising differences between management and leadership Hale (1986), further reinforcing the studies of Bergquiet, (1998), Kotter, (1999), Mintzberg, (1989) and Zaleznick (1986), their main arguments centre upon comparisons between incremental and reform change. Incremental change, they suggest, focuses on maintaining the status quo. This type of change seems out of kilter with change as associated with M&A change. It does not engender a progressive approach to organizational change. Alternatively, reform change, incorporating innovation, vision and longer term strategies and goals, aligns more with M&A organizational change and appears to give further prominence to the leadership role Estyn (2015).

Whilst supporting Zaleznik's (1986) view, particularly in relation to the leadership role, Carnell (2004) stressed two important considerations. Firstly, a positive perspective, the potential of leadership to be a powerful tool acting as a fundamental driving force contributing to effective change. Secondly, there emerges a counter-productive argument which seems to focus upon the limitations of the middle manager to fully enact the leadership role due to a potential lack of ability and capability. The effectiveness of M&A change is dependent upon the middle manager to demonstrate effective leadership. It is this final consideration that is of importance in that it questions the capability of managers to respond to both internal and external change.

M&As in the FE educational sector are fundamentally about transitional change and the creation of a new organizational identity. Change is also about reconfiguration involving people and tasks Heifetz, and Linsky (2002). Marsh (1981) considers change challenging and complex, surrounded by a changing and challenging environment. The similarities common to these studies, suggest the need for a style of leadership that can adapted to organizational circumstances, whilst being cognisant of external factors Estyn (2015). Whilst studies by Carnell (2007) prioritizes leadership over other factors by inferring the importance of leadership. His findings seem to suggest that change can only be effected by the leader's

subordinates, what Carnell (2004) refers to as, an "interaction between 'followers' and leader".

The importance of effective leadership, during change is argued by Kogan (2001). His interpretation of leadership infers a participative change and warns against a 'top-down' imposed change. This view seems to suggest that shared involvement in any M&A change has the potential to contribute to effective change. However, a cautionary note is argued by Guest (2001) who suggests that change needs to be realistic. This requires a certain sensitivity in handling of change and the importance of due consideration as to how factors relating to change are disseminated. This view by Guest (2001) suggests that there is a tenuous line between effective change and failure.

Arising from these various studies on organization change, an important consideration is, therefore, what type of leadership might be suited to M&A organizational change.

## 2.3.2 Operational Environment

Leader (2004) argues that engendering support for organizational change and improvement is crucial. This implies the importance of participation of other middle managers, senior managers and subordinates in change. Whilst Leader (2004) offers a rather general view of change, there are other factors that need to be considered Briggs (2004). Her findings offer a cautionary warning. Middle managers are professional and knowledgeable in familiar areas of work. This suggests that familiarity falls within the boundary of the department they manage. However, her findings suggest, professionalism and knowledge might be compromised when managing outside their immediate, and familiar, area of work. This includes interacting with other managers and leading new teams of people at the pre-merger and post-merger phases. Prye, and Taneja (2003) argue that conflict between managers and team members can cause anxiety and stress. This has the effect of impacting on college manager effectiveness.

A later study by Prye, and Taneja (2010) reinforce their original findings (2003). This later study also correlates and therefore reinforces earlier findings of a (Department of Education and Skills (DES) report (2003). Commonality of views suggests the organizational environment is a significant feature of transitional change. They concur with contemporary

scholars, that organizational environment has the potential to present the middle manager with a challenging organizational climate within which to operate. Carnell (2007) similarly, advocates the influence of the organizational environment on the middle manager role, but widens the discussion to the recognition of an association between the capabilities of the middle manager allied to organization challenges presented by merger. It appears that the challenges of major change invoke the positive nature of new entity, whilst at the same time, has the potential to promote negativity through varying degrees of complexity and fragmentation Berquiet (1998).

Levin (2002) reinforces the views of Barquiet, (1998), and Carnell (2007) on the challenges associated with change. He widens the perspective of the challenges, and points to the existence of a potential relationship between change and the creation of a new entity. There is the potential to create complexity from the creation of this new entity Levin (2002). His translation of complexity equates with strategies and processes which help the organization to adapt to a new environment, as opposed to a focus on the management or leadership role.

Heifetz, and Grashow (2009) also pursue, in their studies, the impact of challenges associated with organizational change. They also include a wider dimension consisting of the external environment. In the FE sector, this translates into Government influence as legislator and provider of funding to colleges.

The broadness of organizational change is recognised by Dentoni (2015). His studies are all embracing and include, innovation, people and organization, important components of leadership having the potential to influence change. Organizational change involves a reshaping of the organization. This invariably involves redefining what people do, which is often translated through a review of management and leadership, a review of role tasks and, as highlighted by Kotter (2012) a change in operational systems. This is a fundamental part of the college M&A process Grashow (2009).

Organizational change resulting in the emergence of a new entity, is associated with improvement is closely linked to leadership. External pressures from Government can also influence the nature of change. An outcome of college M&A organizational change is often accompanied by a review of college budgets at pre-merger and post-merger phases. The

author now reviews the impact of budget constraints in relation to the role of the middle manager.

## 2.4 Control of Income and Costs

One of the key drivers for college M&As is based on financial imperatives.  FE educational M&As transitional change is set against a background of achieving financial imperatives Boyle (2015) (Further Education News FENEWS), and Stewart (2003). Non-economic factors, as identified by Hayes, (2005), Saudarsanam, (2003), and Webb (2009) appear to be equally important.  Harman (2002) recognises these challenges occurring from a turbulent background accompany M&As. It is within this complex organizational background that middle managers have to operate.

Randel, and Brady (1997) argued that a new management approach resulted from change. It was, therefore, inevitable that an outcome of organizational change would be a drive for commerciality. According to Randel, and Brady (1997) this new approach resulted in an increased emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. Their studies related the efficiency and effectiveness of budgetary control to curriculum provision, based on the concept of value for money. A central role of the line function of the college middle manager is based upon budgetary control and the management of discrete cost centres driven by financial imperatives Simmons (1999).

Major organizational transitional change, as the result of college M&A, has influenced outcomes associated with budgetary imperatives. This has directly impacted upon the role of college middle manager with an increased emphasis on manager efficiency and effectiveness.

The final theme explores the importance of middle manager performance allied to effectiveness, and the potential for college middle manager development, in the areas of management and leadership, as a means of potentially improving overall performance at the post-merger phase of college merger.

## 2.5 Role Performance and Development

## 2.5.1 Performance

Performance by college middle managers can be interpreted as the achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs) Boocock (2013). Main KPIs include financial budgeting, embracing income and operational costs, student recruitment, retention and attainment. Allio, (2012), and Jones, (2013) build upon the notion of performance. Allio (2012) alludes to performance as the need for the manager to balance financial and non-financial imperatives, whereas Jones (2013) recognises the inherent importance of performance to the manager role, which might reflect a degree of autonomy middle managers have to run their curriculum departments.

M&A success might be difficult to define. Drowley (2013) in his post-merger study, supports the views of Allio, (2012), and Jones, (2013) by concluding that the achievement of organizational objectives is a paramount considering the performance of middle managers. His findings also highlight an additional factor. Success seems to be predicated on the personal survival of individuals within the organization. This might be the result of the uncertainty surrounding the M&A change process and in particular the need for middle manager job security. La Pina, and Hayes (2005) concur with Drowley (1997) that the personal survival of managers seems to take precedent over organizational survival. This might suggest that alongside the formal role of the middle manager, an informal role exists Hale (1986). During college merger, an additional dimension relating to the fear of change amongst managers has also become a major challenge, which has the power to impact on middle manager performance La Pina, and Hayes (2005).

According to findings by Muijs, Alma, Lumby, Morrison, and Sood (2006) college managers enacting the role of leader is a key factor in developing organizational effectiveness and performance. However, whilst their argument focuses on a pro-active leadership, which they determine drives motivation and improvement, their view, is based on leadership from a general perspective. Whilst agreeing with the view of Muijis et al (2006) on the importance of leadership contributing to effectiveness and performance Hatcher (2004) contends that a particular style of leadership is the key to improving performance. He suggests a transformational leadership style is the important factor to increasing performance.

During major college organizational change college middle managers often find themselves with additional responsibilities. Studies of middle manager experiences during college M&A change, has identified a lack of ability and capability to respond to associated challenges Department of Education and Skills (DofES) Report (2003). This might be interpreted as a of a lack of knowledge and understanding  A report commissioned by the Centre for Excellence in Management and Leadership Training (2002) identified a deficit in leadership skills which cannot be attributed solely to the M&A change.

During organizational change, there might be an increased reliance on a requirement for the right level of skills Carnell (2007). Hatcher (2005) strengthens this view when he suggests a potential relationship between successful leadership and people having the right skills and experience. The findings of Allio (2012) identified gaps in leadership skills, and interpreted these as a lack of competence, thus having a crucial impact on middle manager performance.

The importance of the need for middle managers to have a skills-set appropriate to manage is highlighted by Farahbakhash (2007). He supports the view of Hatcher (2005) and makes a link between skills, performance and effectiveness. Alio, (2012), and Jones, 2013) widen the discussion on middle manager skills, when they imply that middle manager performance, predicated on leadership skills, has a direct effect on effectiveness and efficiency, which can be challenging during organizational M&A change. The overall implication of these studies prioritizes the importance of training and development for middle managers as a means of enhancing their effectiveness in their role and contributing to success transformational change.

## 2.5.2 Continuing Professional Development of Middle Managers

The process of change transcends the creation of a new entity, organization structures and new systems Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, and Dentoni (2015). Their studies suggest an imperative to progress change within a new entity, through effective leadership, innovation and participation of individuals. This suggests an imperative for middle manager development as a contribution towards increasing middle manager performance. Alio, (2012), Hatcher, (2005), and Jones (2013) support the findings of Waddock et al (2015) by reinforcing the importance of leadership skills training and development and a means of addressing to the performance of middle managers.

Middle manager development seems to be closely associated with the skills levels of managers Hall, and Rowlands (2016). An early study by Salem, and Williams (1984) recognized the importance of environmental factors and implied that managers had an inability to describe, predict and explain organizational environmental change. This outcome suggests that organizational change, might be an important influence how middle managers manage and also directs their development.

Support for the findings of Salem, and Williams (1984) arise from a study by the Department of Education and Skills (2003). Following the emergence and proliferation of M&As in the FE educational sector, findings of middle manager experiences by the Department for Education and Skills (DES) (2003) revealed middle managers lacked both ability and capability to respond effectively to organizational challenges presented by merger transitional change. This indicates an opportunity for middle manager development. The debate on leadership training is varied. Findings by Hatcher, (2004), and, Muijs, Alma, Lumby, Morrison, & Sood, (2006) and show that particular forms of leadership development and their relationship to leadership styles are not as effective as first thought. Their conclusions seem to contradict the findings of Hatcher (2004) that a transformational leadership style is more effective for increasing performance.

A contrasting view, which considers leadership and organizational change, is argued by Crawford (2012). He places a greater emphasis upon leadership style rather than the organizational environment. He prefers a shared style of leadership, suggesting a move from a one-dimensional to a collective and situational leadership, in which he infers is adaptable to the various organization challenges, as outlined by Bennet, and Lemoine (2014).

Evidence by Alio, (2012), Farahbakhash, (2007), Jones, (2013), and Waddock et al, (2015) reinforce the relationship of leadership skills and the turbulence of the organizational environment. The important issue appears to be the availability, relevancy and suitability of leadership training for managers Hall, and Rowland (2016). Quinlan (1992) identifies with this view. His findings assert that management training has been too academic and not relating to practice. However, management training is a relevant and important aspect of development. Several key themes identified by Hales (1986) focuses upon variation, contingency, pressure and conflict, thereby placing an emphasis on manager tasks and behaviours. The turbulence of the organizational environment as identified by Alio, (2012),

Farahbakhash, (2007), Jones, (2013), and Waddock et al (2015) reinforces the need for the on-going development in both management and leadership.

According to Lumby (1997) earlier findings suggests fewer college middle managers received training or support, leading to a perception that their abilities and achievements went unrecognized. Conversely, these same studies recognised an improving picture regarding manager development through increased numbers participating in leadership development training. Whilst these studies paint a positive picture, three conflicting issues arose from the findings of Lumby (1997). Firstly, there was an increasing positive position regarding the development of managers, secondly, some managers displayed negative attitudes to training and thirdly, there seemed to be insufficient resources to support manager training. It might be concluded that consideration needs to be given to the relevancy of leadership training and development, whilst taking into account the impact of organizational change and the availability of suitable resources to meet training needs (Lumby, 1997; Hall & Rowland, 2016).

The findings of Salem, and Williams (1984) demonstrates the need to acknowledge the challenges and the variability of a turbulent operational environment, which might require further development of middle managers. This is especially relevant during pre-merger and post-merger phases of college merger, when the impact of change is considered a dominate force. A later study by Stiehm and Townsend (2002) supports their earlier findings relating to the impact of a challenging and variable environment on manager performance. The manager's role, carried out in organizations surrounded by turbulence, comprises of four distinct challenges: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity Stiehm, and Townsend (2002). Awareness by managers of these challenges provides for managers to alter their mind-sets and supporting skills. This has the effect of enabling managers the opportunity to align their individual awareness of forth-coming change with appropriate actions Hall, and Rowland (2016). This enhances leadership agility, thus, increasing the capability of the leader to sense and respond to changes in the organizational environment this resulting in responsive actions deemed to be fast, flexible and focused. Honey, Pasmore, and O'Shea (2010), and Johansen, and Veto (2013) make an interesting observation regarding leadership agility. Their view, that agility, if demonstrated by the leader, has the potential to influence middle manager behaviour. If this results in a positive change in behaviour, then middle

managers might be more responsive to personal development, resulting more positive outcomes on their leadership.

Horney, Pasmore, and O'Shea's (2010) agility model, (Figure 5: Page 67) is grounded in the challenging organizational environments akin to environments evidenced during merger change. The model is a review process for assessing individual's performance and agility Horney, Pasmore, and O'Shea (2010).

To ensure high performance and high agility, Rowland, and Hall (2015) argue that leaders need to identify with three specific parts of the 'nine box' model if they are to become an effective, high performing and agile leader. These consist of, first, reflective high agile performer allied high levels of professionalism, second, leaders demonstrating strategic agility and finally, the leader as a rising star. These three elements of the model can be translated into potential outcomes to be achieved by college middle managers, predicated on excellent performance as demonstrated through adaptability to change, consistency in achieving results, a having high levels of skills and knowledge.

**Figure 5.** Performance Agility - 'Nine Box Model' -  Horney, Pasmore and O'Shea (2010)

Hall, and Rowland (2016) examine a relationship between leadership, management and a VUCA environment and agile leadership. They argue an interrelationship between these factors, which leads to a requirement for leaders and managers to possess appropriate skills to cope with turbulent change. Managers also have to cope with varying degrees of complexity Hall, and Rowland (2016). They argue that leadership development should focus on change factors, a move away from development driven by a requirement based upon stability.

The identification of a relationship between organization and complexities of the environment is also recognized by Prye, and Tanja (2010). Their study considers a wider perspective by suggesting that the implementation of different styles of leadership might also provide adequate responses to the key challenges of a VUCA environment. According to

Bennet, and Lemoine (2014) middle managers can prepare for uncertainty to the challenges of VUCA through application of leadership style. Leadership style is not a panacea, but leadership style can be adjusted to the prevailing organizational environment consisting of new entities, where chaos, conflict and confusion prevail Heifetz, Groshow, and Linsky (2009). Development is a powerful tool and can transform leaders from a transactional stance to a transformational position leading to superior leadership performance Bass (1999).

## 2.6 Summary

The literature says much about formal management roles in the private business sector, as highlighted in the study's contextual diagram (Fiqure 1: Page 19) but not very much about college management and the day-to-day professional 'lived' experiences of college managers in the FE sector, and especially those middle managers occupying a middle manager role in the hierarchical organization structure and within the college context. This suggests a 'gap' in the literature. There is also a paucity of information on the contribution college middle managers make during periods of change.

Themes emerging from the study of the literature include: Management systems and functions, role performance, college manager status and responsibility, Internal and external change and complexity, leadership, work patterns, for example, work routines, managerialism, communication, Influence and authority, college manager identity and continuing professional development (CPD).

The literature review explores many issues, related to the college manager's professional day-to-day 'lived' experiences, including the impact of organizational change in relation to both internal and external environments. Internally, Implementation of practices and procedures, constitute part of the management role and therefore contribute to creating stability. This is crucial during periods of turbulent change such as those related to FE M&As Kotter (1990).

An exploration of the literature shows that the professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers have been influenced by a plethora of issues. During periods of turbulent organizational change, the role of the middle manager has appeared to be potentially

ambiguous, resulting in a loss of professional identity. There are also a number of variables, including manager behaviours, middle and manager competencies which also influence the professional 'lived' experiences of the middle manager. These features combine to create a degree of complexity into the role.

The middle manager role appears to consist of a manager role and leadership role. The former underpinned by a set management functions, namely, planning, organizing, motivating and controlling, associated with managing activities. The leadership role involves an interpersonal approach to managing involving the interaction of subordinates. The literature suggests middle managers combine both roles whilst managing. External factors, namely, Government, Estyn and competition, also appear to exert a degree of influence and control on college middle managers.

Contrasting forces relating to the manager role concern the distinction between the manager acting as a professional and enacting the manager role. The former suggests management of the curriculum and related outcomes of student attainment, whereas the latter, relates to the management of financial and non-financial outcomes. These forces suggest a potential conflict is a possibility as managers manage their curriculum area.

An important issue raised in the literature, is the influence of organizational change on middle manager work patterns. Firstly, organizational restructuring seems to have increased workloads, mainly as a result of fewer managers, within the new entity. Secondly, the responsibilities of remaining middle managers have increased considerably. Middle manager responsibilities, on the one hand, include responsibility for curriculum provision and managing staff, and on the other hand, taking responsibility for managing budgetary matters, suggesting a commercial aspect to the role.

An exploration of the literature suggests a role for middle manager development consisting of both leadership and management training. There appears to be an association between middle manager development and performance. Middle manager development also contributes towards increased efficiency and effectiveness, which impacts on merger success.

The Welsh Government's college merger transitional agenda offered opportunities to colleges' to review their structures and operational polices. However, it is evident that middle

managers felt threatened by this policy. The impact of this policy also heightened the pressure on middle managers leading on change.  As a consequence, turbulent change has produced a challenging operational environment in which middle managers have to operate. The context in which college middle managers have to manage curriculum departments is highlighted in (Figure 6: Page 70.)

