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To What Extent do the Approaches to Leadership of General Further Education College Principals Sustain a Culture that Enhances Institutional Outcomes?

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***To What Extent do the Approaches to Leadership of General Further Education
College (GFEC) Principals Sustain a Culture that Enhances Institutional
Outcomes?***

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University
of Chester for the degree of Doctor of Education

By Andrew McCarroll

September 2021

To What Extent do the Approaches to Leadership of General Further Education College (GFEC) Principals Sustain a Culture that Enhances Institutional Outcomes?

I declare that the material being presented for examination in this thesis is my own work and not has been submitted for an award of this or any other Higher Education Institution.

A McCarroll

September 2021

Doctor of Education

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I would like to thank Steve Lambert and Si Poole for their support, guidance, inspiration and humour throughout my Doctoral Thesis. Two excellent supervisors. I am grateful to all administrators and lecturers who supported me through the Education Doctorate programme at the University of Chester.

I am indebted to my research participants for allowing me to tell their stories.

Dedication

To Maxine. Thank you for your support and understanding

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Abstract

What educational leadership does - not what educational leadership is. This powerful benchmark statement supports me to tell the stories of principals, middle managers and teachers within different General Further Education College settings. In this interpretive hermeneutical examination of the concepts of leadership and culture from the perspectives of three levels of General Further Education College staff I consider and interpret what they think and believe about contemporary approaches to leadership and the establishment of organisational culture through an examination of their lived experiences. I use a thematic analysis to shine a light on the experiences of three principals, three middle managers and three teachers in three institutions. The impact of the Incorporation of General Further Education Colleges since April 1993 and the subsequent marketisation and significant increase in accountability is well documented over many decades. The recognition of the dichotomy which exists in the further education sector between competing business requirements and approaches to student learning have shaped approaches to leadership and the culture required in individual colleges and the further education sector. My analysis is framed by two leadership relationship models. Nietzsche's master and slave morality is utilised in conjunction with Graen and Uhl-Bien's leader-member exchange theory to examine present approaches to leadership and the relationships they produce to inform macro and institutional sub-cultures to meet the competing demands on the further education sector and individual General Further Education Colleges. This framework is supported by theorists concerned with the evolution of further education leadership type and cultural development in a sector driven by market forces and government policy. The thesis highlights the impact of leadership approaches on college direction and how these concepts impact on organisational outcomes.

Summary of Portfolio

Mandatory modules were conducted over a three-year period before the research element of the programme could be undertaken. The programme was structured to provide students with knowledge of research at Level 8, before introducing them to key concepts to support them develop ideas for their research project. The final module of the programme enabled students to develop the design and methods for their thesis topic. The programme supported me as the researcher to develop my knowledge and understanding of key concepts and theories throughout the formative initial three years of the programme. The programme was incremental, supporting me to reflect on my practice when conducting and subsequently completing each module. It developed my reflexive approach which supported me through the research and production of the thesis. At times it was a deeply personal experience, particularly on the Creativity in Practice module. It took me outside of my normal practice and challenged me deeply to consider my educational values and educational purpose. The programme enabled me to develop my understanding of education and my specific sector. It equipped me well to undertake the research project, through the acquisition of new educational knowledge and an improved understanding of research approaches which supported the development and production of a thesis which evaluated approaches to leadership and culture creation in GFECs. The programme structure was as follows:

Year 1

Research Methodologies for Professional Enquiry

This module supported the exploration and critical evaluation of theoretical, methodological and ethical issues for conducting research in professional environments. The module was a comprehensive introduction to research perspectives with regard to key concepts, approaches and techniques. It was the catalyst to initiate the preparation of a research proposal for the thesis. The module assessment supported the production of an interpretive study which explored the appropriate methodologies to research a General Further Education College, Chief Executive Officer's perceptions of culture creation and the impact of that culture on their institution. In doing so, a thematic analysis was utilised to identify and examine a new Chief Executive Officer's approach in relation to the culture they aspired to create and subsequently embed in their institution. The study exposed the contemporary educational challenges faced by General Further Education College, Chief Executive Officers and outlined qualitative data collected through an examination of lived experiences was appropriate for this interpretive study, rejecting the utilisation of a case study approach.

Social Theory and Education

The module supported the student to gain an insight and to critically explore concepts relating to education and its purpose and policy context in society. The module was significant to the research as it analysed educational policy and the impact of the marketisation of education since the introduction of reforms in the 1980s. The module assessment produced an analysis of social phenomena through the utilisation of Stephen Ball's theory of performativity explored five areas of activity: policy, power, control, creativity, and outcomes. Ball's research relating

to performativity was extremely valuable for the researcher when undertaking the thesis element of the programme. Although grounded in other educational environments it was transferable to the further education space. It was invaluable in supporting the participants reality of their sector. The assessment within this module utilised an auto-ethnographic study to outline a senior leader's own practice in relation to organisational culture and the cultural impact on a series of achievement data. The study examined through the lens of performativity how regulation and marketisation of the further education sector had impacted on senior leader perceptions of the contemporary further education operating environment. Correlation was established between the new public management ideas of Ball and the significant levels of accountability central to senior leaders' practice in the FE sector.

Year 2

Creativity in Practice

The module on creative practices explored the complex relations between creativity, theory, practice and policy. The module engendered a broad understanding of the concept of creativity in its many forms. The module covered a variety of approaches to creativity in professional practice, from that of the professional artist creating expressive works, or arts educators engaging their learners in creative production, to the creative policy maker or the workplace manager organising creative learning programmes. The module assessment supported a reflexive analysis exploring parallels between leadership practice and the utilisation of creative processes to improve individual leadership performance. An evaluation of a creative task was designed to support reflection on current practice and produced new conceptual spaces supporting a different cognitive process through the exploration of an artistic creative concept which has the potential to increase personal capacity to analyse managerial issues through a different perspective. The study utilised an exploration of novice and expert relationships and fostered new understandings of leader and follower relationships. The study highlighted how non-traditional approaches to educating through creative processes can support individualised learning for contemporary further education leadership practice.

Cultural Practices

The module on cultural practices explored the complex relations between culture in theory, practice and politics. The module introduced a range of theoretical frameworks of culture and its relevance to professional practices, exploring the creative potential of organisations. This module was crucial in the formulation of the research questions and developed areas for investigation in the research element of the programme. The module assessment produced a utilisation of an interpretivist theoretical perspective supported by a subordinate phenomenological approach to research enabled a critical analysis of human experiences and attitudinal data. The practice and dissemination of leadership through all levels of a General Further Education College was evaluated and correlation conducted against the stated values and objectives of the study organisation. Subsequent document analysis and the interpretation of organisational language and their relatable-ness to institutional culture at macro and sub-cultural levels confirmed a dual system of practice fixed on meeting regulatory requirements and student achievements.

Year 3

Institutions, Discontinuities and Systems of Knowledge

The module provided an appreciation of how institutions operate at a number of levels and through a number of discontinuities. Numerous systems of thought were utilised to explain the operation of institutions. The application of these insights from the module were considered in relation to their application in an institution of my choice. This broadened my knowledge of related systems of thought to the research proposal I had developed from year one of the programme. The module assessment supported the production of a auto-ethnographic study and critique explored the leadership approach and requirements for further education to become ever-more effective and accountable in order that it supports and sustains economic competitiveness through an obedience of neoliberal market principles. Debord's and Bourdieu's ideas of education spectacle and the reinforcement of social disposition in a localised habitus were discussed through a series of practitioner vignettes. These empirical episodes recognised the contemporary and hyper-real forms of further education approaches utilised to provide an appearance of autonomous practice and a student-centred curriculum to meet a performance driven by a metric form of educational ritual.

Thesis in Context

The main product of the module was a written proposal for the thesis including a literature review and design, methodology and methods section. However, the framing and conceptualisation of the proposed enquiry was presented among peers and to a panel of tutors involved in the EdD Programme. This '*viva voce*' scenario served as formative feedback process to assist with a refinement of the proposal. The proposed design, methodology and methods were considered in ways that seek to maximise the justification of the adopted approach, both ethically and reflexively, by the student. This proved a central stage in the conduct of the thesis research as it provided clarity on the inclusion of a Nietzschean lens to support an investigation of the relationships between different participants in the proposed research. Ethical approval for this proposal was then sought through the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at an appropriate time.

List of Abbreviations

Area Based Reviews (ABRs)

Adult Education Budget (AEB)

Common Inspection Framework (CIF)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Education and Training Foundation (ETF)

Education Inspection Framework (EIF)

Education Reform Act (ERA)

Further Education (FE)

Further Education Funding Council (FEFC)

Further and Higher Education Act (FHEA)

General Further Education College (GFEC)

General Further Education Colleges (GFECs)

Higher Education (HE)

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Higher National Diploma (HND)

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

Main Research Question (MRQ)

Middle Manager (MM)

National Achievement Rate Tables (NART)

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)

New Public Governance (NPG)

New Public Management (NPM)

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

Sixth Form Colleges (SFCs)

Subsidiary Research Questions (SRQs)

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the changing educational context for the Further Education (FE) sector, from the move to the political right and the introduction of neoliberal, free market principles under Thatcher (Harvey, 2005) through to the Incorporation of the sector in 1993. The chapter highlights the immediate impact of Incorporation on the operating environments for General Further Education Colleges (GFECs), and the move towards a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003). The utilisation of performativity is important to the thesis as it uses well-rehearsed concepts applied in school and HE contexts to the FE operating environment. The chapter introduces the change to leadership approaches post-incorporation and how this has been steered by regulatory requirements. The main and subsidiary research questions are outlined and how these align to the conduct of the thesis. The research process investigates the concepts of leadership and culture in participating General Further Education College (GFEC) settings through the perceptions of three participant groups: principals, middle managers and teachers. The chapter describes the supporting theories of Nietzsche's (1887/1998) master and slave morality and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) which support the investigation of current leadership approaches in GFECs and the relationship between principals and staff.

Policy Context

The FE sector is a significant provider of education and training for a plethora of post-compulsory institutions, predominately delivered by GFECs and Sixth Form Colleges (SFCs). FE is an umbrella term used to describe a plethora of post-14 recreational, academic and vocational courses, with a primary purpose to support students to gain workplace skills through the provision of professional and technical education and training; preparing students for the world of work or to continue into Higher Education (HE) (ETF, 2019). In 1993-94 there was provision for three million students across the sector, delivered by 464 colleges (Elliott, 1996). The number of colleges has decreased significantly to 238 in 2019-20, with 168 GFECs

remaining in England (AoC, 2019). Bailey and Ball (2016) state that the FE landscape in England is in a period of challenge and change. This is not a new concept for the sector as educational reform and subsequent changes to the FE sector have been increasingly linked with governmental socio-economic policy since the advent of a Conservative government in the 1980s (Lucas & Crowther, 2016).

A landmark shift in educational policy was announced by the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA), a 'New Right' policy which introduced a contemporary ideological mixture and desire to correlate education with the move towards a service-based knowledge economy (Guthrie & Pierce, 1990). Lucas and Crowther (2016) describe the need for a shift in educational policy and the move away from what were technical colleges to GFECs as neoliberal ideas dictated the requirement to move to a Monetarist and not Keynesian educational economic market. This new commitment to the marketisation of the education sector was a seminal milestone in governmental education policy. It had the potential to challenge the progressive purpose of education; to reduce inequality in society, develop individuals and advance social mobility (Dewey, 1938).

The Leitch Review conducted in 2005 and 2006 concluded that UK worker skills lagged behind those of their counterparts in competitor countries. Leitch (2005, 2006) outlined the requirement for upskilling students and the existing workforce through the provision of improved technical and academic training which would support the UK economy to improve through more employer involvement in the development of demand-led education and training (Keep & Mayhew, 2010). The curriculum narrowed (Young, 2011) and the focus of education policy was to promote skills development to fulfil the demands of the government's economic agenda. In 2016 the UK government introduced the Post-16 Skills Plan, a plan to reform technical training delivered by the FE sector which would work alongside academic provision and produce a "high-quality, employer-led, stable technical education option extending to the highest levels" (DfE, 2016, p. 16). Education policy would support the UK's ambition to be

internationally competitive in a global market moving relentlessly towards a technological knowledge-based economy (Ball, 2017).

The UK government's economic ambitions would mean the FE sector was to undertake a period of destabilisation from local authority control to support a planned stabilisation through sectoral reform (Lucas & Crowther, 2016), while adhering to neoliberal economic principles (Chomsky, 1999). Neoliberalism was promoted by the Thatcher government of the 1980s to realign education to the priorities of the economy, by providing choice to the educational consumer and driving up standards through competition in the marketplace (Doherty, 2007). Ball (2017) outlines how neoliberal government policy promoted the deregulation of the FE sector with the introduction of central control through regulation and accountability which was to diminish the freedom in education settings and question traditional educational values (Locke & Maton, 2019). Government policy and global economic strategy converged, and consequently, education became an integral economic development tool (Friedman, 1962; Guthrie & Pierce, 1990).

GFEC Principals' approaches to leadership were significantly challenged through the introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act (FHEA) 1992 and the Incorporation of FE colleges in 1993 (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018; Ball, 2017). Incorporation allowed GFECs to opt-out of their local authority contract, however, the process did increase centralised regulation and legislation for the FE sector. Principals in FE settings had to develop a new set of business skills, concerned with marketing their provision, personnel and financial management to complement their concern for pedagogical development and student experiences. Principals and increasing numbers of other managers in the FE sector had greater autonomy to implement organisational strategic direction to meet their parallel business and academic requirements (Lambert, 2013). These approaches highlight the potential shift in values and mode of operation expected of FE leaders (Randle & Brady, 1997). The transition into the world of corporate managerialism was alien for many leaders which highlighted the need for an increased understanding of the business acumen required to

enable them and their organisations to operate successfully in a system predicated on competition through marketisation (Kennedy, 1997; Gleeson, 2001).

FE has been the sector to answer the challenges of the UK skills requirements at different points in recent history (Savours & Keohane, 2019) which has created a churn or waves in the type of leader required in the sector. The waves of leadership which have followed post-incorporation outline a significant turnover in FE leaders due to the increasing demands of FE policy and regulatory requirements (Gleeson, 2001). Gleeson (2001) highlights that leaders left FE in the first wave shortly after the introduction of Incorporation as the new normal for FE leaders was to be more entrepreneurial and lead with a heroic style. Principals and leaders of support functions arrived from industry with significant business acumen to deal with the new business demands of the sector.

However, Collinson and Collinson (2009) highlight that a more distributed and collegial leader was required to balance the need for a new form of managerialism required in the sector in order to empower managers and teachers to meet student needs. Significant criticism of GFEC outcomes, institutional financial management and individual leadership ability have been a constant since Incorporation and have increased over the last decade (Wilshaw, 2012, 2016). An era of austerity has created an FE environment of doing more for less, and this factor is still prevalent in the sector today (Gravatt, 2014). This phenomenon requires a new type of leader to operate successfully in this marketplace driven by performance outcomes both financial and academic (Lambert, 2011; Ball, 2017).

Regulatory expectations in the sector have changed continually with new inspection frameworks, these have been driven by governmental priorities for the sector and realised through different forms of measurement. The thesis utilises two Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) approaches of inspection to outline outcomes. Firstly, pre-inspection information to assess risk and performance are valuable benchmarks, these include:

- performance data;
- destination data;
- information provided, or concerns raised, by a funding body, government regulators, employers, parents and carers, and learners; and
- any information about significant changes to the type of provision and the number of learners in a provider.

Secondly, the thesis will recognise outcomes for the quality of education provided by the participant GFECs. Ofsted (2019) describe benchmarks for the quality of education as:

- the provider's curriculum, which embodies the decisions the provider has made about the knowledge, skills and behaviours its learners need to acquire to fulfil their aspirations for learning, employment and independence;
- the way teachers teach and assess to support learners to build their knowledge and to apply that knowledge as skills; and
- the outcomes that learners achieve as a result of the education they have received.

These outcomes relate to the students' attainment of qualifications and progression to a positive destination, such as, employment or other forms of education. The thesis recognises Ofsted performance measurements relating to student achievements and financial management of the GFECs when discussing institutional outcomes and priorities with the participants.

Thompson and Wolstencroft (2013) highlight the undeniable fact that leadership in FE is ultimately based on results. Results that can be achieved through individual and effective approaches to leadership in GFECs (Crowther, 2013). The thesis concentrates on the lived experiences of three GFEC principals, three subordinate middle-mangers and three teachers who report to those managers to examine the leadership approaches present in their colleges, and do these approaches sustain a college culture which is effective in securing the results expected by all institutional stakeholders.

Research Questions

I have chosen to tell these individual and institutional stories at this time as I have previously been a principal, middle-manager and teacher exposed to neoliberal FE policies, regulatory requirements and challenges these factors present for all roles and responsibilities in FE environments. My experiences of these three levels of operation equip me appropriately to tell their stories.

Principals, curriculum middle managers who have departmental leadership role (Briggs, 2001) and teachers are at the heart of this study as I establish the impact of contemporary FE challenges on their beliefs and behaviours. The focus of the study is an investigation of their perceptions of government policy and the impact on individual leadership approaches, how these approaches set the culture evident in the study GFECs and do these approaches and operating environments secure and enhance all intended institutional outcomes. The aims of the thesis are addressed in the following main research question (MRQ) and subsidiary research questions (SRQ):

MRQ 1: To what extent do the approaches to leadership of GFEC principals sustain a culture that enhances institutional outcomes?

SRQ 1: What are principals' perceptions on the evolution of FE leadership and regulatory control?

SRQ 2: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of leader-member relationships in their GFEC?

SRQ 3: Do staff freely follow leaders or is there a culture of 'have to'?

SRQ 4: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of culture in their GFEC?

SRQ 5: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of the present priorities and challenges for their GFECs and the impact on organisational outcomes?

To address these questions, a range of theories, including LMX theory and the use of leadership approaches are utilised to understand principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of the contemporary FE operating environment. In the years post-incorporation several studies have been completed which have articulated the impact of the FHEA (1992) on leaders within the FE environment (Elliott, 1996; Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Ball, 2003; Gleeson & Knights 2008). Initially, the evidence suggested that there was a need for principals to move towards a corporate culture driven by what has been termed as 'heroic leadership', leaders who can single-handedly save their organisation by inspiring followers to do exceptional things (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Crowther, 2013; Northouse, 2019). Further research by Collinson and Collinson (2009) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) in 2013 examined the second wave of leadership in FE and suggested that the sector moved increasingly towards a distributed form of leadership which is argued to be a more appropriate approach to engage teachers in the business objectives required to achieve sustainable institutions (Harris, 2004; Bolden, 2011; Lambert, 2017). However, since the impact of austerity on the FE sector and the challenges of competing as a business and doing more for less in an era of decreased funding (Gravatt, 2014; Smith & O'Leary, 2013), principals have had to refocus their institutional capacity and business reach due to the increasingly fast paced nature of the sector. Western (2019) and Boocock (2019) argue that a form of eco-leadership which is concerned with the localised systems and connectivity of GFECs to meet local stakeholder needs is a more realistic approach to leadership to maintain a GFEC operating position and support its longevity in this competitive sector. Principals' perceptions of their approaches to leadership will be discussed in a holistic context outlining their journey through their tenure as a leader and an application of the theory of FE leadership to their views will examine the reality of their practice.

An analysis of the relational perceptions of all three levels of personnel is a central tenet of the study. Leadership and followership can be investigated by examining the aspirations and needs that followers have, and how leaders utilise their power in supporting followers to meet

those needs and aspirations (Gill, 2011). The history of FE leadership approaches suggests that principals' use of power would have changed with a different approach to leadership throughout their period as a leader, however, a discussion relating to current leadership behaviours must be considered as GFECs operate in different geographical locations fixed to deprivation indices and in different policy contexts linked to their curriculum delivery (Lambert, 2017). Indeed, Lambert (2017) suggests there is evidence that there are a set of homogenous leadership traits and the thesis seeks the perceptions of principals to analyse if the changing requirements of the sector has promoted a regression into a more authoritarian approach as leaders face increased challenges with internal harmonisation processes and the personal liability risk posed by the introduction of a new regime of insolvency.

Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) ideas of LMX theory supports the investigation of leadership and followers through the collation of all three levels of participant perceptions of how a college leadership approach utilised by the principal impacts on the operating conditions and the culture evident in the study GFECs. The thesis analyses these perceptions through tangible processes used in the GFECs, such as, performance management methods and the non-tangibles relating to how things are done in the colleges which demonstrate their different cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 2017). Participant perceptions clarifies the value they place on relationships and how they can be used to improve individual and organisational performance in the challenging operating environment (Kang & Stewart, 2007). This examination continually utilises a radical listening process (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012), to really explore the perceptions of the participants lived experiences of the leader-member process and identifies if the approach to leadership creates a unified GFEC team. Furthermore, listening radically will help to establish if all participants are driven through an adherence to a values-based culture to achieve a set of accepted organisational objectives, or if the leaders' approach creates tension and conflict which is masked in a language of 'have to' under the veil of performativity (Ball, 2003).