**Figure 6.**  Research Study Context
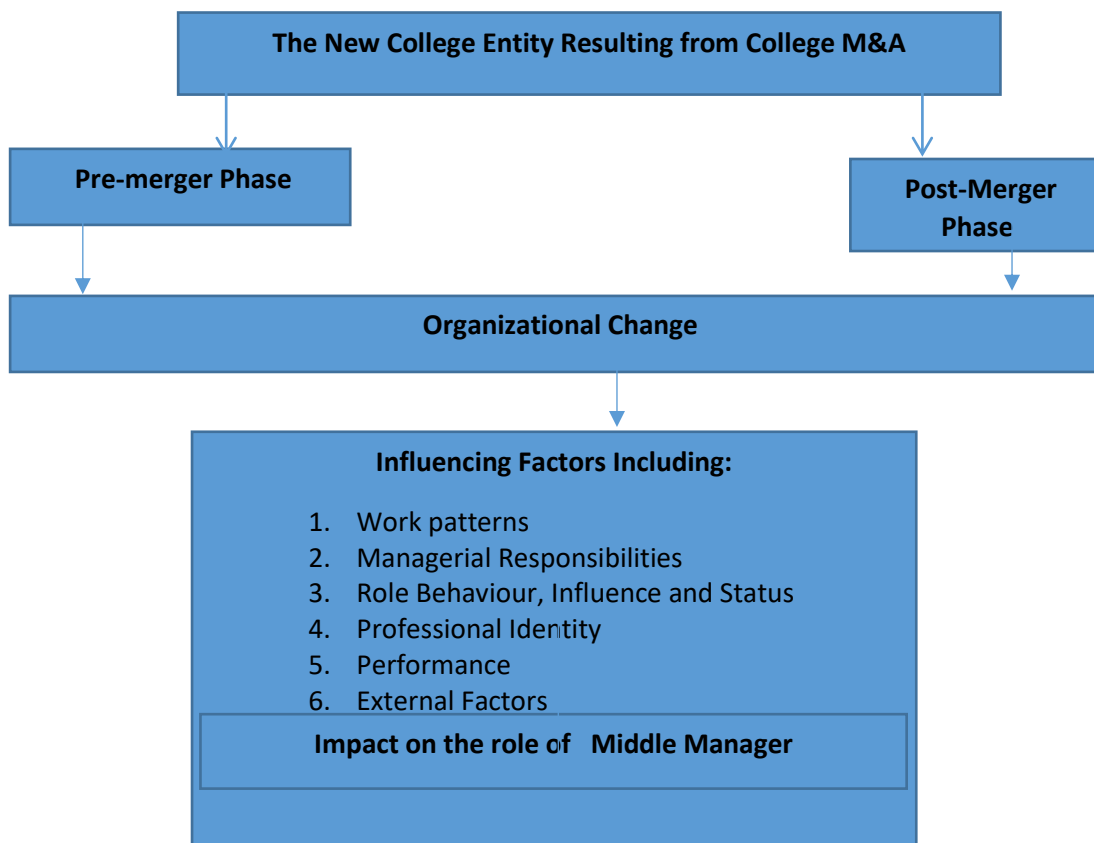


Source author: R.Walford

# Chapter Three

## 3.1 Research Methodology

### 3.1.1 Introduction

The design and research methodology chosen to address the research topic, aim and objectives are outlined in this chapter. The chapter discusses, and justifies, the rationale for adopting the particular research methodology and research techniques chosen.

The exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, gives the researcher the opportunity to gain a 'rich' insight and understanding of the professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers. A quantitative methodology was rejected as the researcher thought this approach would not sufficiently provide 'rich' data, and would, therefore, not be conducive to eliciting the opinions of the college middle manager cohort.

The focus of this study is on the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers based in Welsh further education (FE) colleges. The research study comprises an exploratory investigation into the 'real-world' experience of a sample of college middle managers operating in the Welsh college environment. This study, therefore, applies a social constructionist philosophical stance, seeking to make sense of the perceived individual and collective experiences. This exploratory investigation recognises reality is different for each individual in the study. Individual's experiences, and circumstances are unique and it is these individual experiences, which help middle managers to interpret the world they live in Quinlan (2011).

The researcher has taken a stance focusing on the complex realities of the role of the college middle manager. This enabled the researcher to generate possible explanations of middle manager experiences from gathered data. Subjectivism, which, derives from group or individual opinions Stokes (2011) asserts that social phenomena refers to where the 'world view' is understood to be the product of the collective perceived experiences of individuals. College middle managers experiences can therefore be viewed as the consequent actions of social actors Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012).

The researcher was mindful to select a sample of interviewees with a variable age range of mixed gender and with professional experience of college merger. This non-probability or non-random research study is not a representative sample. A strong rapport developed quickly between the researcher and interviewees, which resulted from the credibility of the researcher through his experience of working at manager level in the FE sector. This rapport enabled interviewees to be open and express critically, their stories of professional experiences. Their narrative was also explicit and comprehensive.

The choice of a social constructionist approach, enabled the researcher to generate possible explanations from gathered data. Social constructionists, hold that reality is unique to each individual and is influenced by their own circumstances, life experiences, constructs and view of the world in which they operate. The researcher was mindful to understand their world from their point of view Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012). Gathered data was achieved through an interview protocol using in-depth semi-structured interviews and both formal and informal questions. The researcher also ascertained particular patterns from the data relating to the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers Maylor, and Blackmon (2005). The interviews enabled the researcher to explore the research topic, through the role of the middle manager, through the collection and analysis of appropriate data.

The researcher was mindful of the issue of reflexivity incorporating examination of self including the author's attitudes and beliefs Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012). The author's reaction to the primary data and findings was important. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) examination of self and attitudes and beliefs, and the researcher's interactions with individuals, helps to overcome barriers to interpretation thus gaining greater insights from the 'rich' data. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) argue the validity and usefulness of insider research helps to provide a 'real' insight about what the organization is really about and may be preferable to outsider research. However, the researcher, whilst not currently engaged in the FE sector, through a previous broad and extensive experience as a professional practitioner in the FE college sector, is well qualified through his knowledge of the sector and is well placed to conduct this research.

The researcher's application of a research approach consisting of a thematic analysis provided a foundation for the researcher to analyse gathered data, whilst maintaining a focus on the research question, aim and objectives Quinlan (2011).

### 3.1.2 Research Design and Strategy

Research strategy for this study, is based upon a perceived 'gap', identified by the researcher, in the literature, relating to mainstream management and the role of the college middle manager involved in the M&A process within the FE sector. An exploratory approach was taken by the researcher, to generate 'rich' insightful data about the role of the middle manager and their 'lived' experiences. The method of the research chosen by the researcher was influenced by the researcher's own practitioner experiences which provided a valuable insight which would not have been available to another researcher unfamiliar with the FE section in Wales.

Through this research study the researcher is attempting to unlock what is occurring through the collection of primary data. This enables the researcher to ascertain, through an inductive process consisting of the interpretation of information relating to the day-to-day experiences of college middle managers whilst managing their individual curriculum departments. This primary information relates to the management of staff and resources and other related tasks forms the day-to-day 'lived' experiences of college middle managers. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) refer to individual experiences as the outcomes of social actors. College managers therefore experience multiple realities, which helps to form individual perceptions.

The researcher's phenomenological philosophy provides for the production of a qualitative data. This approach is most appropriate for this particular study as the main focus of this research is to understand perspective relevant to a number of college middle managers working within a college context.

The researcher's philosophical approach also includes the adoption of a social constructionist philosophy. Social constructionists see the world as being socially constructed, for example, a world consisting of multiple and different realities Stokes (2013). The views of individuals are therefore predicated on interpreting the 'world' through individual and unique interpretations Quinlan (2011). The researcher, therefore, views individual college middle

managers as constructing their own multiple realities based on their day-to-day life experiences. They play the role as actors socially constructing their individual experiences Byron and Bell (2011). A central aim of this research was therefore for the researcher to make sense of college middle managers 'lived' experiences. The researcher's own philosophical approach is different to a positivistic approach in which an individual's view of the world is based on a single reality Quinlan (2011). The methodological approach of the positivist centres on the requirement to confirm a hypothesis through a research process.

The inductive research approach adopted by the researcher is a qualitative approach based on subjectivity and provides for what Stokes and Wall (2014) refer to as 'rich' data. The subjectivist ontological stance, adopted by the researcher, allows for the researcher's own skills and experiences to play a part in interpreting patterns of behaviour. An interpretive epistemological position supports responsiveness to new ideas and findings arising from the primary data collection process and the evaluation of acceptable knowledge. The researcher is therefore attempting to understand the 'lived' experiences of college middle managers, emerging from managing curriculum departments and including financial and non-financial resources consisting of staffing and integration and communication with senior managers, subordinates and also students through teaching responsibilities. The researcher's understanding is not to prove a given hypothesis Blaikie (2007) but rather to collect primary data from respondents to reach certain conclusions.

Given the overall research aim and related objectives of this research study and the general context relating to a FE sector organizational operational environment, a phenomenological methodological approach was therefore found to be the most appropriate approach.

The researcher's focus on multiple realities, generated from knowledge gained from the professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers, also incorporated the epistomology of subjectivism. Whilst multiple realities of college middle managers, as social actors, are constructed from their individual behaviours Maylor, and Blackmon (2005). There is also a correlation between social constructionism and subjectivism. Bryman, and Bell (2011) define subjectivism as a social phenomenon, as created by the social interactions of actors Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012). The realities of individuals are therefore created through social constructivism, whereas social phenomena is developed through integration and interaction of individuals and groups Quianlan (2011).

Three overall research approaches were considered by the researcher. These were: inductive, deductive and interpretive research strategies Byron, and Bell (2015). The researcher considered the most appropriate research design and strategy to adopt. The practicalities of gathering data, allied to the professional 'lived' experiences of the respondents participating in this research study, was a crucial factor.

The researcher's chosen strategy based on an inductive approach aligns with the focus of this study's aim and objectives. This is based upon how middle managers, as respondents, and enacting their roles as social actors, socially construct their experiences Byron, and Bell (2011).

Through the use of an inductive research strategy, which 'fits' the social constructionist epistomology of the researcher, the phenomenon of professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers was explored. Data gathered provided emerging themes, patterns and relationships for consideration. The researcher considered two key research design strategies, deductivism and interpretivism. Deductivism was rejected by the researcher as it was considered unsuitable to this research study due to its focus on the initial development of theory and hypothesis, which is then applied to gathered data, and ultimately accepted or rejected Byron, and Bell (2012). Use of a deductive research approach is also part of a posivistic philosophy which is identified with a single objective or reality Byron, and Bell (2012). Objectivism also asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors Byron, and Bell (2012). This is in direct contrast to the researcher's view, that knowledge is generated through multiple realities based on the experience of college middle managers. The researcher's chosen research strategy of induction is based on the collection of a body of data from middle managers, which is then used to generate knowledge.

The fundamental difference between the researcher's adoption of an inductive approach vis-a-vis a deductive approach, which focuses on a quantitative approach, is that the latter relates to the collection of 'hard' facts and measurement whereas an inductive approach encompasses both opinions and perceptions of individuals.

Interpretivism is a methodological approach, and was chosen by the researcher, as it is suitable for interpreting gathered data and looking at the interaction of individuals within the

workplace Quinlan (2011). Interpretivism is based on the view that all knowledge is a matter of interpretation which, given the small sample size of this study, is most appropriate to this study's inductive qualitative approach. Silverman (2011) states "Inductive reasoning is better suited to qualitative research".

This study is suited to interpretivism as the aim of the researcher is to understand the 'lived' experiences of middle managers and their perceptions Blaikie (2007). The researcher has focused his research study on social phenomena, which is developed in social contexts from which individuals create their own realities Quinlan (2011). The researcher recognises that interpretivism can recognise evidence of subjectivity amongst middle managers and can help to create meaning Stokes, and Wall (2014).

### 3.1.3 Research Methods – Data Collection

Primary literature and secondary literature were reviewed, documents were analysed, and reports interrogated both formally and informally. The research, was also informed by the researcher's own experience and observations as a manager practitioner. The researcher gathered 'rich' qualitative data from college middle managers and identified themes. This helped the researcher to create a conceptual framework Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012).

The method selected by the researcher, for gathering data, is in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, were used to uncover information from college middle managers about how they perceive their own role on the situation in a post-merger environment.

Interviews were designed to generate 'rich' data relating to the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle manager. Breakwell (1990) asserts that "The interview approach relies heavily upon respondents being able and willing to give accurate information". The interview method provided an opportunity to establish rapport and enable detailed discourse throughout the interview process Quinlan (2011). The researcher also gave due consideration, that when carrying out the semi-structured interviews, the 'conscious' 'lived' experiences of the study group, were the main priority, and, therefore, the researcher recognized the need to exclude any bias based upon the researcher's own

experiences Cresswell (2013). The researcher was mindful of the importance to gather, manage and secure this data, prior to analysis and discussion Quinlan (2011).

A pre-allocated room at each college campus provided a comfortable, quiet and uninterrupted environment to conduct the interviews. The average duration of each interview lasted for one hour. All interviews were electronically recorded with the permission of each interviewee.

## 3.1.4 Sample Selection and Size

The researcher carried out this research study between October 2015 and August 2018.

Respondent interviews, were carried out on a face-to-face individual basis, and were undertaken during October, November and early December 2016.

Due to various constraints relating to the start of the new academic year, for example, new student intakes, teaching commitments and other pertinent factors, the above months were found to be the most suitable for conducting in-depth individual interviews. Interview scheduling enhanced the interview process, as college middles were able to afford more time for individual interviews with the majority of interviews exceeding one hour. Consequently, the timing of these interviews proved most beneficial to this study as the researcher was able to ask additional questions, in addition to core questions, based on primary data emerging from each interview which helped to enrich gathered data. The structure of these interviews therefore allowed for a degree of flexibility during the interview process Stokes and Wall (2014).

Twenty-three college middle managers were selected as the research sample. All respondents were selected form a range of FE colleges chosen as being representative from FE colleges in north, mid and south Wales. Respondents were drawn from colleges located in large conurbations and colleges located in geographically rural areas.

The selection of the sample was carried out with the Principal/Chief Executive of each of the participating colleges. This number of middle managers, selected purposefully, was considered appropriate to this research given the size, number and geographical spread of colleges across Wales. The cohort of college middle managers chosen for this study were

responsible for managing curriculum departments and all resources including staff associated with these departments.

The researcher specifically identified, and selected respondents, who had been involved in the college M&A process and had gained professional experience within the area of management during transformational change Cresswell, and Plano-Clark, (2011). The researcher was mindful to select individuals who were available, willing to participate in the research, and also had the potential ability to communicate their professional experiences Bernard (2002). Consideration was also given to the middle manager sample because of their relevance to understanding a social phenomenon Bryman, and Bell (2011).

The researcher has used purposeful sampling, involving college middle managers, selected across a wide geographical area located across colleges in the FE sector in Wales. The researcher's approach, of using a purposeful or non-random sampling technique, identified specific criteria, highlighted as characteristics of the chosen sample Patton (2002). Characteristics included gender, age, professional experience and degree of involvement in the M&A process and management of curriculum departments. The researcher was mindful that non-probability sampling contains an element of subjective judgement Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012).

The research study's objectives and interview protocol were the basis for deciding sample size. Other factors included, time available to carry out the research interviews, access to respondents and the geographical spread of colleges in Wales. Credibility of the data was also an important issue Patton (2002).

The researcher was mindful regarding bias in the interview process. It was recognised that the researcher's values and beliefs had the potential to impact on this research study and how this research study was carried out. The researcher was aware that this ultimately had the potential for creating bias Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) especially during the interview process. The researcher was aware that his own values and beliefs were influenced by his experiences as a professional practitioner in the FE college sector. The researcher was also aware that his interpretive paradigm might be judged as subjective and biased. To reduce the degree of any bias the researcher carefully framed the core questions. The one-to-one interview approach, together with the researcher's awareness of his own values and belief, helped further to minimize any tendency towards bias. The researcher's period of time

out of full-time employment in the FE sector also contributed to reducing the possibility of any bias.

## 3.1.5 Interview design

The aim of this research was to gain the most comprehensive data possible about middle manager practices. The researcher was mindful that in the pursuit of objectivity Oppenheim (1992) he could be compromised by the researcher's prior knowledge and professional practitioner experience of the FE sector, and his involvement and experience in several mergers. The researcher did construct a narrative picture of the stories of respondents, but was mindful of the potential influence of his own understanding of the FE sector and emotional reactions.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the means of eliciting data from college curriculum middle managers working within the FE sector across Wales. The researcher's understanding of the literature, experience as a manager and practitioner and his understanding of the FE sector and the college merger process, influenced interview protocol. In-depth semi-structured interviews were intended to allow the researcher to understand potential relationships between middle managers, their subordinates and senior managers Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2012). The interviews also allowed for probing to elicit 'rich' qualitative data. The researcher used an interview protocol to design the interview. The researcher's involvement, experience and observations of the M&A process, relating to three separate mergers, influenced interview protocol.

The interview protocol consisted of five formal core questions, (Appendix 1: Page 155) which focused on the experiences of middle managers during the M&A process. Additional informal questions, arising during the interview process, allowed for the gathering and recording of additional data. This gave each middle manager an additional 'voice', which widened discussions and resulted in additional in-depth information. According to King, and Horrocks (2010) qualitative interviews give a 'voice' to the college middle managers to express their perceptions, understanding and experiences. The researcher was also aware of the importance of gaining rapport with participants. A key factor therefore, was ultimately to gain and build trust King, and Horrocks (2010).

Formal and informal interview questions, focused on work patterns, change, curriculum teaching, appraisal, training support and development, professional identity, communication, culture, decision making, management and leadership, performance, external influences and merger.

Questions provided a powerful research method for eliciting purposeful conversation from respondents using concise and unambiguous questions. This allowed the gathering valid and reliable data Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012).

## 3.1.6 Data Coding and Analysis

The researcher sought to ascertain the middle managers personal view of their world and workplace. This understanding is important and crucial to this research, as the researcher needed to describe, understand and interpret the data David (2010).

The researcher adopted a thematic approach Miles, and Huberman (1994) to coding of gathered data. Emerging themes identified from the gathered data, as part of the interview process, relate to key issues merging from a constant interpretation and comparison of transcript data Quinlan (2011). Themes therefore emerged as a response to the questioning. The researcher carried out a content analysis preferring to use a manual process as this was found to be more effective and aligned with the researcher's expertize. The researcher clustered groups of middle managers and looked at the meaning of their responses looking at the primary data and trying to make sense of this data Through this content analysis the researcher was able to colour code and identify themes as they emerged in relation to the core questioning and also from additional questioning. The researcher noted that certain themes only applied to some college middle managers and some themes were only relevant to particular colleges.

The researcher used open-coding as a mechanism to identify and label themes. Open-coding, is an appropriate approach for qualitative research, has enabled the researcher to construct plausible explanations of the college middle managers unique and more general work place experiences, and which has enabled the researcher to make easier comparisons between interviews Maylor, and Blackmon (2005). The researcher reduced the number of themes, identified from an initial read of the data, to a more manageable number of themes Quinlan

(2011). This approach enabled the researcher to find 'meaning' to the raw data collected Quinlan (2011). This In-depth analysis of the data, also enabled the researcher to recognise patterns and relationships attributed to the identified key themes Stokes (2011).

### 3.1.7 Research Reliability and Validity

### 3.1.7  i) Reliability

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) refer to reliability, whether data gathering techniques and analysis procedures, as being capable of being replicated by another researcher. To this end, the researcher has been rigorous in the choice of research design and its application. This has been achieved through the development and implementation of an interview protocol (Appendix 1: Page 155) referred to earlier, applied through in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather data.

The researcher's use of a semi-structured interview approach, to gathering data, contributed to a high level of reliability Maylor, and Blackmon (2005). According to Maylor, and Blackmon (2005) the research method chosen by the researcher, should allow for all the main points of the study and its conclusions, to be fully robust. The researcher was mindful to check for reliability at the formulation of the questions stage and during the implementation of the research instrument Bell (1993). The researcher was also aware of potential bias based on the researcher's own background, observations and experience as a practitioner and manager.