Whitty (2002) acknowledges the difficulty in making sense of contemporary educational policy and the FE sector has not escaped these rapidly changing policy initiatives which have created a series of enforced changes to many aspects of GFEC operation (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). This suggests continuing change management processes are inevitable, and with change comes resistance to change (Kotter, 2012). Understanding participants' perceptions of this new series of change and how those processes when mixed into the maelstrom of performativity will produce valuable information to outline the equity and reality of contemporary relationships in GFECs.

The study overlays a Nietzschean (1887/1998) framework to understanding what is valued by leaders, middle managers and teachers in GFEC settings. Through the examination of the evolution of different FE leadership approaches the application of Nietzsche's (1887/1998) master and slave morality to the research seeks to outline the contemporary relationships which exists in the research GFECs. Furthermore, the approach will support an investigation of the possession and distribution of leadership power and has this changed since Incorporation. What is not in dispute is that leaders need followers, it is understanding participants' perceptions of what type of follower has been needed through the continuum of leadership approaches used which informs the relationships between principals and other levels of FE staff (Huddleston, 2014). Nietzsche's (1887/1998) ideas are helpful to the study by examining potential conflict at differing levels in GFECs and help to highlight potential tensions over measures of performativity and traditional educator views of student-centred pedagogy. Utilising Nietzsche's ideas with LMX theory not only supports the thesis to produce information highlighting leader-member exchanges, it also provides a series of relationship tests which provide evidence to describe and evaluate leadership approaches evident in individual GFECs (Lunenburg, 2010).

Bass and Bass (2008) discuss an ideal form of leadership which relates to the leader and follower process moving from being totally leader led to one where responsibilities and actions are shared. Bass and Bass (2008) views on good, better and best forms of leadership

correlate with the description of the heroic leader in FE moving towards a more distributive form, the realisation that managerial leadership needed to be replaced by transformational leadership (Gill, 2011). In a contemporary post-capitalist society where there is a renewed focus on the person and the situation, this is a fundamental point of the thesis (Lopez, 2014; Northouse, 2019). The challenges facing GFEC principals' leadership will shape their approach and their purpose of leadership. Principals' perceptions of their approaches outline their views relating to the actions necessary to provide longevity for themselves and their institution in the sector and in doing so they provide information which discusses the concept of leadership for learning (Crowther, 2013) and its potential dissipation into the annals of FE education history as survival is now potentially the truth for FE leaders.

FE Culture

Culture in GFECs is not a straightforward reflection of how they operate (Schein, 2017). The thesis analyses participants' perceptions of how approaches to leadership shape the macro culture of the GFEC and sub-cultures present at different cross-college and departmental levels. Participant perceptions are valuable in establishing if principals' approaches to leadership force a college culture to be one of managerialism, driven and pre-occupied by an obedience to regulation and judgement from the centre (Ball, 2003; Schein, 2017) or conversely, can student-centred sub-cultures coexist with the concept of performativity to enhance institutional outcomes (Ball, 2017)?

Culture is significant to the study as understanding individual GFEC culture(s) through an examination of the actual lived experiences of principals, middle manager and teachers will help describe leadership approaches and whether they support effective institutional outcomes. Culture can frame organisational stability (Schein, 2017) and if stability is superficial FE institutions operating in this challenging environment can be teetering on the edge of failure. Culture will be examined in relation to how principals, middle managers and teachers contribute to the neoliberal, post-capitalist agendas of production through the lens of habitus.

The reality of a post-capitalist approach that controls many elements in society to feed a knowledge-based economy (Fisher, 2009). Participants' perceptions of FE as a reproductive instrument and one which is unconsciously or consciously complicit in treating students as a source of institutional income at the expense of their educational outcome and how this may reinforce social dispositions are collated throughout the thesis which can be a challenge due to the emotive nature of the subject (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). Therefore, the thesis asks questions to unearth the culture(s) present in GFECs and their impact on supporting student outcomes and if this is a causation of teacher-led pedagogical initiatives or increased systems of performance management created by a game of survival (Baudrillard, 1981/1994)? Contemporary FE culture has been described in both positive and negative terms, linked to the context of government policy and the subsequent approach of the GFEC leader (Lumby, 2003). The FE cultural debate is very dependent on your view of FE purpose and participant perceptions of institutional culture will provide information to identify if there is a conflated heterogenous business and educational ideal which has produced one hegemonic essential and accepted FE culture. A culture driven by closely related values and the need to recognise a new educational ideology based on supporting a national economic agenda (Eagleton, 2016).

A fundamental element of the thesis which links the leaders' approaches, to culture and outcomes is the commitment of all participants to operate in a vastly different FE environment to the one that existed prior to introduction of the FHEA (1992). Successive commentators have described the tension that has existed post-incorporation between the competing business, regulatory and accountability measures introduced in a new market-driven FE sector and the threat to the pedagogical practice, professionalism and the views of teachers focused on student-centred initiatives (Randle & Brady, 1997; Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Lumby, 2003; Ball, 2003; Lambert, 2013; Boocock, 2013). Participants' perceptions will be analysed to describe the impact on their practice. The literature is unequivocal that the roles of both leaders, managers and teachers have changed, it is their views that will be interpreted

to understand the extent of the change and the acceptance of measures of performativity. The use of performativity metrics has increased measurements utilised in individual GFECs and the FE sector, participants perceptions help to establish the levels of acceptance and frustrations with the metrics and if they have challenged existed forms of leadership (Boocock, 2019).

Lumby (2003) supports this assertion and summarises post-incorporation literature on leadership in FE, highlighting that leaders have become concerned with a systems approach (Ball, 2003) to management, concerned with performance and quality outcomes and less committed to a collegial approach to college life. The culture prevalent in GFECs has become more reminiscent of a culture you would find in a corporate environment. Cultural shift in the sector is indicative of the changing governmental policy agenda relating to the performance of GFECs (Ball, 2003, 2017). An uneasy balance highlighted by an educational dualism challenges approaches to leadership and the culture present in GFECs. GFECs are now confronted by the expectations of teachers concerned with student experience and leaders concerned with management principles evident in the private sector (Lambert, 2013). However, there is increasing recognition of the complexity of the FE sector and the leadership nuances which exist and how they have subsequently created a local values-based and inclusive culture to achieve strategic and operational objectives (Jameson, 2008). Participant perceptions will be analysed in this study to provide some empirical evidence to advance this acknowledgement.

The social conditions of professional practice for GFEC principals have become more challenging given the impact of austerity and real funding cuts to the sector (O'Leary & Rami, 2017). Funding cuts to the adult education budget (AEB) and a repositioning of apprenticeship delivery have questioned the actual purpose of the FE sector and the accompanying educational policy drift has placed more emphasis on FE leaders to manufacture more diverse income streams to ensure their individual GFECs are kept financially viable, while still meeting the needs of stakeholders (Keep, 2014). A reforming of qualifications delivered in the FE

sector, coinciding with the impact of funding cuts and area based reviews (ABRs) has forced a narrowing of the curriculum delivered by GFECs (Hodgson & Spours, 2017).

The thesis examines the aspects of leadership, culture and the outcomes colleges are trying to achieve through a new curriculum offer linked to qualification reformation and the subsequent changes to the funding methodology. Participants' perceptions of the purpose and value of the curriculum which is delivered by their institutions will support findings in relation to students as becoming valued as financial outcomes, students being the product of an educational production line, and becoming a knowledge commodity, demonstrating the clinical judgements required to ensure institutional sustainability against the social outcomes of the communities served by the GFEC (Ball, 2000). Saunders (2019) outlines how social mobility was and continues to be a central objective for successive Labour and Conservative governments and the thesis will examine the importance of the concept to research participants. Social mobility is a vast topic and therefore, the thesis investigates the concept in relation to how GFECs acknowledge it and do they improve the life chances of their students through their provision. Bourdieu and Passeron (1970/1990) strongly argue that education is an unfair class-based system. The application of this argument to the FE sector would suggest that students in this sector are already disadvantaged by a lack of cultural capital due to their social disposition (Harker, 1984). The views of the participants will analyse if this concept of what Bourdieu (1982/1992) termed as 'habitus' and its relationship with students is affected by GFECs and the curriculum they deliver.

An introduction to the FE sector

FE is a sector which provides education and training for students after their secondary education which is not part of the UK's HE provision. Courses can range from basic maths and English qualifications to level 5 Higher National Diplomas (HNDs). Students who enter FE pursue academic qualifications or follow a vocational pathway. The contemporary FE environment has been created by the introduction of the FHEA (1992) which introduced self-

governing and centrally funded institutions subject to competition and regulation through funding and regulatory bodies (Lucas and Crowther, 2016). Colleges created by Incorporation include:

- General further education colleges;
- Sixth form colleges;
- Art, design and performing arts colleges;
- Land-based colleges; and
- Institutes of adult learning.

The FE sector is further populated by private training providers and other specialist colleges which provide vocational training and education linked to specialisms and skills required in a region of the UK. Vocational programmes include:

- BTEC Awards;
- City and Guilds qualifications;
- Traineeships;
- Apprenticeships;
- National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ); and
- A Levels and GCSEs.

Gleeson and Knights (2008, p. 2) argue that FE has been the “neglected middle child” of the education sector and delivers education and training to students from disadvantaged backgrounds who require a “second chance” (Collinson & Collinson, 2009, p. 366) after under-achieving in their secondary education. Foster (2005) argues that the FE sector needs to move beyond this narrative and concentrate on delivering high levels of education and training for school leavers and adults in the community. Wallace (2013) agrees with this narrative and seeks to remove the metaphors from describing the purpose of FE. She discusses how technical colleges were first choice for some school leavers to study technical courses, such as motor vehicle mechanics and engineering. However, she highlights that with rises in

unemployment more students are studying these qualifications on completion of their secondary education in GFCEs. Many students see FE as a safety net on leaving secondary education, a fresh start to gain a valuable qualification which could lead to employment or HE (Foster, 2005). However, Hadawi and Crabbe (2018) suggest that the FE sector is moving beyond this outdated view of second chances and has become central to supporting the economy by providing pathways to employment, progression into HE, closing the skills gap and aiding the UK's productivity and competitiveness (Van Dooren, Bouckaert & Halligan, 2015). Collinson and Collinson (2009) state that despite the once poor reputation of the FE sector it is moving forward through establishing substantial relationships with higher education institutions (HEIs) and extending widening participation and access opportunities into HE. The introduction of new technical qualifications, T-Levels from September 2020, and the strengthening of relationships with employers to provide apprenticeships and work-based learning initiatives is supporting FE to stay relevant in the continually changing policy context of the sector (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018).