### 3.1.7  ii) Validity

Quinlan (2011) focuses on the necessity for data to be truthful, sound, robust reasonable and meaningful. She also states that gathered data should be useful and related to the purpose of the research. The researcher, therefore, ensured a focus on the research study's aim and objectives Silverman (2010). The researcher's choice of research methodology has also contributed to the integrity of conclusions drawn from the data Bryman, and Bell (2011). Consideration has also given important consideration to reflexivity in this research study. The researcher's practitioner and management experience and understanding of the FE sector and particularly his involvement in FE M&As, has enhanced the researcher's credibility and

positively impacted upon his relationship and interactivity with college middle managers during the interview process Maylor, and Blackmon (2005).

The researcher has used a coding approach to the analysis of the gathered data, a valid approach Quinlan (2011) which has helped to identify themes from the gathered data and identified relationships and patterns.

The researcher recognised that it was important to ensure the capture of truth underlying a given situation and that the capture of data is not misled by certain influences. As the sample is non-representative, the researcher's choice of a qualitative research design together with purposeful sampling resulted in the researcher creating the maximum variety of responses from respondents in relation to generalizations and concepts, rather than population Maylor, and Blackmon (2005). This had the effect of increasing the validity of the research.

### 3.1.8   Ethical Considerations

Researchers have an ethical obligation to inform participants of the nature of the research, the degree of participation and any potential consequences that may arise Quinlan (2011). There was also a need for the researcher to maintain confidentiality and anonymity with regard to the educational institution and with the participants. This important area of informed consent has enabled the researcher to clarify with participants, the purpose of the research, and what is required of the participants Quinlan (2011). A research ethics policy and procedures proforma was distributed to all respondents (Appendix 2: Pages 156-178).

The researcher has ensured through this research study that ethics play a central part**.** Quinlan (2011) states that ethics is a process of reasoning that can be interpreted as doing the right thing. Brown (2006) refers to ethics  as a set of norms or particular standards of behaviour that provide the researcher with the necessary guidelines to make moral choices about researcher behaviour and how the researcher  conducts relationships with others during the research study. According to Brown (2006) a central goal for the researcher is to ensure no harm comes to participants during the research process.

According to Byron, and Bell (2015) ethical issues are related to how we treat the people who form part of our research.  It also includes activities that we might or might not engage with

in relation to respondents to our study. Byron, and Bell (2015) also refer to research ethics as a critical component to be considered by the researcher when formulating the design plan. Rubin, and Rubin (2012) reinforce the issue of ethics by stating that researchers' have an obligation to behave responsibly and ethically, which means that researchers must behave honestly throughout the research process. They also state that ethics raises the importance of respect between both researcher and respondents, whilst maintaining confidentiality. In the proposed research study confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

### 3.1.9  Informed Consent

Access to individual college Principal's/Chief Executives and participants, was achieved via the Chief Executive/Principal of a significant college in Wales. Prior to contact with potential participants, principals of participating colleges, were asked for their consent to use their individual college in the research study. Participant consent was received via email.

Following the selection of the middle managers sample by each college Principal/ Chief Executive and in accordance with criteria decided by the researcher, potential participants in the sample, were sent an email asking them to confirm their provisional consent (Appendix 4: Page 160). Participants were then asked to complete and sign a consent document (Appendix 3: Page 159) once email confirmation had been received.

All participants received a consent form, which detailed the purpose, aim and objectives of the research study. Information was also disseminated on matters of confidentiality. At the time of each interview, consent forms were duly signed, and collected by the researcher. The research study aim and objectives were reinforced, at the commencement of each interview. Issues of confidentiality were therefore expressed at three key stages: the email stage, as outlined in the consent document and at the commencement of the interview. All participants, prior to, and at the commencement stage of each interview, were aware, and agreed, to the interview being recorded.

The researcher has maintained, additional confidentiality and anonymity, through the use of a coding process at the data gathering and findings and analysis stages of the study, and apply

this coding to colleges and respondents, participating in the research study. This accords with the view of Byron, and Bell (2015) when they state that researchers carrying out a qualitative study should be aware of the issues surrounding a qualitative study, when a number of issues relating to confidentiality and anonymity can arise and create difficulties. Legal and ethical considerations can be directly related to confidentiality. Central to the application of ethics is trust and openness between both researcher and respondent Byron, and Bell (2015).

Throughout this research study, the researcher followed the protocols and guidelines as laid down by the University of Chester and the Business and Management Association. The researcher was also mindful of ethical guidelines within the participating colleges'. Maylor, and Blackmon (2005) stress the importance of observing professional guidelines. They also refer to ethics as encompassing a number of important issues such as ensuring your research does not result in harm to others, and how your research is conducted and reported.

## 3.1.10 Limitations

This study is not a comprehensive study of the 'lived' professional experiences of all middle managers across colleges in Wales. The researcher, therefore, attempts to elicit a range of anecdotal evidence that reveals some useful insights into the role and professional 'lived experiences' of managers Moss, Warnaby, and Newman (2000).

The researcher was mindful that the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers had the potential to influence the perceptions of respondents, potentially impacting upon the reporting of the data Silverstein (1988).

An important key limitation experienced by the researcher, related to the scheduling of the interviews. Due to patterns of commitments by middle managers, operational constraints involving middle manager teaching commitments throughout the year and termly breaks, interviews were accommodated during the months of October and November. This did not have any negative effect on the researcher, respondents or the interview process. The researcher recognised that information gathered was essentially a snapshot at a particular moment of time.

This research study marks the first substantive exploration of the professional 'lived experiences' of middle managers arising from the M&A process in the FE sector across Wales.

# Chapter Four

## 4.1 Findings

### 4.1.1 Introduction

The findings from this study came from several sources, including interviewees, college documentation and the Welsh Government's educational policy documents.

The scope of this finding's chapter covers the role of the FE college middle manager, the impact of college merger on this role. The author explores departmental reconfiguration, college middle manager work patterns, individual behaviours and related issues.

The analysis of interview data enabled the researcher to identify, by means of content analysis, a number of themes relating to the day-to-day or professional 'lived' experience of the further education (FE) college manager. A central issue of this study relates, therefore, to the exploration of interviewee perceptions of the FE college middle manager role.

All interviewees had varying degrees of professional experience in the FE sector in Wales. Professional experience as manager practitioner ranged between six to twenty-five years across the sample of college managers interviewed. The age range of interviewees was between forty-five and fifty-five years of age. This higher age range of college middle managers is a reflection of the fact that that nineteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, were already experienced managers pre-merger and transitioned into new management roles. Changes to the scope of the college manager role were made at the initial merger stage and at later organizational restructurings. All changes resulted in college managers having to cope with larger workloads and an increase in managerial responsibilities.

### 4.1.2 Findings

Findings, from all twenty-three semi-structured interviews, were organized around major areas of questioning. The findings explore the roles and responsibilities of college managers, then, managerial behavioural patterns and finally potential influences impacting upon the college manager role. The researcher aimed to ascertain the 'lived' experiences of twenty-three college middle managers during two key phases of the merger process, namely, pre

and post-merger thereby providing a data set of 'rich' and insightful information on what it is like to be a college middle manager during organizational change.

Approximately thirteen themes emerged related to the organizational change process. This helped to show what is meant to be a middle manager in the FE sector during times of organizational change resulting from college merger. Findings show that the pattern of the managerial organizational environment, during the pre and post-merger phases, progressed from a chaotic environment to towards an environment, which was eventually more settled. However, the researcher was aware that managerial developments were on-going.

It was evident from the findings that amongst the college middle manager cohort a range of different skills and abilities were evident which influenced what respondents told the researcher, which ultimately shaped the primary data.

Initially, interviewees were asked to give an overview of their operational departments.

### 4.1.3 Department Structure and Configuration

The following section considers the operational and institutional context in which college middle managers worked. Interviewees were asked about the size, structure and organization of their departments, in which they worked. Some interesting similarities and differences emerged.

Changes in departmental size and structure, provided the context in which college managers enact an operational role. Departments varied in size, ranging from a staffing level of two members of staff up to approximately seventy-five staff. It appeared the current size of each department, was an outcome of the merger process, determined by senior management, who were responsible for carrying out strategic planning and decision-making. The size of each department seems to reflect the scope of the college manager role. Twenty, out of twenty-three interviewees, stated their overall responsibilities had increased post-merger. Interestingly, there seems not to have been any corresponding increases in remuneration to reflect these increased responsibilities. The majority of departments were curriculum orientated with two college managers having responsibility for functional support departments, for example, Health and Safety and Information technology.

All interviewees acknowledged that organizational restructuring had resulted in 'flatter' and 'leaner' organizational structures, resulting in a reconfiguration of job roles, responsibilities and new job titles. 'Leaner' college organization structures were an attempt by senior management to increase effectiveness and efficiency of college operations through reductions operational costs. Interviewees confirmed the merger process had resulted in fewer middle managers, which had contributed to reducing staffing costs.

## 4.1.4  Work Patterns

This section explores a typical pattern of work performed by the college middle manager' in a typical working week enacted in the context of larger, mainly curriculum departments, with greater numbers of staff.

Exploration of the college manager's weekly pattern of work, suggested patterns of work to be curriculum orientated. Interview data suggested the emergence of distinctive components related to patterns of work, including, roles and responsibilities, work tasks, managerial responsibilities and teaching commitments. Managerial behaviours appeared influential and complimentary to patterns of work. Probing of interviewees appeared to indicate that some components of patterns of work had the potential to impact on their professional 'lived' experiences.

## 4.1.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Examination of the interview data revealed the scope of the college manager's role, which appeared to include a wide range of work tasks and managerial responsibilities.

(Table 1: Pages 89-90) highlights the perceived scope of the FE college manager role at pre and post-merger stages. The role is categorized into three constituent parts forming the college manager's pattern of work. For example, role work tasks **(B)**, highlighting what the college manager does, managerial responsibilities **(C)**, and individual role behaviours **(D)** which seemed to reside alongside the college manager's work tasks and managerial responsibilities, with a focus on how college managers' performed their role.

This study also identifies four significant role titles **(A)** identified in this study, related to the college manager role**.** College manager titles appeared varied, across the FE sector in Wales,

and seemed to result from merger decisions, type of organizational structure and each college's modus operandi. The findings indicated that role titles were predominately curriculum related, except for functional roles, for example, Estates, Health and Safety, Information Technology and Human Resources.

**Table 2. - Perceived scope of the role of college middle managers in the (FE) sector in Wales at pre and post-merger stages**

| College Manager Role Titles (A) | Pre-Merger | | | Post-merger | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Role Tasks (B) | Managerial Responsibilities (C) | Individual Behaviours (D) | Role Tasks (B) | Managerial Responsibilities (C) | Individual Behaviours (D) |
| Head of Department

Director of Studies | Timetabling

Internal and external networking

Teaching role

Student support and guidance

Staff support and guidance

Appraisals and teaching observations

Report writing | Managing the curriculum Planning and implementation process

Managing Departmental operational budgets including income and costs

Managing performance outcomes (KPIs)

Managing and monitoring lecturing and support staff

Managing resources

Managing internal and external networks

Student support and guidance | Individual role behaviours, are closely related to work patterns, and have a direct impact on how college managers perform their work tasks and relate to senior managers and subordinates

This study highlights three key influences impacting upon behaviours:

1. Email technology
2. Hours worked
3. Ability to cope in the role
4. Time spent travelling between campuses
5. Relevance of management meetings

The above influences affected the responsiveness of the middle manager | Timetabling

Internal and external networking

Teaching role

Student support and guidance

Appraisals | Managerial responsibilities have increased in scope due to the flowing factors:

1. Increases in the size of operational departments and increased numbers of subordinates to be managed.

2. As a result of a number of middle managers voluntary accepting redundancy

Managing the curriculum Planning and implementation process

Managing departmental operational budgets including income and costs

Managing performance outcomes (KPIs)

Managing and monitoring lecturing and support staff | The individual behaviours of the majority of college middle managers has become more positive post-merger.

There is an increasing receptiveness to the use of the college's email technology system to communicate with subordinates and senior managers

College middle managers performance, on a day-to-day basis in relation to staff relations and communication in general seems to have a greater priority. Middle manager behaviour relating to staff relations has become extremely positive with middle managers appreciating their increasing contribution to achieving greater levels of efficiency and effectiveness.

Middle managers individual behaviours are more receptive of the increasing support given by senior managers. A far greater priority towards the mentoring of college middle managers has been significant. Mentoring strategy has been both valuable |

| | | | Individual behaviours also influenced the following:<br><br>1. The value placed on mentoring, support and training to support the development of skills<br>2. Good staff relations and the building of trust | | Managing resources<br><br>Report writing<br><br>Managing commercial training requirements | and crucial to helping college middle managers to cope with workloads and new areas of responsibility.<br><br>A far greater priority is now afforded to the attendance of meetings by college middle managers whose behaviours recognize the importance of attendance. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Head of Department with Cross-college Responsibilities | Role tasks as above but with additional work tasks revolving around wider aspects of planning and delivery | Managerial responsibilities outlined above, but with a wider scope of managerial responsibilities including: | Individual behaviours relevant as shown above | Work tasks as above plus work tasks associated with additional college wide responsibilities in the areas of curriculum, budgets, external liaison with business and other agencies. | Managerial responsibilities as outlined above plus involvement in curriculum planning, events planning contributing to setting budgets and involvement in policy making | Middle managers behaviours impacting on a wider range of individuals |
| Head of Functional Support Department | Carrying out work tasks associated with:<br>The delivery of support services in the areas of:<br>1. Finance<br>2. Estates<br>3. Student Services<br>4. Health & Safety<br>5. Management Information Services (MIS)<br>6. Human Resources | Managerial responsibilities relating to the management of all related resources and the implementation of policy within their specialist areas | Individual behaviour as evidenced at curriculum departmental level | Work tasks as shown in column one | Managerial responsibilities as related to the management of staff and resources and ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness in their specialist areas | Positive behaviours as evidenced through effective networking with college curriculum departments and with the senior management team |

A comparative review of the scope of the college middle manager role at pre and post-merger appeared to indicate that components of the college manager's pattern of work remained identical. These key components included, planning, organizing and managing curriculum provision, carrying out teaching duties and managerial responsibility for all resources, including staffing. The probing of all interviewees, suggested an increased number of tasks and increased managerial responsibilities, post-merger, had resulted in significant changes to work patterns. Evidence from interview data suggests larger departments and corresponding increases in staff, appears to be the main catalyst for these changes. Twenty-one, out of twenty-three interviewees confirmed their work patterns, post-merger, had become more complex due to changes in work patterns. Analysis of the findings appeared to suggest curriculum provision to have increased prominence post-merger. This might be the result of increased pressure to maximize student recruitment and retain students and the association with the Welsh Government's core funding policies. Changes in managerial behaviours, post-merger, appear more positive with college middle managers displaying increasingly more positive attitudes towards staff relations, including the mentoring and support for staff, the use of email technology and communication in general and attendance at various curriculum, staff and management meetings. Improved organizational communication, increasing interaction between college middle managers and senior college managers and lessons learned from the merger process, appeared to have contributed to this change in behaviours.

### 4.1.6 Routine and Non-Routine Work Tasks

Probing of Interviewees appeared to show work tasks categorized into routine and non-routine tasks. The majority of work tasks appeared to be predominately curriculum focused relating to the planning and delivery of curriculum programmes, which on the surface seemed to be both tactical and operationally focused.

Twenty, out of twenty-three interviewees confirmed routine work tasks, included, a major curriculum focus, embracing curriculum planning and responsibility for curriculum provision and delivery, timetabling and monitoring student recruitment, retention and attainment. College middle managers tasks also included attendance at regular curriculum meetings, dealing with student and staff issues and problems, monitoring departmental performance, external networking with local schools, networking with commercial business for training purposes and liaison with awarding bodies. Non-routine tasks appeared to encompass, timetabling, staff appraisals, teaching observations and involvement in specific project work,

report writing and curriculum data gathering and presentation. All these seemed to be heavily operational and routine applicable to the majority of college manager roles. Increased numbers of staff appraisals and teaching observations appeared a further distraction from managerial duties.

Two interviewees, were now responsible for functional support departments including management Information Systems (MIS), Estates and Health and Safety. These functional support managers provide advice, guidance and support to other managers with responsibilities for curriculum provision, and the senior management team. Analysis showed that these two functional managers, who previously managed curriculum departments, expressed concerns that they now felt isolated from the core curriculum work of the college, due to their cross-college role.

A distinguishable, and important difference between the college manager role and the senior manager role showed college managers involved specifically in departmental operations. In contrast, senior college managers appeared involved with organizational-wide strategic planning and decision making in areas relating to, budgetary planning and setting key performance indicators (KPIs), determining non-financial strategic objectives in the areas of marketing, human resources, curriculum recruitment, provision and delivery. Further examination of the data showed senior managers have responsibility for collating data and reporting outcomes to college managers, governors and to the Welsh Government. Interestingly, evidence, from interviews, suggested interviewees acted as conduits, for enacting strategy formulated at senior management level.

It appeared a key action for college managers is to interpret and implement organizational strategic objectives, decided by senior managers, across their respective departments through operational planning and ultimately through their subordinates.

Three, out of twenty-three interviewees, who lead curriculum departments also had cross-college roles. The extended scope of their roles, also includes responsibilities comprising of a limited involvement in strategic planning and decision-making in the areas of curriculum development, quality assurance of curriculum provision, student and staff safeguarding, equality and diversity, and budgetary planning and monitoring of financial issues.

Probing of interviewees confirmed that planning, implementation and monitoring of core curriculum, provision represents a significant, part of their of pattern work.

Twenty-one, out of twenty-three interviewees, appeared to suggest communication was both significant and important when enacting their role. Interviewees confirmed regular face-to-face contact with senior managers, deputies and subordinates and was their preferred method of communication. Interestingly, further analysis showed effective communication, was defined as timely, clear and understandable, and enabled interviewees to be more acutely aware of student and staff issues, and therefore more prepared to resolve problems more quickly and effectively.

The following section explores the potential relationship of the college manager role to curriculum provision.

### 4.1.7 The Curriculum Role

Curriculum provision, as related to the planning, development and delivery of a variety of vocational and non-vocational programmes, is the core work of colleges' in the FE sector in Wales. The term 'curriculum' appeared to be an all-embracing name attributed to different roles. Since the merger of colleges, it seems curriculum provision has gained an even greater prominence post-merger.

One interviewee bluntly confirmed the importance of curriculum provision by commenting:

"Curriculum is our bread and butter". Respondent 4. This appears to confirm, the majority of college middle managers are pre-occupied with day-to-day operational matters, and this primary focus on curriculum has the potential to constrain the scope of the college middle manager role.

Twenty, out of twenty-three interviewees, articulated, quite strongly, their professional role was mainly curriculum focused on programme provision and delivery, which included responsibility for student recruitment, retention and attainment, timetabling and teaching observations.

Seven, out of twenty-three interviewees, acknowledged, their professional curriculum role included work as peer assessors for Estyn, the Inspection Service for Wales. Examination of the findings data indicates this involvement is significant and influences how they manage the curriculum.

The interview data suggested the curriculum role, is further enhanced by the requirement for the majority of interviewees to have a teaching commitment.