The research GFECs are different in relation to size, location and Ofsted inspection grading. Payne (2008) is useful in describing the relationships between college size, Ofsted grades and financial health. There is little correlation between institutional size, financial health and student outcomes (Payne, 2008). However, individual colleges face different challenges and external factors are more likely to determine financial health and student outcomes (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). Therefore, an overview of the three thesis GFECs will support the context of their individual operating environments and challenges they may face. The UK government's, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2019) outline seven domains of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from the seven domains to rank local authorities from one being the worst level of multiple deprivation to 317 having the least deprivation. The domains are:

- Income;
- employment;

- education;
- health and disability;
- crime;
- barriers to housing services; and
- living environment.

The IMD highlights the socio-economic area of operation for GFECs. This supports GFECs to understand the needs of external stakeholders. To support anonymity of research GFECs the IMD ranking of the college will be in relation to the corresponding decile. Decile one being the highest level of deprivation and decile ten being the lowest level.

Payne (2008) defines college size based on income as follows:

- small less than £14m;
- medium £14-29m; and
- large over £29m.

However, college groups are becoming more common in the sector (Payne, 2008) some generating income of c. £180 million.

Ofsted grading for GFECs are as follows:

- 1-outstanding;
- 2-good;
- 3-requires improvement; and
- 4-inadequate.

To support an understanding of the research GFECs operating environment, their organisational context is outlined in Table 1.

GFEC	Ofsted Grade	Size (Payne, 2008)	Level of Deprivation (Decile)	Student Population (all types - SLN)	Location(s)
GFEC 1	2 (CIF)	Medium	6	6,000	Rural
GFEC 2	2 (EIF)	Large	4	9,000	Urban & rural
GFEC 3	1 (CIF)	Medium	7	6,500	Urban

Table 1 Study GFEC Context

Research Structure

Chapter 2 conducts a review of the concept of being a leader and the evolution of different approaches to leadership in the FE sector. The chapter discusses the existence of traits in FE principals and principals' perceptions to leadership outline the nature of their leadership in relation to the organisational and government policy contexts. Central to the chapter is the discourse relating to principals and non-principals' relationships. I will utilise the lens of Nietzsche's (1887/1998) ideas relating to master and slave morality which is a helpful model to investigate values-based FE organisations and considers the possibility of resentment between teachers and non-teachers due to the changed set of requirements for FE since the act of Incorporation. This framework interacts well with other theorists who advocate the value of individual or dyadic relationships replacing an average style of leadership to add value to performance and outcomes of organisations (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Participants' perceptions of the positivity of those relationships articulate the approaches and cultures present in individual GFECs and how these contribute to sustain effective outcomes.

Chapter 3, moves the discourse relating to approaches to leadership to who, what, how and why culture(s) are created in GFECs, what drives the cultures and are these cultures accepted by all levels of participants? Culture is defined through a plethora of contemporary theorist perspectives with specific focus given to the evolution of what cultures are and how corporate cultures now apply to educational settings. The cultural context is reviewed through participant perceptions of neoliberal public sector reforms and discusses their lived experiences of

operating in a prescribed capitalist reality (Fisher, 2009), driven by market forces alien to some participants' views on the purpose of FE. The chapter discusses participants' perceptions of changes to funding and qualifications in FE and how this has changed the curriculum they offer and what is the impact of this on the students they recruit. The impact on students' social advancement and the social subjectivity (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014) challenges they face are viewed through Bourdieu's (1982/1992) ideas on habitus, and how GFECs work under the policy context of localism and control by the centre by regulation and funding agencies.

My findings from the research are discussed in Chapter 5, with my analysis of emerging views from the nine semi-structured interviews forming the research data. The themes will be synthesised, and the salient points outlined through an interpretive hermeneutical perspective. The phenomena investigated through participants perceptions will be discussed and set the context of the study outcomes. Finally, Chapter 6, my conclusion, calibrates the significance of the study for the individual GFECs and makes further suggestions for further research in the FE sector.

Summary

Chapter 1 was the introductory element of the thesis. The chapter provided significant policy context in relation to the FE sector from the Thatcher government of the 1980s through to the Act of Incorporation and the subsequent impact it had on the FE sector. GFEC leadership has been impacted by Incorporation and the move in educational policy context for the FE sector. The chapter highlighted that GFEC leadership was benchmarked against success for individual institutions, and this drive for achievement through neoliberal, free market principles prompted a churn in GFEC leadership and approaches individual leaders utilised to meet the requirements of new forms of regulation. The chapter outlined the approach to be utilised for the research and gave context to the FE landscape. The chapter provided information and context to the changing cultures which exist in GFECs and outlined how these are driven by leadership, policy and regulation. The chapter highlighted the main theories which support the

research process and provided some context of the concepts of leadership and culture which will be investigated in detail in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5, which highlights the research findings and Chapter 6 which discusses the thesis conclusions are where information relating to the MRQ and SRQs can be located, however, specific context relating to the SRQs can be found in the following chapters:

SRQ 1: What are principals' perceptions on the evolution of FE leadership and regulatory control? – **Chapter 2**

SRQ 2: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of leader-member relationships in their GFEC? **Chapter 2**

SRQ 3: Do staff freely follow leaders or is there a culture of 'have to'? – **Chapter 3**

SRQ 4: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of culture in their GFEC? – **Chapter 3**

SRQ 5: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of the present priorities and challenges for their GFECs and the impact on organisational outcomes? - **Chapter 3**

Chapter 2 Leadership

This chapter starts with a discussion on the meaning of leadership and places the concept into context within an FE environment. Approaches to leadership are discussed in relation to the journey from heroic and distributed approaches to recent views on eco-leadership in GFECs (Western, 2019; Boocock, 2019). Leadership and followership are investigated through the utilisation of LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and master and slave morality theories (Nietzsche, 1887/1998) to support an understanding of the relationships evident in the thesis participant GFECs. This is a significant element of the chapter, as the discourse on relationships between principals and staff outlines which approaches sustain successful institutions.

Understanding Leadership

Leadership is literally the process of leading (Kurup & Pankajam, 2000). Gill (2011, p. 8) highlights that to lead originates from the Old English *laedan*, “meaning to take with one, to show the way”. Gill’s (2011) ideas were developed from the views of Drucker (1985), who outlined the importance of taking people with you in an organisation. Drucker (1985) proposed that to lead is to lift people through a vision which raises individual performance. Indeed, several leadership theorists (Drucker, 1985; Bennis, 2003; Bass & Bass, 2009; Gill, 2011; Kotter, 2012; Northouse, 2019) strongly advocate that leadership is inextricably linked to the leader having a strong vision and the ability to move followers to a desired future state. Gill (2011) summarises this as follows:

Leadership is showing the way and helping or inducing others to pursue it. This entails envisioning a desirable future, promoting a clear purpose or mission, supportive values and intelligent strategies, and empowering and engaging all those concerned.

(Gill, 2011, p. 9)

However, leadership is recognised as a complex concept and has been conceptualised through an array of theoretical approaches (Northouse, 2019; Gill, 2011). The concept of leadership has produced an excess of publications and debate, and there is no clear framework associated with an agreed practice of leadership (Bennis, 2003). However, an understanding of leadership and an examination of the reality of the approaches utilised by incumbent principals needs to be established to support the thesis. The perceptions of principals, middle managers and teachers in relation to leadership approaches evident in their GFECs will support the development of a wider understanding of leadership utilised in the GFEC element of the FE sector. Gill's (2011) commentary on leadership is comprehensive and is based on many case studies conducted in both the public and private sectors. Gill (2011) strongly argues that there are a plethora of definitions and significant amounts of contested language when discussing leadership, however, he makes salient suggestions which correlate with leadership impacting on followers in the FE sector. The thesis recognises the importance of leaders' relationships with middle managers and teachers and establishes that leaders do lead through different approaches which determines the attitudes of followers to follow (Gill, 2011).

This chapter investigates leadership approaches and their journey in the FE sector since the advent of Incorporation. Approaches are discussed in relation to their impact on organisational outcomes and how they have changed due to the changing policy context for the sector. The chapter concludes with a focus on the relationship exchanges between leaders and followers, principals and teachers in GFECs, this is conducted through a Nietzschean (1887/1998) lens on morality which has relevance in relation to the dichotomy of business-oriented goals of principals and student-centred pedagogies of teachers (Ball, 2003).

Leadership Approaches

Northouse (2019) provides comprehensive critical analysis, and like Gill (2011), outlines the need to set a values-based approach, to encourage followership and provide strategic direction for an organisation, a cultural map, setting operational practice to achieve organisational objectives. Kotter (2012) supports this view and stresses through a productive model of how leaders need to adopt a transformative approach, one which looks to the future and the issues that may be faced by the organisation and sector of operation. Northouse (2019) discusses at length different approaches to leadership through case study analysis which provides some useful context when reflecting on individual and organisational practice. Salient to this research are his ideas in relation to trait leadership (Stogdill, 1948), situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) and authentic leadership (Bass, 1990). These approaches to leadership are recognised through the thesis as important approaches utilised to support GFECs enhance institutional outcomes. Lambert (2017) has investigated the trait approach to leadership in FE and suggests that there are a set of homogenous traits utilised by principals in the FE sector. The thesis provides further insights into this concept by analysing the lived experiences of all three participant groups and supports the view of some commonality with the traits evident in principals in the participant's organisations. Northouse (2019) develops an understanding of trait approaches to leadership, providing evidence which challenges the historic concept that great leaders had several characteristics which elevated them above other leaders (Shackelton, 2001). Stogdill (1948,1974) further challenged the idea of a universality of traits being born into leaders through a review of hundreds of studies. What he did highlight is that individuals who performed better than a peer leader did display similar traits. Stogdill (1948) outlined the following eight traits being evident in the above average leader:

- intelligence;
- alertness;
- insight;

- responsibility;
- initiative;
- persistence;
- self-confidence; and
- sociability.

Lambert (2017) like Stogdill (1974) highlights that personality, individual backgrounds and external situational forces can impact on the approach utilised by the leader. This is significant to the thesis as it provides a theoretical context to support the examination of individual leadership approaches. Northouse (2019) is effective in outlining the renewed emphasis on trait approaches to leadership with the exploration of the charismatic leader in the 1980s and 1990s (Bass & Bass, 2008). There are still conflicting theoretical arguments relating to trait theory, but more contemporary studies do agree on behaviours evident in successful leaders, such as, motivation, intelligence, integrity and drive (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). This thesis examines the leadership approaches in the study GFECs and illustrates some homogenous traits demonstrated through principals' leadership practice and outlines the external factors of accountability and regulation which shape their practice.