### 4.1.8 Teaching Commitments

Examination of the data shows that college managers have a teaching role, which sits alongside their curriculum and managerial responsibilities. Interestingly, eighteen of the twenty-three interviewees interviewed, confirmed having a teaching commitment was an integral part of their pattern of work. The findings data appeared to show each college middle manager had a scheduled teaching commitment of ten hours per week. The remaining average hours for managing their department seemed to be thirty-five. Analysis of the findings data showed some college middle managers thought that having a teaching commitment was a distraction from their management role and reduced their responsiveness to address urgent matters.

When probing interviewees further, it became obvious that there was a degree of variability in planned teaching commitments. This commitment seemed to include cover for lecturer absences due to sickness as well as a certain amount of planned delivery. Allocated teaching hours, for each interviewee, appeared to consist of one hundred hours over the academic year. One interviewee reported that he had in excess of one hundred hours of teaching. However, this seemed an exception to the rule, and appeared due to the large size of his department and the significance placed on senior managers' expectations of him.

Interviewees, with a teaching commitment, seemed to be constrained by their teaching role. Besides a wide-ranging curriculum role, this study has also identified managerial responsibilities are an integral part of their role.

### 4.1.9 Managerial Responsibilities in Contrast with Curriculum Responsibilities

It soon became apparent from this study, that irrespective of the size of each operational department and type of college organizational structure, there appeared to be a consistency in managerial responsibilities of college middle managers across Welsh colleges,

All interviewees acknowledged managerial responsibilities and considered themselves managers by virtue as to their role title and the role they enact. It is clear from the findings that interviewees are responsible for directing staff to enact delivery and controlling and monitoring student outcomes, for example, qualification attainment and departmental financial performance.

Exploration of the interviewee data suggested managerial responsibilities, for the majority of interviewees, incorporates an increasing responsibility for generating commercial work and related income in businesses.

One interviewee supports this view by commenting:

"The role of management is now more commercially driven". Respondent 2. Evidence from the findings seems to suggest the traditional college middle manager curriculum role is transitioning into a wider ranging role.

Feedback from interviewees suggested, college managers chair internal team meetings and represent the college externally at various network meetings, engage with awarding bodies and liaise with other important agencies, for example, Estyn (The Inspection Service in Wales) and Government representatives.

Since merger, colleges in Wales appeared to have escalated provision and delivery of external training with local and national businesses. Sixteen out of twenty-three interviewees state their managerial responsibilities now include this commercial provision. This appeared to be the result of increasing demands of senior managers for college middle managers to make a significant contribution towards increasing college income, associated with a requirement to achieve budgeted targets related to potential income and costs, stated as key performance indicators (KPIs). Middle managers also spoke of links with industry as being a catalyst for building strong partnerships between businesses and colleges.

Examination of the findings data shows that, as the result of college mergers, twenty-one out of twenty-three interviewees manage curriculum departments, with three of these interviewees also having additional wider cross-college responsibility, which includes assisting senior managers in strategic planning. Interviewee feedback also shows two, out of twenty-three interviewees, have no direct curriculum responsibilities but manage functional departments providing advice and support to curriculum departments in the areas of Estates, Health and Safety, Marketing and Information Systems (MIS).

Further probing of interviewees suggested the emergence of role behaviours, which appear to have the potential to influence the work of the college manager.

### 4.1.10 Managerial Behaviours

The analysis of the findings showed key behaviours, exhibited by college managers as they perform their roles, have the potential to impact both positively and negatively on college manager performance. The findings data showed several issues influencing college middle manager behaviour.

Examination of the interview data appeared adversely to affect college managers' behaviour due to the sheer volumes of emails received. Interviewees felt quite strongly there was a growing volume of emails and the majority of college middle managers, reported that they were having problems coping. Whilst purposeful questioning shows that the majority of interviewees acknowledged emails as their preferred method for communicating with their subordinates, and with colleagues and senior managers, the email system, post-merger, appeared to have become increasingly burdensome and seemed to impact upon workloads and take-up too much of their time to complete other work tasks. Strength of feeling appeared evidenced when two interviewees commented:

"I am a believer in the email system, but thus takes over my life. I can be on fifty emails per day and think you can't get through your work as you are tied to a screen". Respondent 10.

"One of the biggest things is emails, just horrendous, as everybody copy's you in. We need to look at this as an organization". Respondent 4.

Examination of interviewee feedback suggests that the sheer volume of emails often made it impossible for the majority of college middle managers to respond to the amount of emails received.

Conversely, some interviewees thought email technology enhanced their work, helped them to 'stay in touch' with what was happening across their respective organizations. The findings suggested email technology was an essential medium when communicating with subordinates and other managers on rural campuses located at significant distances from the main college campus.

Fifteen, out of twenty-three interviewees thought there was no such thing as a typical working week. Examination of the findings data seemed to indicate a manager role enacted in a challenging and frenetic environment. The behaviour of individual college middle managers appears to contribute to role complexity and challenge. Conversely, the very

nature of the manager role suggests challenge. It seemed the number of hours worked by college middle managers influenced by individual behaviours and natural challenges of the role. Responses from interviewees, showed that the frenetic pace of their jobs, and the challenging environment in which they performed their roles, appeared to influence their behaviour in how they prioritize and how quickly and effectively they carry out their work tasks. This seemed to be further aggravated by a requirement to travel between campuses. Fifteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, considered travelling between college campuses an inherent part of their role. Operationally, this was considered to represent a big challenge manifesting itself in reduced time to complete work tasks, thereby increasing work pressures. Further probing of interviewees suggested the location, of these rural campuses, present a particular challenge. For some interviewees, travel seemed to be an integral part of the job role. One interviewee, commented:

"Your staff are expanded, one campus is one hundred miles away. Travel is part of the job". Respondent 7.

This appeared to suggest the inevitability of an enlarged department located on several campus sites, makes travel to rural locations a necessary and therefore an inclusive and accepted part of the manager's job role.

Interviewee data showed a significant change in manager role behaviour, post-merger, towards staff relations. Exploration of interview data confirmed that college managers now give a much higher priority to communicating with staff. Probing of interviewees, seemed to suggest that post-merger, the new operational environment, Principal/Chief Executive leadership and the challenging work environment, have contributed to, and encouraged college managers to demonstrate a positive behaviour, towards staff relations. Further probing of interviewees reinforced their view that the majority of interviewees are more willing to involve subordinates in departmental operations, share information, meet with staff on a face-to-face basis and delegate some of their work tasks to staff. The findings showed that where college middle managers demonstrate positive behaviours there are corresponding reductions in workload pressures, which seemed to impact positively on interviewee performance demonstrated in both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Exploration of the interview data showed all interviewees displayed a very positive behaviour to the appraisal and mentoring processes, at the post-merger stage, in terms of these processes being a very effective mechanism to discuss issues with their staff and therefore

an opportunity to give praise or to address any problems arising from operations. The majority of interviewees also value their own appraisals, advice and guidance, given by their line managers. This appeared to manifest itself in higher motivational levels, impacting positively on college manager performance and departmental staff relations.

This study confirms that fifteen, out of twenty-three interviewees recognised attendance at meetings is 'something college managers have to do'. The findings suggest that some interviewees appeared to have 'mixed' attitudes regarding attendance at non-departmental meetings, such as cross-college meetings. The findings showed college middle managers actually prioritize meetings when deciding which meeting to attend. Further probing of interviewees suggested they give a higher priority to their work tasks over attending certain meetings. The implications of this behaviour appeared to impact negatively on communicating information on wider college issues.

Some college managers, convening team meetings with staff on rural campuses, use Skype technology as a convenient tool for communicating with their staff on campuses located far from the main college campus. However, interviewee data points to the fact that some college managers demonstrate a negative behaviour regarding the use of skype technology. This negativity seemed to be associated with persistent technical problems, which placed limitations on college middle managers ability to communicate with their subordinates and other managers. Interviewees appeared frustrated through loss of time attributed to the non-functionality of this technical equipment and feeling isolated from their subordinates.

Following an exploration of the scope of the college middle manager role, a clearer picture emerges of pattern of work of interviewees.

## 4.1.11 An Emerging View of the College Manager's Pattern of Work

Analysis of the findings of college middle management in the further education sector in Wales, appeared to imply the FE college manager role comprised of a range of specific and varied work tasks and managerial responsibilities, and is increasingly likely to be characterized often as frenetic and challenging. However, further examination of the data seemed to imply, quite strongly, that work tasks and managerial responsibilities appeared curriculum related.

Evidence from this study suggests, changes in organizational structures, larger curriculum departments and increased numbers of staff seemed to have directly contributed to increased workloads, which appear to have the potential to influence individual behaviours negatively and positively.

Having explored the components of the college manager role, the researcher examined potential differences in patterns of work between the pre-merger and post-merger stages.

### 4.1.12 Comparison of current Work Patterns with pre-Merger Patterns of Work

Twenty, out of twenty-three interviewees confirmed their patterns of work, at post-merger, compared with pre-merger, appeared to indicate subtle changes in the number of work tasks and managerial responsibilities. Further probing of interviewees, confirms organizational communication and delegation of their work tasks had also contributed to changes in the way college managers enacted their roles.

### 4.1.13 Changes in Work Tasks and Managerial Responsibilities

All interviewees relate changes in work tasks to managing larger departments with greater numbers of subordinates, with a far greater focus on curriculum provision, delivery and attainment, than was evident pre-merger, with a corresponding increase in work pressures. In some cases, middle managers took on responsibility for new curriculum specialisms outside of their immediate area of expertise.

Interviewees suggested that these changes have made their jobs significantly more challenging. Two interviewees commented:

"I now find my job is chasing others, where this was not the case before". Respondent 10.

"The role is now more challenging, the biggest challenge is not having time to for thinking and planning". "Role has become more challenging in relation to time for deskwork, and getting around to see everyone". "I fire fight continuously, all the time. Yes, I mean every day you fire fight". Respondent 13.

The majority of interviewees acknowledged a close correlation between increased workloads, emerging challenges, and increased work pressures to the post-merger period.

Twenty-one, out of twenty-three interviewees, remained positive. One interviewee accepted the increasing challenges and commented:

"Role is now more challenging, but is not challenging in a bad way". Respondent 20. This might be a recognition that merger is a good thing.

Evidence from the study shows organizational communication to have become significantly more important and influential post-merger.

## 4.1.14 Organizational Communication

All interviewees commented very strongly on the increasing importance and complexity, of organizational communication. Further probing of interviewees suggested that larger 'spans of control' and increased staff numbers had contributed significantly, to giving organizational communication a higher priority post-merger.

Feedback from the majority of interviewees showed that although organizational communication had significantly improved, post-merger, communication still appeared to remain a challenge in some of the merged colleges, with one interviewee commenting:

"It appears there is scope for further improvements in communication. All the mechanisms are there and getting better". Respondent 2. These comments seem to suggest organizational communication, post-merger, is still developing.

Interviewees acknowledged a growing link between communication and the development of staff relations. Twenty-one, out of twenty-three interviewees, thought organizational communications had been the catalyst, for improvements in staff relations, post-merger.

## 4.1.15 Delegation of Managerial Tasks and Responsibilities

Probing of interviewees appeared to indicate, that whilst the act of delegation is a management function and about organizing work through others, some interviewees acknowledged their reluctance to delegate, preferring to maintain control of some work tasks. The majority of interviewees thought the act of delegation an appropriate mechanism for college managers to use to reduce both workloads and related work pressures. This seemed to be a coping strategy adopted by some interviewees. Eighteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, confirmed their work patterns excessive, with seven, out of twenty-three

interviewees, reporting their excessive workloads could be overwhelming at times, leading to increased working hours.

Two interviewees appeared to raise the importance of delegation by commenting:

"I would never get jobs done, if I did not delegate". Respondent 18.

"I support delegation as it as it empowers through ownership, satisfaction and motivation".

This suggested the act of delegation, whilst primarily attempting to reduce workloads, also has the potential to influence college managers' motivation in a positive way, with a corresponding improvement in performance.

It was also interesting to note, that nineteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, confirmed senior college managers now delegate more managerial responsibilities to college managers. Decisions on the development and scheduling of curriculum programmes, representing the college at important external meetings and other policy decisions also represented increased managerial responsibilities.

Having explored potential differences in patterns of work at pre and post-merger, the following section highlights several important elements, considered by college managers as having the potential to influence roles enactment.

## 4.1.16 Important Elements affecting the Middle Manager Role

Probing of interviewees suggested several key elements of the college middle manager role appeared to have increasingly become extremely important post-merger and are categorized into internal and external factors.

## 4.1.17 Key Internal Factors

## 4.1.17 i) Staff Relationships

Twenty-two, out of twenty-three interviewees, cite changes in organizational structure and the reconfiguration of departments as credible reasons for a greater focus on staff relations.

Evidence from interviewees appeared to highlight the importance and potential contribution good staff relations can contribute to the success of the college organization post-merger. Seventeen, out of twenty-three interviewees, confirmed college middle managers appeared

to have a greater role in integrating staff during merger change. For example, integrating staff with different skills, different perceptions and expectations and with different cultural backgrounds. It was also interesting to note that these challenges, were further exasperated with college managers having to manage subordinates on both rural and non-rural campuses. Conflict, between staff on these different campuses, appeared to remain a possibility due to different cultures.

Interviewees gave two compelling reasons for staff relationships becoming more central and critical to the job role of the college manager post-merger. First, the enactment of the role within a increasingly turbulent, complex and changing environment. Second, all interviewees thought there was now far greater pressures to achieve departmental and organizational success, as related to positive student outcomes, minimization of departmental costs and the generation of both funding and commercial income. Further exploration of the interview data suggested the support of all staff working as a team and supporting their manager was crucial. When probing interviewees further, they confirmed their role entailed looking after and motivating their staff, and ensuring their job security. However, the amount of available time for engendering staff relations seemed to remain a key challenge when taking into account the number and variety of tasks to be completed.

Whilst college middle manager time seemed to be a critical factor in conducting staff relations, further analysis of interview data suggested an important contributory factor relating to staff relations. At post-merger, there appeared far fewer college middle managers in post. This seemed to have contributed to increased workloads for college middle managers, thereby increasing reliance on subordinates.

Evidence from interviewees appeared to suggest an important link between good staff relations and college manager performance as measured in quantitative terms including operational costs and income and student numbers recruited, retained and achieving. Qualitatively, included feedback from students, staff and businesses as recipients of training.

## 4.1.17 ii) Performance and accountability

All interviewees acknowledged a growing and important requirement for increased performance and accountability post-merger. Interviewees acknowledged accountability and performance is measured through the attainment of financial and non-financial key

performance indicators (KPIs) consisting of student recruitment, retention and attainment targets and budgeted income and operational costs.

Interestingly, eighteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, considered greater accountability as being positive, and necessary in the increasingly challenging and complex college operating environment. Five, out of twenty-three interviewees, demonstrated a negative view, by suggesting financial imperatives had become a priority, thus potentially compromising their professional curriculum role. It was notable these five interviewees considered their morale was undermined by pressures to generate commercial income and having to control operational costs.

All Interviewees appeared to acknowledge that managing financial performance had become increasingly difficult. This seems due to the uncertainty of student recruitment surrounded by competition from other providers and the increasing costs of resources, which appeared influenced by 'year-on-year' Government cuts in core curriculum funding.

Merged colleges in Wales, seemed to have increased their dependency on commercial income as a response to reduced Welsh Government curriculum core funding.

## 4.1.17 iii) Generation of Commercial Income

The majority of interviewees identified industry commercial training, as a valuable source of additional funding. It is interesting, that interviewees with responsibility for commercial work report earned income, from commercial training, is invested in curriculum projects thus enhancing the student experience. Thirteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, thought the survival of their department depended on their capability to generate much needed additional commercial income, as a supplement to available core funding.

Further probing of interviewees, indicated that eight, out of twenty-three interviewees, had little or no opportunity to generate commercial income. This appeared to leave these interviewees more widely exposed to annual reductions in Government core curriculum income.

Whilst interviewees acknowledged the growing importance of staff relations, performance, and accountability and commercial income, the matter of leadership appears paramount to the college manager role.

## 4.1.17 iv) College Leadership

Nineteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, suggested some knowledge and understanding of what they perceived as enacting a leadership role. One interview confirmed he carries out two roles, that of leader and manager, and commented:

"The perception of me is that I am a leader with a strong ability to manage when I need to. When things are going well, I push the boundaries and when things are not going so well, I flip back into the manager role, to a point when I say, let's look at the detail, then identify what needs to be done to put things right". Respondent 5.

Other interviewees reinforce their views on leadership by commenting:

"I can manage, yes, but more of a leader. I think you have to be both really. Respondent 10.

"I hope I would be classed as a leader. I am also a manager. I try and go by example in the role that I perform". Respondent 15.

"The management bit is the day-to-day thing, whereas leadership is perhaps looking at the future". Respondent 17.

"I lead people into a position where I think they should be, and what we should be doing, and when we get there, I manage it". Respondent 18.

"Being a leader is about getting staff on board, and getting to where we are trying to get to". Respondent 13.

It appeared that twenty-one, out of twenty-three interviewees, seemed strongly influenced by the actions of their Principal/Chief Executive and members of the senior management team as role models for leadership. Several interviewees commented positively on the organization's leadership:

"Our Principal is more a leader than a manager. He is inspiring, uses different approaches and is a risk-taker". Respondent 10.

"He inspires something in me to want to be a leader". Respondent 17. This appears to suggest that the Principal/Chief Executive is a leadership role model, and influences college middle managers to adopt a leadership style when enacting their roles.

The issue of leadership is an important one and provides an opportunity for wider discussion given the increasing importance of interpersonal skills to the role of the college middle manager.

In an environment, which appeared frenetic and challenging, the majority of interviewees seemed to value continuing professional development (CPD), as an important vehicle for helping interviewees to increase their performance and to enhance career progression.

## 4.1.17 v) Training and Development for College Managers

Twenty, out of twenty-three interviewees, confirmed the value of continuing professional development (CPD). Further probing of interviewees appeared to show that training has the potential to contribute significantly to how college managers perform in their respective roles. A general consensus by the focus group, suggested (CPD) enhanced their promotional opportunities.

All interviewees stated training in Leadership and Management development is available at degree and certificates levels. The Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) validates (ILM) programmes. Interviewees spoke strongly regarding the value of the ILM qualification and its relevance to their work environment.

Training was both formal and informal and interviewees acknowledged the benefits. For example, opportunities for networking, sharing good practice, time for reflection and discussion, and a chance to be proactive. The majority of interviewees expressed the rewarding nature of training and its importance to them developing as a college manager.

Notably, some interviewees appeared to have progressed well in their organizations, as the result of robust training, performing effectively and through good mentoring and support. Interviewees confirmed that there was a requirement for college managers' to disseminate the outcomes of their training to a wider audience upon completion.

Twelve interviewees, out of twenty-three interviewees, had gained an MA in Leadership and Management. Twelve, out of twenty-three interviewees, had achieved the Institute of Leadership Management (ILM) programmes at levels 3, 4 and 5.

Examination of the data indicated variable responses to degree level study. Further probing of interviewees determined the ILM certificate level of study in Leadership and Management

was more valued as being relevant to the role of college managers. Evidence from some interviewees implied formal training had little or no value given its disconnect from the realities of the workplace. Two interviewees commented:

"The MA or ILM did not make the line manager a better person".  Respondent 9.

"The MA in Leadership and Management is no value for me, it is a paper qualification on what I already know".  Respondent 19.

Findings showed, training taking place in the workplace, appeared to have more relevance to what college manager actually does. This work-based training seemed, to most interviewees, a rewarding and valuable experience.

All interviewees spoke very positively of the effects of individual mentoring as complementing training, and the contribution this made to their performance. Evidence from the findings appears to show increased support from senior managers, post-merger, was particularly valued by interviewees and had significantly helped them to progress positively in the organization.

Three, out of twenty-three interviewees, expressed a contradictory view to their involvement in training. Two key reasons given, for example, age of the interviewee and a view that 'training had no value' to the 'real work environment'.

Whilst internal factors appeared to significantly influence the role of the college manager, the researcher had identified two important influencing external factors.

## 4.18 Key External Factors Influencing the College middle Manager Role

### 4.18.1 The Political Landscape - UK and Welsh Governments

Strength of feeling amongst 21 out of 24 interviewees, with curriculum responsibilities, is that Central Government and, more specifically the Welsh Government, appeared to play a significant part in influencing a college's curriculum provision through its funding mechanisms within the Further Education (FE) sector in Wales. According to these interviewees, this had the potential to impact significantly on their management role.

Several interviewees commented that:

"The Welsh Government always has a part to play in funding policy". Respondent 6.

"The Welsh Government is a major challenge in relation to keeping costs down, and what we need to put into the curriculum". Respondent 9.

Further examination of interview data, exposes the Welsh Government as indirectly controlling curriculum provision, monitoring college costs, and continuously reducing curriculum core funding. Further questioning of interviewees, identified a significant challenge for college managers trying to provide balanced curriculum provision, attain viable numbers of students, maximizing student attainment within core funding constraints.

Equally influential, is the Further Education Inspectorate for Wales.

## 4.18.2 HMI Estyn - The Inspection Service for Schools and colleges in Wales in Wales

HMI Estyn's expectations for student provision, retention and attainment and student experience also seemed to be major influence on the college manager's professional role. Interviewees, who have departmental responsibility for curriculum, appear significantly influenced by the Inspection Framework.

The impact of HMI Estyn is summed-up by two interviewees who commented:

"Estyn makes the rules, we follow. They are auditors and trying to establish you are doing what the Welsh Government wants you to do". This appears to show a collusion between HMI Estyn and the Welsh Government resulting greater pressure on middle managers to conform.

"College managers should be striving to make sure we work to whatever Estyn expects, throughout our daily work". Respondent 8.

Analysis of the data indicated the influence of HMI Estyn extends across curriculum planning, provision delivery and attainment.

In the following section the author explored the college manager's experience at the pre-merger stage.

## 4.19 The 'Lived' Experiences of College Middle Managers Pre-Merger

The pre-merger phase of college merger was characterized by a college environment that was challenging and surrounded by the complexity of merger, created by the restructuring of departments and redeployment of staff. The reconfiguration of departments also resulted in some departments delivering new specialist subjects of which some college middle managers were unfamiliar. Quite significantly the pre-merger change also resulted in changes in senior management teams, thus impacting upon lines of communication between middle managers and senior managers.

The lack of experience of college merger by some senior managers created uncertainty and resulted in certain tensions amongst a number of middle managers. The merging of urban and rural college campuses was a significant challenge during this initial phase of the merger. An uncertain operational environment therefore provided operational difficulties, which caused a degree of anxiety amongst college middle managers. Some mangers coped with this change whereas a number of middle managers found this stage of merger extremely difficult. The anxiety and uncertainty created invariably resulted in a negative impact on a number of college middle managers 'lived' experiences.

Although the majority of interviewees were in an operational management role only eight, out of twenty-three interviewees, contributed to any significant extent to the pre-merger process. This appeared a rather low number given the skills and experiences of the majority of college middle managers. Comments by several interviewees reinforce this lack of involvement in the merger process:

"College managers played no part in merger planning". Respondent 16.

"We were told we were going to merge, and we had to work with senior management. It was as simple as that". Respondent 7.

However, a contrasting view, taken by fifteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, indicated there were opportunities, albeit limited, to participate in the merger planning process, through involvement in decision-making regarding new departmental structures, deployment of staff and changes in operational processes. This view, supported by one interviewee, who commented:

"You were certainly consulted on what was happening. I had an opportunity to consult. They would also listen to me". Respondent 3.

Further probing of interviewees suggested they had been negatively affected by the merger process. Interviewees had expressed concerns for their own job security, a perceived degree of 'loss of control' and a general 'fear of the unknown'. Twelve, out of twenty-three interviewees, thought a lack of information had resulted in a general feeling of being sufficiently uninvolved. One interviewee likened the release of information as a 'drip feed' process. Sixteen, out of twenty-three interviewees, spoke of raised levels of anxiety, as an outcome of the merger journey. This seemed to be a collection of perceptions characterized by fear, causing uncertainty.

Pre-merger anxiety seems exasperated through a personal belief that some interviewees might not cope, or have the necessary confidence, to manage larger departments and additional staff. However, eleven, out of twenty-three interviewees, offered a contrasting view. They appeared quite confident they would secure a new management role in the merged college. These interviewees also spoke of a positive impact to merger, which exposed them to the complexities of the merger process and how they might respond to difficult situations in the future.

Finally, the author, investigates changes in the college manager's professional experience and identifies significant contributory factors, perceived by interviewees, as contributing to changes.

## 4.20  Post-Merger Changes in Professional Experiences and Potential Contributory Factors

The post-merger phase of college merger resulted in a more settled environment which saw many of the operational difficulties resolved, especially those resulting from departmental reconfiguration and the resettlement of staff. This was in part due to senior managers continuing familiarization of the merger process. College middle managers also demonstrated more awareness of their operational objectives and appeared comfortable with their work patterns. This post-merger phase also resulted in more harmony between staff in rural and urban college campuses. The additional support for mentoring for college middle managers was a significant development which helped to allay uncertainties amongst middle managers. The new post-merger stage manifested itself in a cohort of college middle

managers who were mainly beginning to feel more confident and motivated in their roles and less anxious about their futures. This combined to provide for a much improved 'lived' experience thus providing a positive foundation for progression

Exploration of the interview data highlighted some significant changes to the college manager's professional experience post-merger. The analysis of the interview data suggested changes had taken place against a background of a frenetic, complex and rapidly changing work environment, which appeared to impact significantly on professional experience. However, further probing of interviewees, identified some key changes post-merger, and potential key contributory factors as outlined in (Table 3: Pages 111-112)

**Table 3. Changes in college manager's professional experience and potential contributory factors post-merger**

| Changes to College Manager's Professional 'lived' Experience | Potential Causations of Change |
|---|---|
| Increased managerial responsibilities in the key area of curriculum | A growing emphasis by senior management on curriculum provision in relation to the organizational aim of an improved a quality student experience. Also, increased size of curriculum departments, greater numbers of staff to manage and the management of multi campuses in both rural and non-rural locations.<br><br>The introduction and requirement to manage effectively, new and developing systems and procedures revolving around curriculum provision. The overall accountability of college middle managers has increased significantly. |
| A wider scope to the college middle manager role beyond a curriculum focus | Increasing downward pressures on curriculum core funding and the requirement to reduce operational costs had placed a greater emphasis on the need to generate commercial income from industry training programmes to counteract reductions in core funding. |
| General increase in workloads thus increasing the scope of the college manager role | Additional work tasks and new areas of work appear to have substantially contributed to increased workloads. Fewer college middle managers in post also resulted in increased workloads. |
| Increased levels of trust between college managers and senior managers and subordinates | In the majority of cases, improved staff relations allied to improved, developing and more open communication seem to have engendered higher levels of trust throughout each college organization and resulted in the higher credibility of college middle managers. |
| Increasing the influence of communication | Open communication, good leadership, a positive interface between college managers, subordinates and senior management and new developing cultures, appeared to have contributed a far greater college manager influence regarding planning and decision-making. |
| A requirement for additional travel between college campuses | Some college middle managers' now manage multi-site campuses which has, in effect, reduced their actual work- |

| | time through having to travel to these distant locations, thus presenting additional challenges. |
|---|---|
| An increasing focus on CPD development and mentoring | Post-merger, there has been a significant drive to place a far greater emphasis on the development of college middle managers' by senior managers |
| A greater administrative role | The increasing requirement for reporting of financial and non-financial complex data to senior managers and external sources, for example, Welsh Government and Estyn, the Inspection Service in Wales, thus increasing beauracracy. |

Interviewees clearly recognised post-merger changes, and contributory factors influencing their professional experiences, as highlighted in (Table 2: pages 89-90) Although most interviewees acknowledged their roles were becoming increasingly more reactive and leaving little time to be proactive, they appeared to paint a positive picture associated with these changes, as evidenced by the following positive comments:

"I think it's been a journey, and though I would say my experience has been positive, and I am happy to be here, I do like my job". Respondent 7.

"As part of the changes in my management experiences, I have become more knowledgeable and have a broader picture of things". Respondent 9. This respondent also thought that the role was now better informed.

Another interviewee commented: "My new role has had a positive impact on my overall performance as related to staff, results and targets". Respondent 10.

## 4.21 Mentoring and Support

Exploration of the interview data, seemed to imply mentoring, and associated senior manager support had contributed positively and significantly to helping college middle managers' cope within the challenging work environment and emerging role challenges. One interviewee confirmed this view by commenting:

"Since I got the new post in the new college, I feel I have received a really high level of support from the management team". Respondent 5.

## 4.22 Work-place Culture

The analysis of interview data seemed to show cultural complexity having a distinct influence on the college manager's professional experience. Cultural complexity appeared to have arisen due to several contributory factors including the integration of staff from dispersed campuses, changes in the senior management and variable communication as evidenced across college organizations. Nine, out of twenty-three interviewees, demonstrated some confusion regarding understanding organization culture. Several interviewees appeared to add to this confusion by being unclear as to the relationship and impact of culture as applied to the college manager role. Three, out of twenty-three interviewees, stated cultural differences still accounted for some staff not working together effectively.

Noticeably culture change seemed to have been more dramatic and positive when long-serving older college managers had taken the decision to take voluntary redundancy during merger. The majority of interviewees preferred to use face-to-face contact when dealing with cultural issues.

## 4.23 Summary of Findings

The data from the findings has given the author a valuable insight into a number of influences having the potential to impact on the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers. College mergers, resulting from organizational structure changes and the reconfiguration of departments, appear to be the main catalyst for changes to work patterns and managerial responsibilities. Larger curriculum departments and functional departments, with corresponding increases in numbers of staff, have led to an increase in multiple work tasks, significant increases in managerial responsibilities and increased accountability. Additional work pressures had led to college middle managers adopting a primarily reactive approach to their work.

It is also clear from the findings that the primary role of the college middle manager focuses on a growing pedagogic involvement. Significantly, the findings confirm the current college manager role appears to have developed significantly beyond curriculum provision to include a commercial dimension. External factors also appear to influence enactment of the management role.

The title of each college middle manager appears to be a key determinate in clarifying and identifying each role. However, what is evident is college middle managers within the college

structure are located in the 'middle' of an organizational hierarchy. It is also noticeable that some college middle managers perceive themselves as leaders, in addition to being managers.

Overall, what college middle managers do is more significant.

The outcomes of the findings provide a platform for in-depth discussion in the following chapter.

# Chapter Five

Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

An important element of this study was to provide a clear definition as to what the college manager does in the context of a merged environment and how he or she performs in this role. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the role of the college middle manager and to identify the potential impact of college merger change on the professional 'lived' experience of college middle managers working within the further education (FE) sector in Wales. This discussion chapter is structured into nine key areas comprising: The college manager, Managerial roles and responsibilities, 'lived' experiences, College middle manager performance, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Comparisons of college manager roles, External factors influencing the role and College environment.

In FE colleges, the college middle manager role seems perceived as specialist and technical role, and predominately curriculum focused. This study provides an insight into college management not explored before and highlights components of the college manager role against a background of organizational change and potential external influences.

Merger change has significantly impacted upon the college environment.

## 5.2 The College Middle Manager

The term 'middle' manager is not helpful and confusing, and appears to have minimal impact on 'lived' experience. Whilst it appears college middle manager identity is strengthened by title, what the college manager actually does is more significant which also raises creditability of the position.

This study places the college middle manager in the centre of a restructured organization resulting from the merger process. This view has resonance with a study by Bennet (1995) who states the term 'middle' manager implies a hierarchy of formal structure where senior managers assume responsibility for strategy. In the college context, strategy covers organizational aims and objectives and encompasses planning for curriculum provision and non-curriculum activities and associated resources. The views of college middle managers consider their role as operational, with responsibility for implementing organizational strategies by senior managers.

Examination of the data clearly places college middle managers in the middle of the college organizational structure located between senior managers and the subordinates they manage. Whilst for the majority of college middle managers their role has expanded significantly since merger, the positioning of their roles within the organization structures of the merged colleges remains much the same. Lines of hierarchical demarcation appear to mark the boundaries of each interviewee's managerial responsibility within the organization structure. The views of interviewees, appears consistent with a study by Briggs (2001) who defines the middle manager as a person who leads a curriculum department. As the majority of college middle managers manage departments, this appears to confer legitimacy to the role and depicts the college middle manager as reporting to senior managers and managing subordinate staff.

This is confirmation of the organizational positioning of the middle within the organizational structure, describing college managers as middle managers, appears too simple and is certainly a vague interpretation. Whilst college managers may occupy a central position within the organization it does not appear to contribute much to understanding what the college middle manager does, or highlight the complexities associated with the role. Feedback from interviews appears to suggest that explanation of the many work tasks and nature of managerial responsibilities of the college middle manager may offer a more definitive and clearer identification of the role.

Examination of the data shows interviewees are more inclined to define their own roles through their titles. This study's findings confirm role title's as Head of Department or Director of Studies, is a more meaningful and significant identifier of roles amongst interviewees than the term 'middle' manager. The views of the majority of the focus group on where their role is positioned, and where they 'fit' into their organization's structure draws parallels with Mintzberg's (2011) definition of a manager's position in the organization and how college managers see the positioning of their roles. This suggests the term middle manager, may not be a significant factor when defining the role of the college manager.

This study clearly identifies a significant management role for all interviewees, however, what is less clear are the perceptions of college middle managers that they enact a leadership role alongside their management role.

The author will now discuss the issues associated with the college middle manager role and related managerial responsibilities.

## 5.3 Managerial Roles and Responsibilities

### 5.3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Examination of the managerial dimensions of the practitioner role, suggests 85% of interviewees consider they carry out two distinct roles. Firstly, a role as professional educator considered a specialist and technically specific curriculum role and identified in this study as the college middle manager's primary role. This view draws parallels with findings by Briggs (2001) who suggests the majority of middle managers in FE lead curriculum departments.

Analysis of the findings indicates curriculum development, planning and delivery a major strength for all interviewees managing curriculum departments. All college managers consider curriculum provision to be the core business of the college. Secondly, the role of manager which is perceived by interviewees, as managerial due to their involvement in the managerial process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling of work, staff and resources in their respective departments. It appears that these management functions offer interviewees a degree of stability within their roles Stewart (2003).

However, role transformation Beresford, and Michael's (2014) appears to have emerged post-merger indicating a shift away from a solely pedagogical role for college middle managers, towards a role incorporating a new market-based managerialism with its focus on strict controls and efficient use of Key Performance targets (KPIs) to measure performance Pollit (1990). This study identified a close correlation between this new managerialism and the commerciality of curriculum departments. It was apparent from the findings that college middle managers were now required to be more accountable for departmental outcomes translated as operational targets. This accountability was a commonality between FE college middle managers and public sector middle managers McConville (2006). The debate on managerialism is an interesting one. This study shows a large number of college middle managers generally agree the necessity of a managerialistic approach to managing as a means of improving their effectiveness and efficiency in departmental operations.

Examination of the findings, suggests 70% of college middle managers are actively involved in a commercial dimension associated with the generation of commercial training income, which has gained increased significance post-merger. However, the level of involvement by interviewees in the generation of commercial work appears variable. The degree of involvement by interviewees is influenced by the nature of specialist programmes being

offered by the respective department and the skills and capabilities of departmental staff. Analysis of interviewee feedback suggests a wide range of variances across the focus group.

The inclusion of commercial training within curriculum departments is an important one, and although Randell, and Brady (1997) in their study do not mention managerialism, they do refer to a shift in emphasis from a professional educational stance to commerciality. This is consistent with findings of this study, which identifies an important change in emphasis in the middle manager role and responsibilities towards increasing commerciality. McConville (2006) relates this to role dissonance. At least 67% of interviewees suggest that the increasing drive by senior management towards commerciality had the potential to create conflict for college middle managers' when contrasting their curriculum managerial responsibilities with a growing emphasis on commerciality of departments. However, the majority of interviewees recognised the significance of incorporating a commercial dimension in their roles with the benefit of generating commercial income. This was significant given the necessity for colleges to counteract annual reductions in the Government's core funding for curriculum programmes.

Evidence presented, suggests the college middle manager's work tasks and responsibilities are galvanized into activities identified with Mintzberg's (1989) 'The working roles of managers' model recognising mangers as carrying out interpersonal, informational and decisional roles surrounded by power and authority. The degree of power and authority of college middle managers is debatable due to a widespread belief amongst interviewees that formal authority and power, continues to reside with senior managers. This has resonance and relevance to managing within the college context. This view echo's findings by Dowley (2013) who suggests power resides with a small group of senior managers. This raises the question of the managerial freedom and influence interviewees perceived they expected in their management role, post-merger. The findings suggest a possibility that the behaviour of senior managers could potentially influence college middle managers Lumby (2013). This seems to have the potential to impact on the individual behaviours of college middle managers whilst carrying out their roles.

This study shows that elements of all three roles identified by Mintzberg are manifest in the middle manager role. However, whilst this study found a degree of variability in practitioners' involvement in these separate roles, staff relations and communication appeared paramount in underpinning the college middle manager role. This increased emphasis on staff relations and interpersonal skills, might suggest middle managers in the FE sector actually carryout a

limited leadership role. If leadership is about influence rather than authority Bush, and Glover (2014) and has an association with vision and transformation, then leadership has to prevail within the college organization to effect successful change. However, the author recognises the leadership debate is much wider.

Evidence from these managers, in terms of their pattern of working in the college context, suggest the 'lived' or professional experiences of interviewees, was shaped and influenced significantly at the pre-merger stage but less so at later stages. Later refinements to organizational structures seem to have had only a marginal impact upon the workloads and managerial responsibilities of college managers. This might suggest that initial merger was the main catalyst for fundamental changes in the roles and responsibilities of college middle managers.  The majority of interviewees supported merger and recognised the potential opportunities for progression.

The role and responsibilities of college middle managers' comprise multiple activities and exhibit a number of characteristics.

### 5.3.2 Activities and Characteristics of the College Middle Manager Role

Examination of the managerial dimensions of the practitioner role, suggests the majority of interviewees, carryout a number of managerial activities underpinning their role. This is consistent with the findings of Hale (1981). However, interviewees also carry out a number of non-managerial activities including liaising with external businesses and having an involvement in school partnerships. The study exposes a pattern of activities associated with the work of college middle managers. A broad consensus, across the focus group, emerges on a range of key activities they carry out in relation to their core role in the area of curriculum. These have been identified as, internal networking with other managers and staff and external networking with industry businesses and other agencies, dealing with staff problems, developing new curriculum provision, Developing commercial training programmes, scheduling of work and teaching and the management of data and other forms of departmental information. These activities align with Hales (2001) study highlighting mainstream managerial activities revolving around the functions of management and including networking, negotiating, human resources, innovation and management of information.