The external environment is a significant factor in the contemporary FE operating environment (Boocock, 2019). Crowther (2013) reinforces that the external economic climate, including the allocation and generation of funding for the different types of provision provided by GFECs and regulation have all contributed to the shaping of GFEC leadership approaches. Leaders have learned to adapt to these challenges and have had to recognise the importance of a situational approach to their personal leadership practice (Boocock, 2019). Northouse (2019) highlights that situational leadership is dependent on the ability of the leader to adapt their style to meet external demands and internal staff needs. There is significant correlation with the application of a situational awareness by a leader with the arguments outlined by Lambert (2017) and Stogdill (1974), who recognise the utilisation of a situational approach into an

individual style of leadership can be very reliant on the leader's personality and background. Situational approaches to leadership reinforce the need for leaders to recognise the demands of the challenges they face, and when to use high levels of directive behaviours or high levels of supportive behaviours (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Blanchard, 1985). Indeed, the ability of the FE leader to react to internal and external challenges can be linked to their knowledge, understanding and practice of leadership. Lumby and Tomlinson (2000) highlight the inconsistencies of college leadership and the impact it can have on the college as a business and student-centred teacher practice. This is not surprising given the use of external and internal training methods to improve all levels of potential and incumbent FE leaders (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). Lambert (2011) suggests that to support the challenges associated with a shortage (Collinson & Collinson, 2005) of appropriately skilled FE leaders, GFECs could adopt a sustainable approach to leadership, whereby, a culture of leadership is built into the fabric of the college, "so those individuals in the early stages of their management careers can develop skills which are used every day in situations and that have a positive impact on the culture and work of the organisation" (Lambert, 2011, p. 145).

The thesis recognises the challenges of how leaders have been developed in their institutions and the ability of leaders to adapt to the reality of contemporary challenges due to their individual approach and the nature of the college policy context. Therefore, the thesis agrees with several important arguments developed by Northouse (2019) which are applicable to an understanding of leadership and leaders in GFECs. Northouse (2019) outlines three fundamental functions for leaders to be effective. Firstly, he recognises that leadership is a trait, where leaders bring their own qualities to impact on organisational challenges. Secondly, leadership is a skill connected to an individual's ability to complete tasks efficiently and effectively through their utilisation of knowledge of the situation and the people of their organisations. Finally, leadership is behavioural, concerned with an adaptation of behaviours to ensure leadership is an inclusive process between leaders and followers (Lopez, 2014).

The behaviour of the leader was and remains, the visible edge to their leadership approach. Behaviours can change given the background and ability of the leader and the organisational policy context of their institution (Adair, 2009). This thesis investigates how all participants have changed behaviours and practice in their roles in relation to the changes in the FE sector. The leaders in the research have outlined the changes required to meet stakeholder expectations and the information they provided highlight the educational ethical issues that challenge their approach to leadership (Greenfield, 1993). Stoten (2013) argues that a central pillar of ethical leadership approaches is authentic leadership. Northouse (2019) describes through an assessment of current literature how authentic leadership is a relatively new, contested and fascinating element of leadership. Authentic leadership is based on the premise that leaders are real, honest and genuine with all stakeholders (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). Bass and Bass (2008) acknowledge the original, real and truth elements of an authentic approach. Fundamental to these elements is a personal self-awareness and how this is applied morally to relationships with subordinates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Leadership approaches which are genuine can impact on the efficacy of followership in an organisation (Pavlovic, 2015). Avolio and Gardner (2005, p. 319) provide an interesting commentary on how in “tune” the leader is with themselves in terms of their self-awareness and with their followers and organisational needs. Authentic leaders are original in their approach and do not seek to clone themselves on a sectoral stereotype, they are committed through personal values which drive their behaviour (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Moreover, and importantly to this study, Avolio and Gardner (2005) stress that an authentic leader must have a positive ethical element to their practice and should not be overly compliant with a new managerialist approach expected by regulators and policy makers. However, this concept can have concomitant implications for educational leaders as they balance business and student needs (Ball, 2017). Pavlovic (2015, p. 309) provides further commentary on the ethical element of the authentic leader, highlighting that, the leader “promotes both positive

psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate” which supports the development of effective relationships with subordinates.

The FHEA (1992) invested the concept of power and being all-powerful in the leader within GFECs in the period post-incorporation (Harris, 2004). Incorporation provided the leader with the authority to implement regulatory practice to their institutions which allowed the leader not to be authentic (Shain & Gleeson, 1999). Stoten (2013) recognises this issue and argues that it was a judgement for the leader to accept a compliance or authentic approach. Leaders who followed what they presumed to be the FE leadership stereotype were hailed as the heroic type, a type accepted by policy makers but a type which did not build trust with teachers (Kiersch & Peters, 2017; Shain & Gleeson, 1999). Ball (2003) reinforces the issues created through a non-authentic approach, an approach which would produce an environment of distrust and work against the establishment of community in FE (Gleeson, 2001). Jameson (2010) warns leaders not to act in a way to develop a culture of distrust which potentially may present itself in a teacher form of silent resistance. Moreover, Jameson (2010, p. 49) highlights how distrust in the leader can result in staff putting “more energy into maintaining and disguising resistance to authority than they do into positively working to improve an organisation”. An authenticity within a leader’s approach appeals to teachers in GFECs, however, as Stoten (2013) suggests this is predicated on a leader’s:

Willingness to regulate their own behaviour; acting without bias or prejudice in making decisions; and, being open and honest in their professional relationships. Inherent within such a conception of authentic leadership is the moral context to action and the ethical dimension to the workplace. The contrasts with transactional leadership with its emphasis on impersonal compliance is clear; authentic leaders generate followership through admiration and trust.

(Stoten, 2013, p. 515)

Authentic leadership significantly conflates the approach of the individual leader with their desire to influence their followers and if this approach portrays a genuine concern for all aspects of college life or is set through a predominance to satisfy regulators and policy makers (Stoten, 2013). Avolio and Gardner (2005) recognise the difficulties this can pose for a new leader as this is a skill which is developed over time through a learning process. Northouse (2019) agrees, arguing that it is a behavioural concept for a leader which can be nurtured and shaped in leaders and is formed by their personal experiences and the operating environment. The lived experiences of principals in the thesis highlights differences between principals in relation to what is defined as authenticity within leadership approaches. Common to the discourse was an acknowledgement of despite the challenges of the contemporary FE environment was the need for leaders to create and aspire to achieve what they regarded as an authentic vision shaped through their influence and shared values (Bush, 2020b).

Changes to FE Leadership

Heroic Leadership

Elliott (1996) describes how leadership in the FE sector has changed significantly with the introduction of the FHEA in 1992. Since Incorporation, leaders of GFECs have operated in independent organisations in a highly competitive market-driven sector. Leadership approaches needed to change to these market conditions of competition, informed by the development of new income streams, methods of funding and regulation through governmental agencies (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2013). Incorporation was a catalyst for the rise of new managerialism in the FE sector which produced a new set of management techniques, regulation and accountability through inspection and an increased conformity to the utilisation of key performance indicators (KPIs) (Ball, 2003, 2017). New management techniques and increased regulation were designed to increase competition in the sector (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). Gleeson (2001) outlines that this new form of sector management by government left many leaders ill-prepared for the challenges of this new FE environment. Consequently, FE leadership witnessed a churn in leaders and independent corporations

invited leaders from outside the sector to apply for senior leader positions (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). Goddard-Patel and Whitehead (2000) outline how many leaders were not prepared for this new competitive marketplace, many were too ambitious, they did not fully understand the requirements relating to accurate data which culminated in the use of heavy-handed management. Leaders employed a specific style of heroic leadership (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Crowther, 2013) in this new managerial environment which highlights a solo and autocratic (Crawford, 2012) approach to leading, where the leader was seen as strong and able to singlehandedly solve the challenges they faced through inspiring their followers to follow them, despite the challenges to student-centred teaching (Bush, 2020a). Indeed, heroic leadership in GFECs had moved beyond the historical heroic leadership attributed to leaders during the 1970s (Baker, 2007). Followers during this period were described as passive and powerless and waited for direction to be given by a leader before conducting any actions. Leaders were formal in their practice and had little regard for followers and the need to understand followership (Chaleff, 2009). Therefore, despite the use of aspects of heroic leadership in the years post-incorporation, leaders in GFECs recognised and identified with followership being predicated on position and not always as a social process (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe & Carsten, 2014).

Ball (2017) provides significant clarity on heroic leadership as a product of neoliberal educational policy, a consequence of reform to the public sector dating back to the Labour government of Callaghan in the late 1970s. Ball's (2017) observations chart the educational paradigm shift from education as a tool to meet social expectations to a sector pivotal to the economic potential and prosperity of the UK. Clear in the narrative is the continuing challenge for education to keep pace with reform to the sector. Supporting the challenge of change and new educational policy context is the heroic leader, a leader borne from approaches of new public management (NPM) in the public sector, where the "leader is the cultural hero of the new public service paradigm" (Ball, 2017, p. 56). Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004) highlight that this new heroic leader was argued by government to be the antidote to professional and

non-competitive education regimes which do not support the new knowledge economy. The heroic leader was a transformational (Gill, 2011) and charismatic leader who would focus on meeting the market demands and improve institutional effectiveness (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2013). However, Spillane (2005) presents the problems associated with a one-size-fits-all model of leadership (Ball, 2017) in education. Spillane (2005) outlines that leadership in times of change is based predominately with the leader's ability to influence followers.

Followership has moved forward from its passive position in the 1970s to a supportive, challenging and transformational process with the leader. It is a process whereby leaders and followers need to share an understanding of the leader and followers' positions which supports a change process in an organisation (Chaleff, 2009). The qualities and approaches to leadership utilised by an individual leader must meet the expectations of their followers (Goethals, 2005). However, leadership in educational settings does not revolve around one individual it works when all levels of staff are involved in the process (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016). Sobral and Furtado (2019) are emphatic with their views that a heroic form of leadership represented a problematic style purported by policy makers to resolve the issues in an era of managerialism. Bass and Bass (2008, p. 581) provide an insight to the challenge presented by a heroic form of leadership, they outline that "heroic leadership is not simply a quality or entity possessed by someone; it is a type of relationship between leader and led". Crowther (2013) fully acknowledges all these views of heroic leadership in the FE sector, stating that leadership in FE requires a transition from the post-incorporation heroic style to a distributed form which encourages teamwork and the skilling of all levels to lead and manage complex organisations in a challenging environment. Hartley (2007) reinforces this position, outlining that heroic leadership in the sector has been a failure as the organisation is not successful on the performance of the leader but on the everyday functions being performed to an exceptionally high level. Hartley (2007) further recognises that the significant and constant changing of FE policy contexts requires a distributed form of leadership involving more managers across the institution which supports the efficacy of establishing greater

partnerships and more forms of local collaboration. Followers have a significant role within this process in GFECs. Followers must take an active not passive position and work with the leader to support organisational objectives through a supportive and not just a challenging position; followers must still recognise that the balance of power is still unequal (Chaleff, 2009). Furthermore, the heroic leader through autocratic new managerial approaches has sought to change the student-centred culture of the GFEC and disenfranchised teachers from organisational purpose (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016). Ball (2003, p. 221) agrees with this argument and uses the emotive language of a “de-professionalisation” of teachers, outlining an acceptance of corporate cultures in GFECs at the expense of teaching and learning (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016). Wilkinson (2007) describes this de-professionalisation of teachers as the consequence of the commercialisation of education; the commodification of students justified through an idea of efficiency in GFECs.

Distributed Leadership

The criticism and demise of heroic leadership reinforced the acknowledgement that a form of distributed (Gronn, 2002) leadership was more conducive to supporting the attainment of successful institutional outcomes (Crowther, 2013). Distributed leadership, although a contested approach (Harris, 2004) correlates with a collaborative (Bass & Bass, 2009) and more democratic (Gill, 2011) approach to leadership. Post-heroic views of leadership outline the pitfalls of the leader as a hero, highlighting that the romanticising of the heroic type suited a regulatory system post-incorporation (Hartley, 2007). However, this was not the actual reality, and this approach proved difficult in maintaining positive organisational outcomes as it fractured collegial relationships and did not fully appreciate the impact of external pressures on the leader (Collinson & Collinson, 2009). Harris (2004) argues that distributed leadership is a way of rethinking how leadership works for all in an educational setting, a form of leadership which moves away from top-down and hierarchical processes to a collective reciprocal approach, engaging leaders and staff in a community to support the institution to succeed. Harris (2004, p. 16) makes effective arguments in outlining how leaders understood

the importance of transitioning away from an individualistic style of leadership to one of inclusivity, a style which “empowers other to lead”. Harris (2004) is clear, that at the heart of a distributed form of leadership is collegiality, a social process involving significant interactions with many actors in an organisation (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Parker (2014) outlines the value of implementing a distributed form of leadership, providing a useful commentary on how this approach can encourage the creation of an open institutional culture but does acknowledge that this approach is dependent on the behaviours of the leader towards all staff. It is paramount for successful educational outcomes that leaders in education effectively delegate (Harris, 2004). Savours and Keohane (2019) highlight that GFEC leaders have too many functions to perform and that they may not possess the extensive range of skills necessary to meet the challenges of their organisations. Followers in GFECs, have specialist knowledge and can support a transformational process (Chaleff, 2009). Leaders have a role to motivate followers and followers need to support leaders to implement change and impact on progress in GFECs through self-management processes (Kelley, 1988), however, this is dependent on the leader in GFECs recognising the value of the follower (Chaleff, 2009). Active followership in GFECs can be supported by the utilisation of a revised LMX approach, where leaders review their social relationships with all staff to support an effective approach to leadership. Leaders must ensure fairness when dealing with followers to avoid the creation of in-groups and isolated out-groups within their organisational setting (Northouse, 2019).

The concept of more effective leadership being conceived as a group function, executed by many actors was recognised through the work of Gibb (1954). Gibb (1954) acknowledges distributed forms of leadership as a tool to examine the theory of leadership, he recognises its use in examining the actual relationships it supports and the frequency of distributing decision making and how this is impacted by the dynamic of the leader’s power (Bolden, 2011). Gibb (1954) argues that an investigation of leadership recognises that leading is not fixed in one individual, it is a concept that requires distribution to others to streamline the decision-making process. Leadership becomes a redundant concept to change the fortunes of an organisation

if the power resides in one individual (Thorpe et al., 2011). Harris (2004) discusses the relationships and power within distributed leadership in significant depth, highlighting the internal dialogue which takes place as leaders wrestle with the challenges to their power and the challenge to the institutional status quo. GFEC leaders who had transitioned into the post-heroic period had to reshape organisational leadership and build trust which would not be a straightforward process as a consequence of the authoritarian approaches utilised post-incorporation (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2013). Torrance (2013) reinforces the challenge, highlighting how this distribution of power did not come easily to leaders, it was difficult for leaders and staff to build a relationship of trust which would be the path to building a collegial institution and improving organisational outcomes. Jameson (2010, p. 52) outlines that the challenge of building trust is a reciprocal process between leaders and staff but suggests leaders have to display a “willingness to subject themselves to potential loss of power by placing faith in other people or in situations, despite uncertainty, vulnerability and risk”.

Social trust, the moral engagement (Newton & Zmerli, 2011) between leaders and staff could be developed through a shared vision in the post-heroic era, built on the implementation of a set of shared values (Bush, 2020b). Harris (2004) and Torrance (2013) outline how the democratic establishment of a set of shared goals in an FE setting which meets leader and staff needs is an important aspect of the “negotiated nature of distributed leadership” (Torrance, 2013, p. 56). However, Torrance (2013) strongly argues that distribution is still the gift of the leader and that visionary rhetoric and shared values (Crawford, 2012) can be misleading (Fullan, 1992). There is a recognition that with the advent and utilisation of a more distributed form of leadership, leaders were still challenged by NPM and the increasing levels of regulation and accountability (Bush, 2020b). The new reality of the FE sector increased the pressure on leaders to change from a purely heroic approach (Crowther, 2013) towards a more distributed approach. Many theorists (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2005; Gronn, 2008; Torrance, 2013) suggest individual leaders have implemented some form of distributing the decision-making processes within their institutions while reflecting on the challenges of

retaining power to meet the requirements of policy makers and relinquishing power to meet the needs of staff. Gronn (2008) is not surprised by this development, and strongly argues that distributed leadership was a fashionable theoretical panacea to the challenges in the sector. Eliophotou-Menon (2013) agrees with the suggestions of Gronn (2008) and argues that the evidence for a solely distributed form of leadership in educational settings is not sufficiently supported by empirical evidence. Gronn (2008) argues that a new hybrid form of leadership adapting to the challenges of the sector is required for contemporary leaders. Bush (2020b) supports this assertion, reminding the educational sector that NPM remains a powerful regulator of distributed leadership, moreover, as Spillane (2005, p. 149) recognises, distributed leadership is a tool for diagnosing how the sector thinks about leadership and that it is not a “blueprint for effective leadership”. Clearly, there is a recognition of the value to contemplating forms of distributing leadership in GFECs which may be more effective in meeting the needs of students, employers and local communities than previous leadership approaches, but questions remain about the longevity of distributed leadership due to the challenges presented to leaders of GFECs (Boocock, 2019). More recently the introduction of a new regulatory Education Inspection Framework (EIF) concerned with the development of curriculum and whether that curriculum meets local needs and an increased reliance on new funding streams (Gravatt, 2014) has further advanced arguments to reconsider present approaches to leadership in FE.

The Future of Leadership in FE

Jupp (2015, p. 180) states that “an ineffective principal fails to create a sense of common values and purpose across the whole college and this in turn allows the erosion of accountability and of ambition for students”. GFEC leaders can fail due to the challenges of leadership, with the advent of the new managerial, entrepreneurial style, required by policy makers to meet neoliberal principles, (Coffield & Williamson, 2011). For example, leadership in the FE sector had to reshape as austerity and reduced funding took hold of the sector (Jupp,

2015). Gronn (2008) describes this new approach as a hybrid form of leadership which demonstrates elements of a hierarchical approach which outlines retention of leadership power while supporting a democratic spread of responsibilities across the organisation. Hodgson and Spours (2015) strongly argue that the FE sector should not look to the heroic past to develop a conflation of bureaucracy and democracy as the panacea to address issues of leadership and changing policy initiatives. Rather, they advocate a “third way” (Hodgson & Spours, 2015, p. 199) to rebalance leadership approaches which recognises the changing educational policy relationships at national, regional and local levels. The significance of the local value of GFECs should not be underestimated and principals’ perceptions in the thesis advance this idea. The thesis acknowledges a commitment to localism and the data produced through the investigation correlates this commitment through their individual approaches.

The concept of localism and connectivity are argued by Rhodes (1997) as a system of self-organising networks that function with policy makers and when required without them to seize opportunities with other networks to provide education. Localism is seen as an alternative to strict forms of neoliberal educational policy contexts (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). Osborne (2006) suggests that new public governance (NPG) models as outlined by Rhodes (1997) can support the public sector to move away from the juxtaposition of the sector being required to compete in the market-place while achieving social expectations. An increasing reliance on networking at a local level while considering policy maker expectation is the alternative “third way” celebrated by Hodgson and Spours (2015). Hodgson and Spours (2015, p. 200) describe this as a “public social partnership” an alternative to the market driven FE sector evident before the election of the coalition government. The coalition government’s language towards the FE sector changed and provided a seemingly tacit acknowledgement of the value of the sector to support vocational and technical training in a bid to fill the skills gap in the UK (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). Indeed, government now referred to the FE sector as social enterprises, (Boles, 2014) however, a new direction and mission for FE has started to evolve through a mixture of political devolution in England and the regional and local networks which have

formed to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). This formation is not universal across the sector and a new clearly defined mission for the sector is required to support leaders with the continued challenges of regulation and financial pressures (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). Moreover, Boocock (2019) argues that increased competition driven by government through a policy of requiring FE to supply vocationally current curriculum has encouraged some GFEC leaders back towards a more transactional leadership model. However, common to the evolution of a renewed regional and local impetus by individual GFECs, particularly as the EIF concentrates on the intent of the college curriculum to meet regional and local needs is the value of connected systems which are established by a form of eco-leadership (Western, 2019).

Eco-Leadership is “both an ethically driven approach, but also a very pragmatic and progressive approach to leading business and other organisations” (Western, 2019, p. 256). Eco-leadership is not necessarily linked to environmental considerations by a leader but is concerned with the ecosystems of operation used by any leader and their organisation (McKimm & McLean, 2020). Hodgson and Spours (2015) recognise the value of this regional progressive approach stating that an:

Area-based, vocational and collaborative approach can build on the best that GFECs have to offer and provide the environment within which they can use their entrepreneurial capacities to make a unique contribution to local and regional skills ecosystems.