Importantly, emerging from this study are a number of characteristics specific to the role of the college middle manager as Identified in (Table 4: Pages 112-113) These specific characteristics are consistent with mainstream managerial characteristics highlighted in studies by several management scholars including (Hales, 1986; Minzberg, 2011; Morris et al, 1982; Tengblad, 2006). Their studies portray the role of the middle manager as consisting of an involvement in a series of fragmented activities carried out at an unrelenting pace involving various types of communication media all within a controlled environment. This is further evidence to support the perceptions of college middle managers of the complexity of their roles, post-merger, and the widening scope of their responsibilities.

**Table 4.** Characteristics of the College Middle Manager Role and Associated Activities

| Characteristics of the College Middle Manager Role | Activities |
| --- | --- |
| Challenging and Pressurized Role | Practitioners enact their roles in a frenetic and challenging workplace, which is consistently changing. This provides a major challenge for practitioners |
| A Reactive Approach to Working | The practitioner enacts their role, involving multiple activities. This forces the majority of interviewees to apply a reactive approach to their managerial role. Time appears to be a significant factor and can impact negatively on the time to complete work tasks which has the effect of expanding the working day and increasing role pressures. |
| Patterns of Working | Evidence suggests that the practitioner's work tasks are fragmented. This is particularly due the wide scope of their role and the multiple work tasks and activities carried out. Whilst the major emphasis is on curriculum tasks and activities, there is also the requirement to carry out a teaching commitment and involvement in commercial business work for the majority of interviewees, which involves working with a plethora of businesses on development and delivery of training. |
| Merger Process | The majority of practitioners appear energised and motivated by the merger process. This has resulted in a manager role characterized by additional work tasks and wider managerial responsibilities. |
| Positioning of the College Middle Manager Post | College managers are pre-occupied with increasing involvement in staff relations |

| | and a growing emphasis on departmental and organizational communication, including networking with other middle and senior managers. Communication has become a central feature of the role and has become increasingly important and significant. |
|---|---|

Changes in the roles and responsibilities have significantly influenced the size of college middle manager workloads.

### 5.3.3 Middle Manager Workloads

Whilst increases in managerial responsibilities is an expected outcome of enlarged departments and increases in staff, what appears subtle is the increase in work tasks since merger. Interviewee feedback suggests fewer college middle managers are in post following merger due to older and long-serving managers taking voluntary redundancy. This has increased workloads of college middle managers, consequently leading to additional work pressures.

Evidence of the findings data confirms a greater role for college middle managers in human resource management. Increasing reliance on staff participation, the delegation of tasks to subordinates, as a mechanism for reducing work pressures for college middle managers, and a general recognition that the participation and contribution of staff can enhance organizational success, has given staff relations a higher priority within college organizations.

Evidence from the findings suggests that changes in workloads have a close association with organizational change and growing levels of levels of complexity. This is consistent with a study by Berquiet (1998) who relates role complexity to merger change. Feedback from interviewees suggests the college middle manager's role exhibits a highly frenetic, constantly changing pattern of activities, which in many ways can be seen as echoing the type of frenetic pattern of work uncovered by leading mainstream management studies Hales (1986). For some interviewees, role complexity was enhanced by an operational requirement for travel between college campuses. Travelling time erodes available work time to carryout various work tasks. This arguably has a resonance with a study by Prye, and Taneja (2010) linking multi-work environments to college managers' work patterns.

This study's findings identified a link between excessive workloads and the ability of college managers to cope effectively in their roles. The data indicates that scheduled teaching commitments further resulted in what Stewart's (1989) study identified as the intrusion of fragmented work patterns, which resulted in limited time for college managers to adopt a proactive stance. There was a consensus across majority of interviewees that coping with excessive workloads, applying a reactive approach to their work and scheduled teaching commitments, created the potential for conflict.

There was a broad consensus across the focus group their workloads were managed in a systematic and functional way which echoes the approach to managing as exposed by leading mainstream management studies such as those conducted by (Fayol, 1949; Minztberg, 2011; Taylor, 1947) This view is also consistent with a study by Briggs, (2001), and Jenson Van Rensberg, Davis & Venter, 2014) which suggests a close correlation between managerial curriculum responsibilities and the functions of the management role.

The merger process and patterns of work have greatly influenced college middle managers 'lived' experiences.

## 5.4 The 'lived' experience of College Middle Managers

Rapid change has been influential in shaping the 'lived' experience of the college middle manager. Data from the findings indicates that college organizational change is wide-ranging with interviewees confirming 'lived' experiences being influenced by new organizational structures and changes in processes and systems. These views have resonance with a study by Gleeson, and Shaun (1990). Evidence from interviewees indicated, that in some cases, changes in the senior management team and an associated change in the style of management practiced by senior managers, which also impacted on their 'lived' experiences. However, findings data suggest other factors, not directly associated with the merger process, influencing 'lived' experiences. Positive influences include: Mentoring and support and Provision of training programmes. Negative influences have resulted from: Differing cultures across organizations, travel demands, Pressures for commercial income, which appear to only the shaping of these over the longer term, increasing bureaucracy pinching manager time and increasing accountability. Examination of the data also refers to the continuing uncertainty regarding the FE sector and core funding. One extreme view related to two interviewees given smaller departments post-merger, and is considered to have a demoralizing effect. It was clear from the findings that negative issues abated over time due

to improved communications. Evidence from the study suggests that college mergers have been the major catalyst for change in the FE sector in Wales.

There appears a consensus across the focus group that their roles have become increasingly challenging post-merger. Evidence from this study suggests a close correlation between an increasing role challenge and changes in the college working environment. This line of argument aligns with a study by Prye, and Taneja (2010) highlighting an association between increasing role challenge and merged work environments. Examination of the data indicates increases in the number of work tasks and managerial responsibilities, allied to increasing challenge, were mainly associated with departmental size and wider staff responsibilities.

Examination of the data appears to show that the rationalization process, Brunson (2009), has resulted in both positive and negative 'lived' experiences for college middle managers. Interviewees interpretation of a positive experience relates to what Dentoni (2015) refers to as, opportunities for creating new jobs and redefining what people do. It is against this background that this study reveals college manager's experience of the merger process has been generally good with the majority of interviewees progressing to new managerial posts in the new merged organizations. Some interviewees thought their experience of transformational change had resulted in a positive outcome and given them an insight into a complex organizational situation and this experience had taught them how they might deal with such complexities in the future in view of college organizations surrounded by continual change complexity and challenge.

Conversely, 21% of interviewees expressed a degree of negativity impacting upon their 'lived' experiences. Examination of the data implies negativity is associated with organizational communication, which was both variable and inconsistent. The focus group also raised negative issue revolving around a general confusion over organizational change, a lack of direction by senior managers and feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. The views of some members of the focus group related these issues to the limited experience of college merger by some senior managers. Feedback from interviewees implied that this negativity was specific to the pre-merger period. Post-merger, there is an improved picture resulting from improved communication between senior managers and college middle managers.

Given the uncertainty of merger change and the levels of negativity at the pre-merger stage, it was surprising that the majority of interviewees recognised the value they could bring to the merger process, if given the opportunity to be actively involved. This view aligns with

Briggs (2004) study acknowledging the significant contribution college managers can make to the merger process, given their position in the college organization and their specialist professional knowledge of curriculum matters. This view has parallels with a study by Leader (2004) in which he concludes that gaining the support of college managers during merger is crucial to success.

The author's study shows that interviewees understand the influential impact of managerial behaviour has upon their 'lived' experiences. Not all behaviours displayed by college middle managers were of a negative nature. A number of behaviours were considered extremely positive. These findings have resonance with a study by Everard, and Morris (1990). Managerial behaviours appear to complement roles and responsibilities and are seem to be an important influence, with the potential to impact upon the college middle manager's ability to manage effectively their departments. This view where interviewees recognise the influence of their behaviours on their role is consistent with a study by Stewart (1986) who demonstrates the potential impact managerial behaviour can have on the college manager role. Three key behaviours emerged from the author's findings with the potential to impact upon college middle manager performance.

Technology has transformed the role of the college middle manager over recent years. The email system is a manifestation of how changes in modern technology and work practice can manifest themselves. The 'tyranny of email' is a phenomenon of modern life, but needs to be considered in the broader context of patterns of communication in college organizations.

The growing importance of organizational communication and the need for a high level of inter-personal skills, makes the email system a useful tool for college managers. This view resonates with a study by Bennis (1984) in which he recognises leaders need to have a set of good inter-personal skills, which contribute to raising levels of trust. The responsiveness of college managers to email communication is variable. The main causation of this variability seems to be associated with work overload and the potential impact, on the working time of college managers.

The college manager's behaviour towards mentoring and supporting staff was also significant due to its association with engendering good staff relations. The analysis suggests there was a consistent pattern of involvement by all interviewees in the mentoring and support process. Interestingly, all interviewees also spoke highly of senior managements role in

making mentoring and support a higher priority, post-merger. Interviewees stated that this was significant in helping them to cope and perform in their roles.

Interviewees highlighted the requirement for them management and departmental meetings. This appeared a pre-requisite to their role. Examination of the findings, suggests 39% of interviewees demonstrated ambivalence towards meetings, especially those organized outside of their own departments. Interviewees appear to prioritize meetings following an assessment as to which meetings might add value to their role. Workloads, limitations on time, general attitudes and the coping strategies of interviewees, all combine to shape their views on attendance.

This study highlights the influence individual college middle manager behaviour has on their 'lived' experiences throughout the merger process. Examination of the findings data, suggests a lack of involvement by some interviewees at the pre-merger stage had directly influenced their managerial behaviour during transitional change. This view has parallels with work by Bennis, (1984, 1989), and Ibarra & Hensen 2011) who state the prominence of behaviours appears more relevant at the time of organizational change. Negative behaviour appears to have manifested itself in their general attitude in responding to senior management requests and sharing the longer-term college vision. Their lack of involvement in pre-merger planning and their uncertainty of a future management role seems to have been the catalyst for this negative behaviour. College middle managers displaying positive behaviour seemed to have had some involvement in pre-merger planning and seemed confident of securing a new management role.

The findings data suggests, that whilst the majority of interviewees modified their behaviours post-merger, and more significantly at later organizational restructurings, a very small minority of interviewees continued to display variability in their behaviours. Inconsistencies, in individual behaviours, appears linked to several key causes. The ability and capability of the college middle manager to cope with a larger department and increased numbers of staff, pressures of the role generated from senior management demands and increased patterns of work allied to available time to complete these tasks.

Examination of the findings suggest college cultures at departmental level have also contributed to how college middle managers behave in their role. According to Groysberg, Lee, Price, and Cheng (2018) their study suggests culture is an organizational tacit social order capable of shaping attitudes and behaviour. If this is the case, the integration of many distinct

cultures resulting from college merger, whilst complex, is a powerful force for change which needs to be managed, therefore, positively contributing to organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

The different cultures evidenced in the college organizations need to be managed to ensure integration of middle managers and all other staff. This will contribute to creating a sense of loyalty, thus addressing conflict and stress which can arise during organizational transitional change Harman (2002).

Whilst a combination of factors appear to have significantly influenced the 'lived' experiences of the college middle manager, investigation into the roles and responsibilities of college middle managers has identified college middle managers as perceiving themselves as enacting a leadership role whilst carrying out their jobs.

Ambiguity exists between leadership and management roles as found in the mainstream literature review chapter. Some management scholars consider management as separate to leadership. Conversely, other scholars consider management and leadership complementary, thereby generating a contentious debate about leadership amongst management scholars.

This study identifies a mixed response from interviewees on the nature of leadership at departmental level, which seems to suggest a degree of vagueness in their views on leadership. Interviewees views on leadership appear to be partially influenced by their perceptions of their Principal/Chief Executive as a good role model for leadership as exemplified by their vision, actions and drive to achieve a successful organization.

Leadership requires a different set of skills and competences to management Gillen (2003). Interviewees strongly considered themselves as enacting a management role. College middle managers perceptions of themselves as enacting a leadership role appears to resonate with them carrying out the traditional functions of management as identified by leading mainstream management studies such as those conducted by Fayol, (1947), Hale, (1986), Mintzberg, (2011), and Taylor (1949) and working towards objectives and 'hard' results. According to Gillen (2003) leadership is not just about interpersonal skills but includes vision, integrity, trust and attitude.

Staff relations have always been intrinsic to the college middle manager role, thus reinforcing the importance of manager participation in staff relations Everard, and Morris (1990).

Evidence from the findings suggests an increasing emphasis on staff relations, post-merger. This appears to suggest college middle managers need to have higher levels of competencies and skills when interacting with    subordinates and senior managers. The importance of interpersonal skills, as central to the leadership role, has been identified by numerous scholars, including (Blanchard, 1998; Ibarra & Henson 2011; Stewart, 2003). Whilst a focus on staff relations and viewing senior managers as role models has shaped the views interviewees on leadership, when considering the findings of Gillian (2003) leaderships is much more complex.

Leadership is symptomatic of change in the college organization, and as espoused by Henson (2011) is therefore fundamental to this change. Data from findings suggest, for some interviewees, their views of themselves as enacting a leadership role is a reflection of them being engaged in organizational change at pre and post-merger stages.

Examination of interviewee feedback identifies a strong link between 'lived' experiences of the college middle managers and how well they perform in their roles. The next logical stage in the discussion is to understand college middle manager performance.

## 5.5 College Middle Manager Performance

Evidence from this study highlights the importance of manager performance. It appears that all interviewees are under increasing pressure to achieve Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used as an attainment tool to measure of their efficiency and effectiveness in the post. There appears an increasing emphasis, within the FE sector, on managerial efficiency and effectiveness, as reinforced in a study by Randell, and Brady (1997).

In the FE sector Key KPIs are associated with attainment of curriculum and commercial income, operational costs and student recruitment from traditional sources and industry. According to some interviewees the attainment of commercial income presented a significant challenge and there appeared the potential for conflict given their primary aim of managing curriculum as interpreted, as recruiting and retaining students and maximizing core curriculum funding.

All Interviewees expressed the relenting pressures they faced in meeting budgetary and student related targets, which represented a daily challenge to their work. This view resonates with a study by Cavert, and Rosner (2009) relating pressures to budgetary

considerations. Boocock, (2000) also reinforces this view expressed by the focus group that the link between budgetary considerations and targeted outcomes was significant.

It appears that some college middle managers struggle to find an acceptable balance between the demands of the curriculum and commercial operations. As the evidence presented suggests, the major challenge for college middle managers is to establish an acceptable balance between their financial and curriculum obligations as uncovered in a study Allio (2003) thereby ensuring their performance is both efficient and effective. This view is widened when considering findings by Briggs (2001).

Jones (2013), in which he outlines, in the literature chapter, the performance of college managers is also associated with the achievement of organizational objectives and having a degree of autonomy. Examination of the data indicates the majority of interviewees have autonomy relating to their curriculum role. College middle managers appear to have a far greater strength in the area of curriculum, whereas weaknesses appear to emerge in their commercial work.

Analysis of the findings also shows the majority of interviewees as having a personal interest during merger transition when focusing on their individual performance. This appears to relate to their personal interests revolving around their security and the potential opportunities for promotion. This personal view draws parallels with findings by La Pnna, and Hayes (2005), and Drowley (1997) who suggest that during merger change and uncertainty, college managers also consider their own personal survival over the success of the organization. This view gains support from Everard, and Morris (1990) who refer this to a 'concern for self'. Further examination of their study suggests performance is revolves around a 'concern for results' and a 'concern for relationships'. Analysis of the findings data suggests college middle managers enact their role with an increasing focus on the 'hard' results of the management process and relationships arising from the management of increasing levels of human resource.

Examination of the data suggests that there is a close correlation between college middle manager performance and the provision of training and support as an integral part of interviewees continuing professional development.

## 5.6 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Examination of the interview data suggests comprehensive training is provided for all college managers. An earlier report by the Department for Education and Skills (DES) (2003) identified college middle managers as lacking both ability and capability to respond effectively to organizational changes presented by merger. This study suggests an improvement in abilities and skills of college middle managers since this earlier report. Varying degrees of abilities across all college middle managers is still evident. There also appears a close correlation between the performance of college middle managers, and their continuing professional development (CPD). This echoes findings by Waddock, Maszoely, and Denton (2015).

Evidence from the findings suggests interviewees are exposed to formal and informal continuing professional development. There appears a propensity for managers to prefer a more informal approach to their training. Interestingly, findings suggest a weak correlation between degree level study in leadership and management, and the work interviewees do in the workplace. This suggests the benefits may not be fully realised by all interviewees. Some interviewees did not find formal training very beneficial to their work role and preferred more on-the-job training. This view is consistent with a study by Mintzberg (2011) who states that learning "Is a practice, learning primarily through experience and rooted in context". This practical approach to management training appears to connect better with the work environment. This view of the majority of interviewees aligns with a study by Peters (1992) in which he advocates 'Learning by doing'. The practical approach to management training, as espoused by a number of interviewees, may be an important consideration and has a resonance with a study by Mintzberg (2011) who states, "Managing is neither a science nor a profession, it is a practice learned primarily through practice".

This study shows college managers, post-merger, were supported and positively influenced by mentors. Mentoring had now become a higher priority in the merged institutions, with the majority of interviewees confirming the benefits resulting from this experience, with a corresponding positive impact on their individual performance.

To gain a wider understanding of the college middle manager role the author now explores comparisons between managers in the college environment.

## 5.7 Comparisons of how Manager Roles are portrayed in the college Context

The conventional view of the role of the manager in the private sector, according to Mintzberg (2011), is that fundamental characteristics have not changed. Planning and organizing of work, the application of a systematic approach characterized by unrelenting pace, variety, fragmentation, orientated towards action. This study has ascertained that these fundamentals are also relevant to managers in the public sector. From discussions with interviewees there appears a lack of clarity of what is a manager or leader in the FE sector in Wales. Their views on the manager role seem to align traditional and contemporary studies by such scholars as Fayol, (1949), Minzberg, (2011), and Taylor (1947) and the priority they give to curriculum, also appears influential their view of the management role in FE.

According to data from the findings, comparison of management roles in the FE sector in Wales, appears to be generally defined by the positioning of the manager role and the activities carried out by managers. Traditionally, college middle managers and senior managers share a commonality associated with curriculum provision. Senior managers appear to be viewed as leaders of the organization involved in strategic planning and decision-making. College middle managers, however, are considered functional and involved in operational planning, decision-making. Post-merger, examination of the data indicates the common view of the college 'middle' manager has transformed into a wider, more holistic role with a commercial element and a greater focus on operational targets.

It was evident from this study that the college 'middle' manager role was significantly influenced by external factors. These are discussed in the following section, thus creating greater clarity of potential influences.

## 5.8 External Factors Influencing Role Enactment

As evidence from the data shows, there appears to be two external sources, which seem to have a significant impact upon the 'lived' experiences on the majority of college middle managers having responsibility for managing curriculum departments. One particular external source, the Welsh Government, appears to exercise an influence as controlling curriculum provision through their policies curriculum provision allied to availability of core funding as uncovered by Heifetz, and Grashow (2009).