(Hodgson & Spours, 2015, p. 200)

Ecosystems for the GFEC leader are both internal and external systems of connectivity which require the principal to not always think in a hierarchical way, to support their investment in internal distribution of responsibility and as a consequence, provide the space for them to focus on important regional and local relationship building (Western, 2019). The evolution of distributed forms of leadership in education recognised the political acceptance that it was the approach necessary for leaders to reshape relationships internally with staff and externally with new market demands (Crowther, 2013). Distributed leadership replaced the dominant

heroic model adopted by many principals immediately after Incorporation (Boocock, 2019). Criticism of distributed leadership as outlined by theorists (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2005) as an empowering model for staff increased as new financial pressures impacted on leadership approaches and developed an illusion rather than the actual distribution of power to staff in the sector (Lumby, 2013). Boocock (2019) establishes the need for authenticity of the leader in the contemporary FE environment, a concept McKimm and McLean (2020) accept as a sign of the increasing value of an eco-leadership approach, built on the leaders' abilities of self-awareness and understanding the requirements of all stakeholders (Block, 2014). Western (2019) advocates that leaders in the sector need to rethink their relationships, as they are contained within complex systems which are still governed by regulation, competition and events often outside of their control. Western (2019) proposes that to meet the present-day challenges in the sector, leaders should consider moving their distributed leadership away from its subservience to neoliberal policy contexts and towards an establishment of a series of balanced governance relationships with national, regional and local stakeholders (Boocock, 2019).

Kaufman et al. (2019) agree with this concept of balanced governance and suggest that eco-leadership strengthens operations of a provider at a local level as a reaction to address local educational and employment problems. Eco-leadership is predicated on its ethical considerations (Western, 2019) and how an increased focus on the power of networks can enable the leader to give significant freedom and autonomy to staff in their institution. Eco-leadership is a relatively new discourse on leadership within the FE sector and is considered as an approach for investigation in relation to principals' leadership practices. Principals' current approaches and the contemporary challenges they face provide some context to their individual style and outline the significance of an eco-leadership form on leadership in their practice. What is clear is that the journey of leadership has moved from a heroic approach to a post-heroic approach, highlighting the increased use of a more distributed model which recognises the changes in relationships between principals of GFECs and staff (Collinson &

Collinson, 2009). A further transition to an eco-leadership model is argued by theorists (Western, 2019; Boocock, 2019) as an important step for leaders to contemplate given the changes to policy contexts in recent years. Eco-leadership, like all approaches utilised since Incorporation is fundamentally linked to the leader and follower relationship, it is a discourse on the systems of power and equality (Lumby, 2013), and how this has supported the production of successful institutional outcomes (Boocock, 2019).

Leadership and Followership

In the FE sector there is a need to recognise and understand the political, power and social relationships which exist and the approach of the leader that shapes these relationships (Edwards, 2011). Delanty (2003) argues that the leader's approach can create harmonious or divided communities, communities built on values and ethics. Bush (2020b) supports Delanty's (2003) view, that there is a need to utilise shared values and provide clarity of institutional mission which will support organisational objectives (Jupp, 2015). Leaders can dominate the behaviours of others in organisations, their approach can determine the extent of followership (Gill, 2011). The aspirations and needs of followers are met through the leader's ability and will to support followers to achieve them. Jameson (2010) states that relationships in the FE sector are built on the distribution of power, the trust that is generated from the distribution and the feeling of empowerment generated by both of these processes. Leaders in the FE sector display similarities in their approaches, (Lambert, 2017) however, this can be impacted by their background and the policy context their GFEC is operating in (Jupp, 2015). The effectiveness of leadership in FE has been criticised since Incorporation (Kennedy, 1997; Gleeson, 2001, Wilshaw, 2012, 2016) which demonstrates that correlating inclusive and effective approaches to leadership is not a ubiquitous concept (Ball, 2017). Gill (2011) outlines that to establish a high-performing, loyal and empowered team, leaders need to understand what motivates high levels of good followership (Collinson, 2006). Leadership and followership studies have focused significantly on the role of the leader (Collinson, 2006; Malakyan, 2014) in this process, the concept of the leader having cult status (Kelley, 1992).

The thesis through a Nietzschean (1887/1998) lens investigates the contemporary relationship between principals and other staff in GFECs, drawing on the concepts proposed by leader-member exchange (LMX) theory and seeks to present through the lived experiences of all participants the extent to which present policy contexts have changed the dynamic of the relationships due to the fluid nature of leadership approaches since Incorporation (Boocock, 2019).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

LMX first proposed the concept of leader and subordinate relationships based on influence through exchanges of authority (Dansereau et al., 1975). LMX suggests that theories of leadership have moved beyond the ideas relating to leaders treating followers in a collective way (Northouse, 2019) and seeks to challenge leaders utilising a purely transactional approach, concerned with planning and target setting to consider what really empowers followers (Gill, 2011). LMX correlates with the promotion of distributive forms of leadership and asks leaders to consider individual or dyadic relationships with every subordinate as an alternative to an authoritarian leadership approach, where the leader is a controlling influence which stifles empowerment and innovation (Dansereau et al., 1975). The formality of vertical relationships is replaced by a reciprocal process to influence behaviours and increase organisational outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Lunenburg (2010) is concise in summarising the LMX model as follows:

The LMX theory focuses on a dyad, that is, the relationship between a leader and each subordinate considered independently, rather than on the relationship between the superior and the group. Each linkage, or relationship, is likely to differ in quality. Thus, the same leader may have poor interpersonal relations with some subordinates and open and trusting relations with others. (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 1)

Dansereau et al., (1975) describe the establishment of two general types of relationships, those relationships developed due to negotiated or expanded roles of subordinates which were called in-groups and those which remained formed by formal and contractual

relationships which were called out-groups. This use of social identity theory is important to recognise individual needs and not just those of the collective in any institution (Stets & Burke, 2000). Northouse (2019) through a review of theory, advances the relationship exchanges discourse between leader and subordinate, and outlines in detail how the personal characteristics of the leader can impact on the formality of the exchanges between leaders and followers. In-groups are active participants in the decision-making process and are more likely to be given more responsibility and possible reward, whereas, the out-group are excluded from the decision making process and managed through a formal relationship and therefore, can become disenfranchised from the team and work only to their formal contractual commitments (Lunenburg, 2010).

There is significant correlation between the development of LMX theory and the journey of FE leadership approaches since Incorporation, however, as Collinson (2006) suggests the focus of leadership studies has predominately focused on the leader and not on the act of followership. Heroic leadership approaches in FE demonstrated a command-and-control approach to leadership where principals set objectives for subordinates and utilised reward and alternatively more punitive responses to staff effectiveness (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). Leader's perceptions in FE are shaped by the responses of subordinates to the new managerial style of leadership, a style encouraged by regulation and accountability (Ball, 2017). Ball (2003) argues that new managerialism encouraged leaders to focus on income generation, marketisation and adherence to new processes of inspection. This led to the "de-professionalisation" and marginalisation of teachers; a "conflict of values" and the creation of a student-centred out-group (Ball, 2003, p.221). Kang and Stewart (2007) highlight the significance of correlating LMX with another concept which supports the development of arguments of principal and participant exchanges being examined through a Nietzschean lens. Kang and Stewart (2007) describe the process of LMX as reciprocal systematic exchange between leader and follower and stress the importance that progressive leadership approaches have moved beyond a focus solely on the practice of the leader but reinforce the

need to understand the practice of the follower. Exchanges develop from the contributions of the followers and the leaders, not just one group; without this interaction, organisational performance may decline (Kang & Stewart, 2007). This highlights the important shift away from a heroic leadership approach in GFECs to one which is more shared and distributed, an approach where “good followership skills” have never been more important” (Collinson, 2006, p. 179). Shared values in this process now establish an identification of leader and follower role and identity, a shared space where through a social process teams of followers become empowered through a process of mutual trust (Collinson, 2006). Jameson (2010) reinforces the need for trust to support institutional performance, trust which cannot be produced through coercive, heroic approaches. Putnam (2000) suggests that thick trust is used in leader and close colleague relationships, built on the leader’s personal experiences, thin trust relationships go beyond the personal relationships and is used in the development of common relationships across the organisation. Kouzes and Posner (1993) describe this as a social process, one which is built on shared common values which emphasises the importance of an authenticity and ethical awareness by the leader. The leader and their followers have to make sense of the normative behaviours and regulatory actions of their institution, this builds institutional trust, the relationship between staff and their GFEC (Fuglsang & Jagd, 2015).

Uhl-Bien (2006) utilises LMX theory to understand the relationship approaches required to successfully lead an organisation. Uhl-Bien (2006) is keen to move the understanding of leadership forward, dispelling views adhering to a heroic approach as the only approach, outlining that a relational leader who requires a dependence on their ability to socially influence followers is a viable alternative. Uhl-Bien (2006) strongly advocates that effective leaders thrive on good relationships. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991) reinforce this assertion reminding leaders that to produce self-managing teams, trust, empowerment, and successful outcomes are built on good relationships. LMX theory outlines that as reciprocity advances between the leader and follower, leaders can influence followers more to increase individual performance. Van Breukelen et al. (2006) agree that the quality of the relationship drives the quality of

performance. An effective approach to leadership is supported by dynamic relationships which once established can become increasingly responsive to the educational situation, Van Breukelen et al. (2006, p. 296) describe how this can be achieved by the leader adapting their “behaviour to situational characteristics”. Changing behaviours and approaches of leaders in GFECs to meet new challenges, led to the displacement of heroic approaches (Collinson & Collinson, 2009) and the establishment of a distributed approach which is sustained through a constructionist approach to relationships which create a shared purpose for principals and teachers (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Northouse (2019) develops the relationship discussion further as he outlines that as exchanges become a reciprocal and productive process, leaders move beyond the classification of in-groups and out-groups and aspire to develop effective relationships with both these groups which will further enhance individual and institutional outcomes. This realisation by the leader diminishes the need for group classification and builds educational communities in GFECs, communities which move in the same direction which removes the labelling of the leader by subordinates and subordinates by the leader (Edwards, 2011). Van Breukelen et al. (2006) advocate that building communities through reciprocal exchanges highlights the autonomy created for subordinates through the application of LMX. This process can support leaders to create larger in-groups and smaller out-groups which has a significant and positive impact on the motivation and satisfaction levels of subordinates (Lunenburg, 2010).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) provide a significant review of LMX over a 25-year period. The review process correlates with Lunenburg’s (2010) suggestion but also outlines a view that it is not just about the decrease in out-group size but also the value of the relationship to the subordinate as this supports the leader to develop partnerships with all subordinates as they offer them all a dyadic relationship through access to the LMX process. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) advance the discourse on the leader, the follower and the relationship domains. They use a taxonomy to illustrate the LMX process and consider the implications for concentrating

on one of the leader-follower domains. The taxonomy is useful to understand the impact of situational forces on what domain could be more dominant. Furthermore, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) provide contemporary commentary in relation to the importance of acknowledging that LMX has moved beyond a basic conversation on in and out-groups, and they propose that mature leader-follower relationships work best through a social inclusion process for the leader and the follower, a dyadic relationship built on the ability of the leader to be self-aware and authentic in their approach (Lunenburg, 2010).