Interviewees also seem to have a pre-occupation with Estyn (The Inspection Service in Wales) and are acutely aware of the impact of the inspection framework and protocols on their

autonomy in relation to the curriculum planning process. Estyn appear to exercise a form of control, which impinges on how college managers plan and deliver their curriculum programmes. It was very clear to interviewees, their performance as managers of curriculum would be assessed, once inspection outcomes, were published in the public domain.

Interviewees strength of feeling towards the Welsh Government and Estyn's levels of control draws parallels with a study by Boocock (2013) which shows the extent of control exerted by Government and Estyn, through their funding and inspection policies. Interestingly, interviewees thought this level of control reduced their influence, leaving them less empowered. A further complication relates to college managers perceptions their autonomy as a professional educator, is potentially undermined by both these external influences.

The college environment was significant in influencing shaping the working patterns of college middle managers.

## 5.9 College Environment

Organizational restructuring of colleges in Wales has afforded the opportunity to review the college middle manager's role, including work tasks and managerial responsibilities. Evidence presented shows a close relationship between organizational re-structuring, configuration of curriculum departments and review of middle manager roles. This appears consistent with Kotter's (2012) findings showing a strong relationship between changes in organizational structure and a corresponding review of work tasks and managerial responsibilities. Evidence from the findings, suggests these changes also have an impact on the 'lived' experiences of the college middle manager.

The definition of the term middle manager is capable of causing some confusion due to the potential vagueness of the term and its position within the organizational structure.

## 5.10 Summary

The notion of a middle manager role remains a contentious term in the context of this study of Welsh colleges. This term middle manager appears to contribute very little to understanding what the college manager actually does. However, it is quite clear from this study that the middle manager role, when taking into account increasing work tasks and accompanying managerial responsibilities, is significant. The college manager role has significantly been shaped by, merger change, by the actions of senior college managers and

by later organization restructurings. Role complexities appear influenced by a plethora of key factors including individual behaviours, culture, which all have an important impact on the college middle manager's performance. It is clear that continuing professional development, and mentorship, has an important role to play in improving performance.

The work patterns of college middle managers, carried out in a challenging and frenetic workplace, underpins the college middle manager's role. In addition, this study has identified a potential leadership role for the middle manager. However, whilst links to leadership has the potential to be complementary, the association with college managers currently appears weak.

The findings show a predominance of females in middle manager posts within colleges in Wales. This appears in contrast to the private sector where the ratio of males to females in manager positions appears to be higher (Kelan, 2015; Ogden, McTavish; McKean, 2006).

# Chapter Six

## Conclusions and Recommendations

## 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of college merger and related organizational transitional change, on the professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers in the further education (FE) college sector in Wales. This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations resulting from this work. The research confirms current literature concerned with issues of management role, leadership and organizational change.

Evidence in this study does not disconfirm the conventional wisdom relating to the functions of management as espoused by (Drucker, 2007; Fayol, 1949; Kotter, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989). Conclusions provide possible answers to the original research objectives, thus extending knowledge in these areas.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'lived' experience relates to how individuals, or groups of individuals, feel and respond to everyday situations Stokes (2011) and how middle managers enact parts of their role based on individual interpretation Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012).

## 6.2 Research Objectives

The original objectives of this research were:

- To gain an understanding of the role and 'lived' experiences of college middle managers within the Welsh college system.
- To explore internal and external factors influencing college middle manager enactment with specific emphasis on the effects of college restructuring.

The following section draws conclusions emerging from this study about the effect of major organizational change on the professional 'lived' experiences of college middle managers. It is to be noted, that there will be some overlap of conclusions shared between research objectives.

## 6.3 Research Conclusions

The author will address conclusions in relation to the research objectives relevant to this study.

> **Objective: To gain an understanding of the role and 'lived' experiences of college middle managers**

The findings show, that the 'lived' experiences of the middle managers had become more positive at the post-merger stage. Evidence in the findings show that three key factors contributed to this positive change in 'lived' experiences. Firstly, middle managers confidence in carrying out their roles has increased as the result of greater support from senior managers who now place a higher value on the middle manager role and middle managers experience. Secondly, the acquisition of new skills appears to have helped middle managers to cope with on-going pressures associated with their work tasks and the implementation of new operational procedures and systems. Thirdly, significant improvements in communication structures, allowing for increased effectiveness in two-way communication between middle managers and senior managers, has given middle managers a stronger 'voice' negotiating operational and strategic issues with college senior management.

College middle managers appear to be more valued, by senior management, within the college organization. The increased efficiency of middle managers in relation to how they manage their respective departments and work tasks, manage staff and resources and perform in their respective roles appeared to have contributed to this increase in their value to the organization as managers. This has led to a wider recognition of their role by Principals/Chief Executives and senior managers, than was the situation prior to merger. Middle managers appear to be in a much stronger position managing their respective departments and grasping opportunities to be involved in planning for organizational change, which is an on-going feature across colleges in Wales, as a result of a challenging FE sector. Evidence in this study shows middle managers 'lived' experiences have been enhanced by their increased involvement in the change process.

The findings confirm that the majority of middle managers felt increasingly influential in their jobs. This influence appeared to be attributed to the involvement and control middle managers exercise through their key role as curriculum managers. The view of middle managers, that core curriculum provision was what the college was all about, appeared

closely associated with middle managers strong views on the importance of curriculum provision, which they considered could place their jobs in jeopardy if curriculum provision was not given a high enough priority.

The majority of middle managers acknowledged that job challenge and complexity present in jobs Briggs (2005) had actually increased post-merger, but there was an acceptability that this actually contributed to positively enhancing their experiences. The merger process, which had exposed middle managers to new experiences and new skills appeared to well prepare middle managers for taking on wider managerial responsibilities at departmental level and, in a minority of cases, at cross-college level.

An important conclusion from this study, and its impact on middle managers experiences, relates to the effects of senior managers own experiences of the merger process. In a number of cases, uncertainty of the merger process by some senior managers acted as a barrier to any reasonable and detailed flow of communication with middle managers during the transitional period. As evidenced in the findings, this restriction in information, which manifested itself in increased anxieties, confusion and worry, at the pre-merger stage, impacted on a number of middle managers, translating into feelings of uncertainty, confusion and job insecurity regarding their own jobs. The picture, post-merger, appeared rather different. Senior managers own experiences and a better understanding of merger change had resulted in senior managers recognizing the contribution of middle managers and were, therefore, more willing to engage and involve middle managers in the planning process relating to future change.  This more 'open' communication style took the form of inviting middle managers to contribute ideas for potential change. This was motivational and impacted positively on their experiences.

A conclusion from this study, after reviewing evidence about the middle manager role in the Welsh context, is that the 'lived' experiences of middle managers is based on the hybrid nature of their role, that of academic and of a manager. These middle managers are expected to combine their academic managerial responsibilities and work tasks with their professional manager responsibilities. Middle managers views of management had also been distorted by the contrasting demands of having to balance the differing managerial responsibilities, including responsibilities for commercial training provision. The inclusion, of a commercial element to their work Randell & Brady (1997) and the provision of training programmes to industry, further added to the complexity to the role. Middle managers, therefore, found themselves torn between a curriculum role, evolving around a structured and ridged

framework, and the commercial role, which required middle managers to work flexibly and took middle managers outside of their respective internal academic work environments where they are most comfortable in working. For some middle managers, this had a negative effect on their 'lived' experiences with multi-tasking resulting in middle managers adopting a reactive stance to their work. This conclusion resonates with an argument by Briggs (2001) that complexity Briggs (2005) leads to college middle managers adopting a reactive approach to their work. This reactive approach to the role appears more prevalent in the post-merger period and is associated with an increase in the number and variety of work tasks, compounded in some instances, with middle managers having to travel between college campus sites.

The increasing pressure for college middle managers to perform financially Randell, and Brady (1997) in the pursuit of financial KPIs was more prevalent at the post-merger stage. This challenge is closely associated with reducing core curriculum income and growing pressures to increase commercial training income. Whilst some middle managers saw this as a challenge, others viewed this as a burden and found it difficult to perform well when having to balance competing agendas relating to managerial responsibilities as related to academic provision, commercial provision and enacting a general management role. In these instances the 'lived' experiences of some middle managers had impacted negatively on their overall performance.

In this study the prominence of the middle manager's academic responsibilities, including teaching responsibilities, acted as a time constraint for middle managers. It is this academic focus that the majority of middle managers consider gives their role an identity within the college context and organization. The inclusion of lecturing commitments may be viewed, at best, as middle managers being part-time managers accommodating work alongside their teaching role. However, the findings indicate, that all middle managers in this study are mainly pre-occupied with a full-time management role.

Evidence shows middle managers increased influence has not been accompanied by authority and power Lumby (2013). Authority and power continues to reside with senior post-holders, and senior managers post-merger. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the absence of authority and power at middle manager level negatively affected middle managers or their behaviour. Cultural differences between college campuses, were much more significant, and contributed to negative day-to-day experiences for some middle managers. Post-merger, more positive organizational cultures have evolved across the

merged colleges, primarily as the result of more effective communication networks. This has helped to enhance middle managers experiences.

Mintzberg's (2011) argument that beyond the generic elements of management each area of work has its own unique characteristics, that set additional specific challenges for managers, has some credence in the college context where in a number of cases, middle managers, who are steeped in curriculum management experience appear to encounter difficulties transferring their management experience and professional teaching experience from a curriculum driven role to a broader business role Gleeson, and Shane (1999) and to what Beresford, and Michel (2014) refer to as a market-based managerial role with a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship, the market and the generation of commercial income. In the college context, where income generation is secured from middle managers providing training programmes to industry, this growing emphasis on a commercial role seems contradictory to the firmly held view of the majority of middle managers, that their role is curriculum driven with the key purpose of proving students with a high quality of curriculum provision. The defined career path of the majority of college middle managers is through a lecturer route to an eventual management post, which further strengthens middle managers perceptions of their role as being primarily an academic one. The views of Briggs, (2001), Van Rensberg, Davis, and Ventor (2014) that the curriculum role has the potential to positively or alternatively, negatively influence the way that middle managers enact their role appears a sound one.

Whilst acknowledging, in this study, that 'management' and 'leadership' are distinctive if related to concepts in the literature (Kotter, 1990; Minztsberg, 1989; Mumford & Gold 2004; Zaleznik, 1986). These concepts warrant some exploration in the way they manifest themselves in the college context. This study clearly identifies leadership is mainly the premise of the Principal/Chief Executive and Senior Managers during and following organizational change. The notion of middle managers enacting a leadership role is an unusual one.

Training and support for middle managers had a distinct and influential effect on middle managers 'lived' experiences with the outcomes of training and support resulting in middle managers feeling more valued and confident and respected by senior managers and subordinates. The learning process had enhanced their existing skills and exposed them to new skills and valuable experiences which contributed to them coping much better in their jobs. The acquisition of new skills was viewed as a necessary precursor to organizational

change, so was seen as a critical factor for effective college merger change. Middle managers also saw the acquirement of new skills and exposure to new experiences, as a precursor for accessing opportunities for promotion. The increased positivity of middle managers 'lived' experiences had been extremely influential in how they actually enact their management role.

In nearly all, but a minority of cases, middle managers confirm an increasing positivity in their 'lived' experiences emerging post-merger. This outcome appeared to have been influenced by a greater clarity of their role, the opportunity to acquire new skills and experiences, improved promotional opportunities and a more 'open' communication structure. Two other outcomes also appeared significant. The level of personal support given to middle managers and also the opportunity to contribute to planned change.

> **Objective: To explore internal and external factors influencing college middle manager enactment with specific emphasis on the effects of college restructuring**

Conclusions from this study indicate that the college context in which middle managers enact their role has changed post-merger. Merger has provided for a challenging and frenetic workplace influencing practices and enhancing the pressures of the role Lumby (1997). Organizational context was, therefore, a powerful mechanism, which contributed to, and continues to shape, the role of the middle manager, which impacts significantly on the day-to-day experiences of middle managers. This has been outlined under the previous objective. The 'take-it' or 'leave it' attitude of some senior managers fostered negative feelings and, therefore, contributed to a negative 'lived' experience of the merger process manifesting itself through low morale.

College management restructuring, as evidenced through reconfigured and much bigger departments, and larger numbers of staff to be managed has been an inevitable consequence of organizational change. It has led to a profound impact on the role and scope of the middle managers job, which in turn has made for a far more demanding and pressurized 'lived' experience. In some cases, a feeling of being overwhelmed, manifested itself by the number and variety of work tasks to be completed and travel between campus sites, which, for some middle managers was viewed as burden, eroded their time to complete work tasks. In a number of cases the possibility of future restructuring influenced their performance. There was also a feeling they had to demonstrate good performance, otherwise they may become a casualty of future organizational change.

It, therefore, comes as no surprise that merger change offered the opportunity to review management structures within the college context and provides, what Carnell (2007) argues, is the opportunity to define job activities, responsibilities and accountabilities. Far greater job clarity and a sense of purpose, post-merger, helped to define the middle manager role, post-merger. However, for some middle managers, organizational change created a degree of anxiety due to the departure of other middle managers, arising from redundancy, and wondering if they could cope with larger departments, more staff and new curriculum areas. This initially impacted negatively on their experiences at the merger stage as reflected in their uncertainty and levels of confidence.

A conclusion reached by this study found that organizational communication is a significant factor during the merger journey and beyond, thus contributing to the success or failure of college organizational change. Most notably, this study revealed that communication was a catalyst for breaking down traditional working practices and helping to change departmental cultures. Improved and clearer horizontal and vertical communications were found to have improved post-merger, through more 'open' communication, which enhanced internal networking. This study also found that the demands of merger are one thing but changes to management structures also contribute to developing human relations. The impact of this change has improved staff relations, manifesting itself through a positive interaction between middle managers senior managers and subordinates and increased efficiency in the use of resources and effective implementation of new operational procedures and systems. Evidence shows, personal relations are important throughout the merger journey, and have contributed significantly to building trust between middle managers, senior management and subordinates. During merger this is critical as trust can easily become misplaced with a negative effect on 'lived' experiences.

A conclusion of this study indicated that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has now become more professionalised and may potentially be used in a more active role in management development. This is due to the integration of college middle managers, from different rural and urban campuses, with different skill-sets, attitudes and behaviours. This is due to CPD, together with support for middle managers, becoming a critical factor in post-merger success and has helped middle managers transition positively through the challenges of the merger change process and adapt to more effective and relevant work practices. This action has had been beneficial in relation to middle manager's 'lived' experiences as evidenced by the majority of middle managers remaining in the same role since initial merger.

This study also concludes that identified differences in middle manager attitudes, and behaviours, found to be prevalent throughout the merger process, have significantly improved over time. Training and development has been the catalyst for these particular changes. Honey, Passmore, and O'Shea (2010) argue that in the complex work environment there is a need for managers to be agile and flexible to ensure a high level of performance. The evidence from this study on merger concludes that, in many cases, middle managers were requested to demonstrate a degree of agility and flexibility whilst enacting their role Stewart (1989). Firstly, to some extent, the challenging and frenetic workplace, in which middle managers operate, presented no option other than to be both agile and flexible, especially if they were to succeed in their roles. Secondly, the composition of the different elements of their role, for example, academic, commercial and general management, further required agility and flexibility.

Some middle managers felt constrained by the policies of the Welsh Government and Estyn and the FE sector in general. However, there was no evidence to suggest their 'lived' experiences were negatively affected by these external factors. Control mechanisms, which had the potential to increase role pressures, were actually beneficial for middle managers as they provided an important framework for benchmarking their own performance. In the majority of cases, there appeared no adverse effect of these external controls on the attitudes and behaviours of college middle managers.

## 6.4 Summary

In reviewing these two major objectives the evidence led the researcher to establish that the professional college context, in which middle managers enact their role, is all powerful, and, therefore, crucial to defining and shaping the role of the college middle manager. This study shows that the college context, together with a number of internal and external factors, can contribute, either way, to a positive or alternatively a negative 'lived' experience for the college middle manager.

Following inevitable initial concerns over merger change, the majority of middle managers confirm that the merger experience has been a positive one with a beneficial effect on their 'lived' experiences. Organizational change has exposed them to 'new' experiences, equipped them with new skills, introduced them to new ways of working and given them a growing confidence.

A striking outcome is that middle managers now appear more effective and in a much stronger position to contribute to new managerial initiatives and also take advantage of opportunities for advancement.

Most importantly, whilst the academic work remains a prime focus of the middle manager's role, this study has shown that as a direct result of the merger process, the majority of middle managers have increased competencies in the skills necessary to enact the role of manager and also have good levels of work experience. This has contributed to a more positive and enhanced 'lived' experience, and raised self-esteem, thus placing middle managers in a much better place to respond to the changing and extremely challenging FE sector in Wales.

## 6.5 Recommendations

- This study has recognised the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for middle managers. However, there needs to be stronger links between the theoretical content of training programmes and the middle manager's situational workplace. Training and development, which integrates theoretical knowledge and the middle managers work environment, would be more effective and bring wider benefits across to college operations.
- The college middle manager role has transitioned from a traditionally curriculum focused role to a wider role now requiring a wider range of business and leadership skills. During the management recruitment process in colleges there should be a shift in policy to emphasise the need for wider management skills. This should test and confirm that candidates possess not only curriculum related knowledge and skills but also wider management skills.
- The notion of middle managers contributing to future organizational change is interesting given their knowledge and experience gained over a number of years and also their experiences of recent merger. In any future potential changes senior managers should consider the degree of middle managers involvement, how they might contribute positively to change and assess the likely benefits at both organizational and departmental levels.

Following a study of these two core objectives, this researcher will go on to explore and draw out some important contributions including implications for college practice and policy in the next chapter.

# Chapter Seven

## Evaluation

### 7.1 Introduction

This final chapter consists of four sections. The first section deals with the limitations of this study. The second section includes a personal reflection by the author. The third section considers the contributions of this research in terms of furthering current debates in the domain of the role of middle managers and their professional 'lived' experiences as associated with major organizational change. This section therefore includes contributions to theory, college practice and college policy. The final section presents proposal for future research.

### 7.2 Limitations

This study has included a number of colleges across Wales, chosen as being geographically representative of all colleges in Wales.

The exploratory nature of this study, conducted by the author to gather data from the focus group, was considered appropriate as this approach helped the author to ascertain college middle managers 'lived' experiences from the way they interpret the world they live and work in Quinlan (2011). Whilst this social constructionist approach provided 'rich' and valuable data, the author recognises this research work provides data from a rather small focus group of college middle managers, and therefore may not be reflective of the wider college middle manager network across the FE sector in Wales. On a more positive note, although the findings from this small sample may not be representative across the FE sector, they are certainly transferable.

### 7.2 Personal Reflection

Until recently, I was a practitioner in the Further education (FE) sector working in a senior manager role. Given my experience as a practitioner in FE, I considered the DBA as a more appropriate route to the doctoral qualification. Prior to commencing the DBA, I accessed useful information from a variety of sources, namely, University contacts and some important texts (Brown, 2016; Jesson, Matheson & Lacey, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Stokes & Wall, 2014; Stokes, 2011). This gave me a useful overview and developed my knowledge and understanding.

I was extremely motivated and eager to start on the DBA programme and prepared to finance the significant cost of this programme. Having been out of degree level education for a significant period of time, a degree of apprehension prevailed at the initial stage of the programme. This apprehension related to the amount of work to be undertaken, personal family commitments and part-time work. However, the excellent induction and guidance of the module leader put me at ease.

The first two years of DBA study was structured with effective support from tutors, both within the classroom environment and also via email communication. I found this greatly aided my learning in the initial stages of the DBA programme. Although my strengths include organization, ability to work methodologically and good time management, a range of competing priorities distracted me from important project milestones during the major project stage. A prevailing key challenge related to me not having been involved in academic study for a number of years. This required additional learning to familiarize myself with academic writing.

The planned interview phase of this project was also challenging due to the geographical spread of the participating colleges in Wales. The schedule of interviews was extended to accommodate operational issues which arose and which were completely outside of my control.

Attendance at several lectures and workshops helped me to develop a wider academic perspective and has been invaluable in my academic work and also in my teaching commitments. My contribution to a research conference held at the University of Chester helped me to reinforce my confidence and provide useful academic feedback.

My journey through the DBA programme has been full of expected challenges. However, to overcome these I found regular meetings with my doctoral supervisors invaluable and their support and guidance throughout this major project has been significant. Another great help was the support network consisting of my DBA peer group. This group enabled the sharing of information and proved most beneficial, thus further contributing to my personal development.

The DBA experience has enabled me to reassess my own philosophy of life and helped me to develop a more critical thought process. Importantly, the DBA has challenged my own ability and competence, whilst at the same time building resilience. I have also widened my academic knowledge and experience in the area of academic writing and presentation. In

hindsight, I would have sought more guidance and advice on the major project at an earlier stage. The research project stage, albeit frustrating in the later stages, has been a very good and worthwhile experience. I have learnt a lot about academia in respect of academic writing and project structure. Personally, my confidence in academia has grown significantly and I have gained a much clearer grasp of planning skills, presentation of data and literature searches.

## 7.3  Contributions

### 7.3.1  Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge

This study confirms but adds to theory concerning the role of middle managers in the Further Education (FE) sector. In a review of the literature, there was a paucity of information on the college middle manager role across the FE sector in Wales and on their 'lived' experience. This presented a challenge in determining the contribution of college middle managers. This study shows the middle manager role has become more prominent and influential in Welsh colleges due to their greater managerial responsibilities allied to larger departments and the increased value placed on their roles by senior managers, post-merger.  This resonates with the findings of McKinney, McMahon, and Welsh (2013) that the middle manager in the merged organization is a 'driving force' and well placed to influence and implement organizational objectives. Middle managers have grown in significance since merger.

Current management literature indicates middle managers enact a role, which has become increasingly more challenging and complex post-merger Briggs (2005) with the majority of college middle managers managing traditional curriculum departments Briggs (2001). Although a traditional hierarchical organization structure, albeit a 'flatter' structure prevails, post-merger, what has emerged from this study, is that college context is critically important to understanding how management in a college setting manifests itself.

College middle managers are primarily professional educators, with an expertise in the specialist area of curriculum. They therefore lead curriculum departments Briggs (2001). The term curriculum management, which embodies the planning, provision and delivery of curriculum programmes, gained currency throughout this study. Whilst their role is 'situationally specific' it is an operational one, although not considered mainstream management. However, this study recognises a traditional approach to managing underpins the application their role. This resonates with the systematic and functional approach to managing as espoused by (Drucker, 2007; Fayol, 1949; Taylor, 1947).

The findings challenge the traditional management view that management is a static process (Fayol 1949; Taylor, 1947). Due to the challenge, complexity and rapidity of merger change, the college middle manager role appears to relate more closely with the views of mainstream authors Hale, (1986), and Mintzberg, (1975, 1989, 2011) arguing that the mainstream management role has become broader and increasingly variable.

This research offers a valuable insight into the role of the college middle manager and its relationship to the traditionalist view of management. However, when considering core areas explored and the consequential impact on the role of the college middle manager (Figure 6: Page 68) it appears that work patterns, managerial responsibilities and performance expectations are the most important in influencing college middle managers 'lived' experiences. However, whilst available literature mainly focuses on what middle managers actually do, later scholars give consideration to the impact of the work environment on the manager role. Within the FE college context environment, factors, including organizational restructuring, deployment of staff, changes in senior management and new lines of communication are all paramount factors as having a more significant influence on college managers 'lived' experiences.

A contribution this study makes relates to the developing wider role of the college manager in the post-merger era not recognised in management literature. In the college context middle managers are primarily curriculum professionals and yet also managers in a wider context. This potentially impacts significantly on the middle manager role Wolsfencroft (2015). This shift in the middle manager role from a mainly professional educator stance towards a role incorporating a growing managerial role and commercial role Randell, and Brady (1997) has the potential to cause conflict between these opposing roles. Lumby, and Tomlinson's (2000) view that these two roles relate to different cultures further accentuates this potential for conflict. A focus by the majority of middle managers on a curriculum specific role has the potential to weaken the manager's enactment of a wider and increasingly complex management role.

The issue of the college middle manager enacting a leadership role remains vague with a number of middle managers demonstrating a degree of uncertainty of what constitutes a leader. College middle managers definition of what a manager was and what a manager does was far clearer and more precise. However, if mainstream management scholars argue that management and leadership are complementary Cerych & Sabatier, (1986), Gleeson & Knights, (2008), and Mintzberg, (2011) then an opportunity exists to develop middle

managers leadership potential. However, this development needs to provide appropriate and relevant continuing professional development (CPD) which correlates theory with workplace practice. As middle managers are subject to on-going change, the challenge is to ensure middle managers have the right level of skills Carnell (2007) to cope with this change. As staff relations have become an increasingly important priority, post-merger, the development of interpersonal skills is a crucial factor within leadership development.

The exploratory nature of this research shows the middle manager role as having developed significantly within an extremely demanding and challenging merger environment. The role is distinctive and significant and has contributed positively to college management. The author's discussion on management and leadership recognises a relationship that has a direct influence of middle managers 'lived' experiences. This relates positively to the author's proposed conceptual model in the introductory chapter (Figure 1: Page 146)

Randell, and Brady (1997) argue the middle manager's focus has moved away from prioritizing student learning and the achievement of high academic standards, towards an agenda with a focus on student numbers and maximizing income. This research confirms that in the post-merger era, a key priority for middle managers is the quality of curriculum provision, although it is recognised that the commercial nature of the role remains an important imperative to operational success Randel, and Brady (1997).

This study shows that through the pre and post-merger phases of college merger the 'lived' experiences of college middle managers has become much more positive. The challenge for the future is to maintain and increase these positive managerial 'lived' experiences.

Findings may be transferable across all colleges in Wales and this contribution has a value across the wider FE sector.

## 7.3.2 Contribution to College Practice

The incorporation of FE colleges in Wales in the early 1990s and their resulting 'independence' provided an environment for change Gleeson, and Shaun (1999) and paved the way for radical, yet positive changes to college practice. Importantly, merger change provided an ideal opportunity to specifically review management practices and the role of the college middle manager.

Importantly, this study shows the college context, in which middle managers operate, has dramatically changed since merger. The workplace has become more challenging, frenetic and operations have become more varied and complex offering little opportunity for middle managers to be proactive in their role. Increased support from senior managers presents an opportunity for college middle managers to alter the balance between adopting a reactive or proactive stance to their work. Progression from implementing what is the current reactive approach to their work Briggs (2005) to a more proactive or planned approach would have a positive impact on their 'lived' experiences and engender improved motivation and potentially lead to increased performance.

This study shows re-organization provided an opportunity for middle managers to gain more prominence in Welsh colleges. This prominence arose through middle managers having wider managerial responsibilities as a result of managing larger departments and more staff and taking responsibility for new curriculum areas. Whilst the influence of middle managers enacting their role has grown, their degree of power remains minimal. This view has resonance with Drowley, (2013), and Lumby, (2013) who argue that power in the FE sector, remains the premise of the senior management team. Whilst there are limitations on the degree of power held by college middle managers, this study shows that their influence might be a major factor and more important than individual power. The significance of organizational context as having an impact on 'lived' experiences reinforces the case for involving college middle managers in organizational change planning throughout the change process. This study shows that this would increase motivation, improve communication, raise morale and consequentially have the potential to increase individual performance, thus enabling college middle managers to make a fuller contribution to college success.

Following the merging of multiple campuses an outcome was a middle manager cohort with a range of personalities and differing cultures. There was no evidence that this mixture of

personalities had any diverse effect on the middle manager role. However, cultural differences provided a significant role challenge.

Whilst merger organizational change has given middle managers the opportunity to advance their careers, to be effective and efficient and able to cope with increasing workloads and a broadening of the middle manager role, middle managers need to have a wider skill-set incorporating higher level skills in accounting, communication, negotiation and administration. Importantly, the relevance of future training to the middle manager's work environment is critical. All middle manager training needs to correlate with each middle managers workplace to ensure relevancy of training if this training is to be effective.

A greater emphasis on interpersonal skills might suggest the presence of a leadership role. However, leadership requires middle managers to demonstrate vision, innovation and demonstrate direction. This study shows that in only a few cases were these elements consistently evidenced in their role. Curriculum management remains a fundamental part of what middle managers do. This study has shown that leadership is an integral part of the change process. To this end, it is imperative that all college middle managers are equipped with the necessary leadership skills, and are also enabled to implement these skills efficiently and effectively. Leadership should therefore be part of CPD developments and more importantly there should be a correlation between theory and workplace practice.

Continuing professional development (CPD) and mentoring support has become a prominent feature of middle managers development. However, middle managers need to have a broader skill-set to enable them to effectively manage. This means training needs to be developed to specifically address a skills deficit and bridge the gap between theoretical foundation and the challenging organizational environment Horney, Passmore, and O'Shea (2010) in which middle managers work. An outcome of this study shows the importance of mentoring and how influential mentoring was as merger progressed. The facility of mentoring needs to be consistent throughout all the transitional change phases and beyond and should include both existing and new middle managers. To strengthen the value and outcomes of the mentoring process it needs to be fully integrated with CPD strategy.

This study shows that initial organizational change was traumatic for a number of middle managers mainly due to a lack of consultation by senior managers. However, for the majority

of middle managers, organizational change has been positive and helped them to transition to a more significant role.

Senior managers, own experience of merger change has significantly influenced their views and willingness to involve middle managers in future organizational change, thus recognising the contribution middle managers can make to organizational change. This has resonance with mainstream thinking, that middle managers in a merged organization are a 'driving force' McKinney, McMahon, and Welsh (2013) and are well placed to implement organizational objectives. This development has been quite significant in developing middle manager positivity. The role of the middle manager is therefore important and rewarding. The middle manager's contribution to organizational success is significant and given their experience and increasing influence, post-merger, they could play an important part in in any future change proving senior managers give them this opportunity.

### 7.3.3 Contribution to College Strategy and Policy Making

Strategy, and its association with culture, are primary leavers for maintaining organizational viability and effectiveness Grasberg, Lee, Price and, Cheng (2018). It is significant for middle managers, that this study shows a change in organizational culture post-merger. An outcome of this positive change is the opportunity for middle management involvement in the area of both policy and strategy formulation, although this does not extend to organizational decision-making on policy and strategy. Middle managers are conduits for change Briggs (2004) so involvement makes sense. To this end, there needs to be a far greater recognition by senior management of the potential contribution of a large number of college middle managers, who through their skills and experience, are well placed to significantly contribute in a very positive way to future change. An outcome of increased involvement by college middle managers in organizational change has the potential to increase their interaction and communication with senior managers and increase their autonomy and therefore feel less directed and controlled. This would have a positive effect on college middle managers 'lived' experiences.

Whilst this involvement is restricted to contributing ideas and general comment, it has a motivating effect, adds value and enhances middle managers 'lived' experiences.

Whilst college organizations have a degree of 'independence' this study confirms two external sources, Wales Government regarding educational policy and core funding and

Estyn (The Inspection Service for Wales) has a significantly impacted on college strategy and policy formulation. External factors, according to McConville (2006) have significant influence on the middle manager role.

The impact on the middle manager role is significant. This position is further compounded by the availability of resources. This study shows that the current FE climate has become more difficult and therefore more challenging for management.

Reductions core funding and limitations of resources places a far greater need to seek additional funding working commercially with industry. Increased pressures to find savings, which appears an on-going situation, has already resulted in modifications to organizational structures. Middle managers can play a significant part in these changes.

This study shows that skill and experience levels of middle managers and senior managers, are also a contributory factor to improving performance and efficiency. There was no evidence that skills training and development needs were being cut. On the contrary, the majority of colleges in Wales continue to invest heavily.

A more 'open' culture, post-merger, and a willingness by the majority of senior managers regarding the involvement of some middle managers, whom they consider have the ability and inclination to be involved in contributing to strategy and policy has provided for improved communication and 'joined-up' thinking between senior managers and middle managers.

Whilst this change is a very positive one, there are opportunities to widen further involvement by college middle managers in the future.

## 7.4 Opportunities for Future Research

Several areas that will build on and advance the conclusions of this study are listed below:

- Leadership remains a rather vague issue when considered in relation to the middle manager role within the college context. Further research would clarify leadership in the college context more clearly and its place in the middle manager role.
- A wider investigation into the middle manager role in England to enable comparisons with findings in the Welsh FE sector.

- A review of the development, planning and delivery of leadership and management training for college middle managers from a wider perspective and the relevance of this training to workplace practice.
- A study to determine the growing impact of commercial provision on the central role of the college middle manager.

The author is currently discussing with two college Principals in Wales the feasibility of working on joint projects with the possibility of publishing work and reports in the Journal for Higher and Further Education. This will further add to the knowledge base and should allow other researchers to engage in dialogue to inform both theory and practice.

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**University of Chester**                    **Researcher:  Robert Walford**

**This research interview will be carried out in accordance with the University of Chester guidelines on ethics, and also taking into account information outlined in the consent proforma.**

## Semi-Structured Doctorate Interviews

**Date of Interview: _____        Respondent Code:_____      College Code:_____**

**General Information:**

A.  Age Band:    25 to 34            35 to 44            45 to 54      55 and over

B.  Number of years in a middle manager position: _____

C.  Curriculum Operational Department: _____

D.  Number of staff responsible for: _____

**Specific Information:**

Q1.  What is your pattern of work over a typical working week?

Q2.  How does your current pattern of work compare with your pattern of work before the college merged?

Q3. What would you consider to be the most important elements of your role as a middle manager?

Q4.  In your role as a college middle manager, how would you describe your professional 'lived experiences, prior to, and during the merger of your college?

Q5.  At the college's post-merger phase, have there been any changes in your professional 'lived' experiences and, if so, what factors might have contributed to any identified changes?

Q6.  Are there any other comments you may like to make regarding your role as a college manager?

**End of Interview**

**Thank you for your participation in my research.  All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence in accordance with the University of Chester research guidelines.**
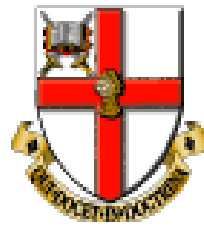
# University of Chester

# Faculty of Business and Management

## Research Ethics Policy and Procedures

**(February 2016, version 02.2.16)**

**Participant Information Document**

### *Professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers in FE colleges: A study of the impact of major change.*

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

To investigate the effect of college merger on the experiences of middle managers.

**What is the aim of the study?**

To investigate the impact of college mergers and related transitional change on the 'lived experiences' of middle managers in the further education (FE) colleges of Wales using examples from four large FE colleges.

**What are the research study objectives?**

1. To investigate the extent to which the college merger process might impact on the managerial experiences of middle managers in the college management context.
2. To explore organizational change factors, influencing middle managers experiences.
3. To ascertain and discuss middle managers performance as an outcome of middle manager experience.

4. To make recommendations to prepare and support middle managers during future organizational transitional change.

A written report will be produced at the end of the project.  The findings from the study will be used to construct a paradigm that can be used to support middle managers involved in future mergers within the FE sector or in other forms of college transitional change.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen non-randomly by your Principal/Deputy Principal accordingly to a predetermined set of criteria, as one member of the group of managers with experience of being involved in the college merger process.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.  If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.  If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.  A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive in any way.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

Whether you have, or have not yet been contacted by the researcher, once contact has been made, and you  have decided to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign the consent form. You will then be contacted by e.mail by the named researcher from the Chester Business School and invited to attend an interview lasting a maximum of 1.5 hours during the month of June 2016. Your response will be **entirely confidential**.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

You may be able to identify ways in which you might be integrated into any future mergers or other forms of transitional change thus enhancing your influence in matters related to change. By taking part, you will be evaluating the merger process from your perspective and how your experiences may be improved. Outcomes will enable senior managers to evaluate the role of the middle manager during transitional change.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Professor Clare Schofield

Chair of Faculty Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee,

University of Chester Business School

University of Chester, United Kingdom, Chester CH1 4BJ

Tel. +44 (0)1244 511000

Email:  c.schofield@chester.ac.uk

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements.  If you are harmed due to someone's negligence (but not otherwise), then you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for this.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that only the researcher carrying out the research will have access to such information.

Data Management and Storage: Participants should note that data collected from this project may be retained and published in an anonymised form.  By agreeing to participate in this project, you are consenting to the retention and publication of data.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results will be written up into a report.  It is hoped that the findings may be used to improve the support provided to individual manager's and as a result further enhance their professional practice. Individuals who participate will not be identified in any subsequent report or publication.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is funded by the named researcher who is also organizing this research study.

**Who may I contact for further information?**

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

*Robert Walford (Researcher) University of Chester Business School.*
*E.mail:r_highflyer@hotmail.com*

**Thank you for your interest in this research.**

Appendix Three - Letter to Participants

**Participant Informed Consent Form**

**Title of Project:** Professional 'lived' experiences of middle managers in FE colleges: A study of the impact of major change.

**Name of Researcher:  Robert Walford**

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet, dated February 2016, for the above research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care or legal rights being affected.

☐

2. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

_____     _____     _____

Name of Participant                  Date                   Signature

_____     _____     _____

Name of Person taking consent        Date                   Signature
(if different from researcher)

_____     _____     _____

Researcher                           Date                   Signature

Please note: All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence in accordance with the University of Chester guidelines.

## Appendix Four - Research Ethics Policy and Procedure

**Involvement in Research Study**

Dear Participant

As part of my Doctorate in Business Administration I would be most pleased if you would consider participating in in my research study.

The focus for my study is on the 'lived' experiences of college middle managers during a period of organizational change resulting from merger. The study will focus primarily on middle managers with responsibility for curriculum operational departments. My research study will be investigating potential changes in 'lived' experiences at the pre-merger and post-merger stages.

I am interested in eliciting a broad picture of views and opinions through the implementation of in-depth semi-structured interviews. Questioning will also give each participant the opportunity to expand on the discussion through additional questioning. I expect interviews to be of approximately one hour duration. The intention of the interview is to explore your perceptions of your day-to-day professional experiences within the college context. All information will in the strictest of confidence and your college will not be identified. All data will be destroyed once the research is completed. My aim is to obtain interview data which reflects the reality of your involvement in departmental operations.

For this research I have chosen a cross-section of middle managers of both genders with a wide range of experiences in manager posts. The age range of participants is broad. This will enable me to elicit a mix of data to inform my research study.

I will be conducting my research in accordance with the University of Chester research regulations.

If you would like to participate in my research study, I would be most grateful if you could return the enclose agreement and consent proforma.

Thank you for considering my request. This is most appreciated.


Yours faithfully



Robert Walford
Doctoral Research Student