In summary, LMX theory is an extremely beneficial model to understand the relationships and leadership approaches which exist in the study GFECs and the FE sector; it recognises the importance of human relationships and the requirement for principals, middle managers and teachers to reflect on and adapt their behaviours to build mutual respect and empowerment (Malakyan, 2014). The correlation between LMX and the journey of leadership from heroic to distributed and beyond is significant, it maps with Gronn's (2008) ideas of a hybrid form of leadership in FE and displays the realisation for principals to move beyond a purely distributed form of leadership to a more self-aware and eco-ethical approach outlined by Western (2019). Gerstner and Day (1997) in their review of the leader-member agreement, strongly advocate the ability of the LMX process to provide positive performance for individuals and organisations, as it provides leaders who appreciate the value of LMX to understand what makes their people tick (Pinker, 2003). However, LMX can only work if the leader accepts the process and the value of exchanges with their members, if leader perceptions of the usefulness of positive dyadic relationships with every subordinate is indifferent at best, then this can create a leader led approach which questions the journey of leadership in GFECs (Van Breukelen et al., 2006). Crowther (2013) describes the requirement for FE sector principals to move to a more distributed form of leadership. The first decade post-incorporation was undeniably characterised by a shift towards a market-based system (Ball, 2003, 2017; Keohane, 2019) for FE, followed by a recognition of a certain amount of failure by a solely heroic approach, as witnessed through ABRs and FE Commissioner interventions (Keohane,

2019). This questions the value of the exchange agreement by principals in relation to their middle managers and their teachers and provides a background to examine the reality of relationships between participants groups in the study.

Nietzsche: Master, Slave morality and relationships in FE

Relationships are a central tenet for organisational success (Gerstner & Day, 1997) and LMX theory outlines how it is incumbent on the leader to recognise the importance of a positive exchange agreement between principals and their subordinates in the study GFECs (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Transformational leadership “is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower” (Northouse, 2019, p. 172). Post-incorporation, transformational leadership was argued as an effective relationship approach to motivate staff to achieve organisational objectives, however, organisational structures, leader behaviour and increased new measures of accountability created “passive resistance” to this form of leadership (Muijs et al., 2006, p. 90). Literature on the changing nature of leadership approaches in GFECs (Crowther, 2013; Boocock, 2019) suggests that leaders have moved from a heroic to a distributed form of leadership and many theorists suggest that contemporary approaches to leadership are continually changing to meet a regional and local need (Gronn, 2008; Western, 2019; Boocock, 2019; Keohane, 2019).

Ball (2003) describes that through a culture of performativity, GFEC leaders post-incorporation were concerned and driven by neoliberal market principles and increased accountability which had an impact on the de-professionalism of teachers in the sector. The change in leadership approach impacted on principal and employee relationships leading to inauthentic leadership and conflict between principals and subordinates (Ball, 2003). Teacher values and the educational morality of the sector was challenged by market principles (Jameson, 2008) which provides the background for the discourse on the nature of leader-member exchanges and how principals and subordinate relationships are shaped by what each group values.

Nietzsche's (1886/2003, 1887/1998) works on morality and values is a significant critique of traditional morality and is helpful to determine the nature of the relationships between principals and subordinates since Incorporation and provides context to relationships which exist in the research GFECs. Nietzsche (1886/2003, 1887/1998) is critical of the status of morality, he objects to the view that morality sets the benchmark for what everyone should do in society and that we all make choices as we all have free will. Nietzsche (1886/2003) uses a number of aphorisms to speak out against the morality of the herd and he argues that this morality creates a mediocrity in society. Furthermore, Nietzsche (1887/1998) continues his attack on morality and suggests that morality is a bad, and not life-enhancing concept which inhibits man from achieving his potential. In both texts Nietzsche develops themes of what is good, bad and how position and power impact on relationships (Aydin, 2007). Throughout his discourse, Nietzsche uses complex and contradictory narrative as he structures his critique of contemporary Western morality, a polemic on the failure of Christianity. Nietzsche's (1886/2003, 1887/1998) views are emotive and a surreal narrative which undercuts itself on occasion (Hunt, 2015), apportioning blame to the reader for not being able to understand his views. Nietzsche (1887/1998, p. 6) berates the reader, suggesting that if his ideas are "intelligible to anyone and hard on the ears, the fault, as I see it, does not necessarily lie with me".

Nietzsche (1887/1998) critiques the origins of what he views as society's unacceptable ideas on morality, he contrasts what he defines as master and slave morality. Master morality is the morality of strong, good and powerful individuals who have the ability to set their own agenda as they are free to do so through an affirmation of their self-worth (Kain, 1996). Migotti (1998, p. 746) describes the origins of master morality originating from "masters who determined for themselves that they were good, and that the weak unfortunates who lacked masterly qualities were in consequence bad". Slave morality is unhealthy, weak and bad; subjugated by the master (Nietzsche, 1887/1998). Slaves view masters as evil and themselves as good as the slaves reject the noble master's ability to oppress them (Nietzsche, 1887/1998). Master

morality is the morality of the strong-willed and authoritarian type, whereas slave morality is pessimistic and cynical of what the master values (Sunday et al., 2017). Nietzsche (1887/1998) argues and believes that through a revaluation of values he can advise society to prevent a spread of weak slave morality, a morality which he evaluates as having defeated master morality in his 19th century view of Western values (Sunday et al., 2017). Nietzsche (1886/2003, 1887/1998) asks contemporary society to revalue the dominance of democratic belief systems, and the ideas of equality, advising modern philosophers to consider the values of great leaders which go beyond both moralities of master and slave (Janaway, 2007).

Ball (2003, p. 216) states that “one key aspect of the current educational reform movement may be over the struggles over the control of the field of judgement and its values”, a challenge to student-centred pedagogy by new managerialism (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016). Correlation can be made to managerial leadership approaches and Nietzsche’s view on the noble type and their master morality, a heroic type of leader who is all-powerful and “curtailed” subordinates and their educational freedoms (Jameson, 2008, p. 12). Slave morality can be linked with the position of teachers post-incorporation, weakened by a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003). Teachers have become sceptical and challenge the purpose and ability of a business-oriented FE to meet the needs of learners and in the first decade post-incorporation adopted an interest in self-preservation and an acceptance of a new educational set of values through leader coercion (Shain & Gleeson, 1999). Rutherford (2018) acknowledges that teachers have come to accept values forced upon them as they have no recourse, as they essentially have become a powerless herd, a group who by not challenging the principal, will remain within the slave morality. Teachers throughout the decade post-incorporation have become accepting of the GFEC social order, an acceptance of a new morality, a morality of market principles, one driven by the noble virtues of the principal (Hunt, 2015). Van Breukelen et al. (2006) outline how this acceptance of an institutional order is reliant on the principals’ approach to leader-member exchanges, if the principal recognises the positives which will be

achieved from the value of exchanges, then this will challenge any form of hierarchy in a GFEC (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Relationships have been a challenge since Incorporation (Elliott, 1996) and the divergence in teacher and leader values was significant in the decade which followed the introduction of NPM in FE (Keohane, 2019). Teachers questioned the necessity of this educational dichotomy (Ball, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2007) which highlights a leader-led member exchange process where the leaders retain power (Jameson, 2010). This retention of power can lead to distrust between the principals and subordinates, Nietzsche (1887/1998) would describe this as the removal of belief in fairness for the teacher in the process. Wollenberg (2013, p. 360) through a review of the origins of Nietzsche's ideas highlights that "the slave believes the master could choose to act otherwise and condemns him for not doing the right thing", interestingly, by the end of the decade after Incorporation government and theorists (Harris, 2004; Gronn, 2008, Crowther, 2013, Boocock, 2019) were arguing that a heroic, master leadership approach by GFEC principals was not working which leads to a reconsideration of the LMX relationships present in GFECs and the correlation of master and slave morality.

Bush (2020b) argued that distributing leadership and power is the gift of the principals and the thesis seeks to understand this relationship. Distributed forms of leadership were hailed as a panacea to reengage teachers in the attainment of organisational goals (Collinson & Collinson, 2009) through the ending of heroic and master forms of leadership. A Nietzschean (1886/2003, 1887/1998) view outlines this concept as an evolution of values and the development of relationships between leaders and subordinates. Sorgner (2009, p. 32) outlines how this evolution is when "values undergo a change on various levels, on a social and cultural level as well as a personal one. Nietzsche's concept of power, to which the concept of value is closely related, can change given new experiences and insights". LMX relationships changed under distributed leadership but the leader still held power despite a shift towards inclusivity of more members in their GFECs (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016).

Nietzschean (1886/2003) theory is supportive to GFECs as it reminds the FE sector that leaders make their values while subordinates are given theirs as leaders have agency to impose corporate objectives to all subordinates in the institution. Nietzsche (1887/1998) is a useful and complimentary view of the changes in FE leadership, if master morality is the heroic type, then Nietzsche's narrative outlines the surrender of power through a growing acceptance of the importance of student-centred pedagogy or leadership for learning (Crowther, 2013). LMX theory reminds leaders that motivated and creative teachers are more productive (Lunenburg, 2010) which Nietzsche (1887/1998) argues as the slave revolt, in essence teachers, supported by a realisation through changing policy contexts of austerity and deregulation that leadership approaches were required to change in FE (Lucas & Crowther, 2016).

Western (2019) advances ideas of eco-leadership, leadership concerned with the impact of GFECs on local communities, connected through a diverse system of networks. Eco-leadership is an ethical approach which discards a strict adherence to control, coercion and use of power by the leader (Boocock, 2019) and argues for a self-aware leader who takes all subordinates with them to meet a localised educational and business agenda. The thesis examines this premise and is reminded by Nietzsche (1887/1998) that master morality can and according to Nietzsche should be revived as the antidote to weak and democratic forms of slave inclusivity. Nietzsche (1887/1993) is vocal in assuring society that all individuals seek power over existence, and his views provide context to how heroic leaders can still exist in FE. The thesis investigates through the lived experiences of principals, middle managers and teachers the extent of productive LMX processes present in study GFECs and what form of relationship morality exists and how this contributes to the creation of organisational cultures and their contribution to positive organisational outcomes.

Summary

This chapter investigated leadership and leadership approaches utilised since the advent of Incorporation in the FE sector. Leadership approaches have changed from heroic to distributed forms to meet the challenges of ever-changing FE policy contexts (Collinson & Collinson, 2009). Changes to leadership approaches have been the catalyst for significant churn of leadership in the FE sector (Savours & Keohane, 2019). Debate on present forms of leadership in GFECs has moved to examine the benefit of adopting an eco-type of leadership, concerned with the localism of FE and the establishment of productive external networks to support organisational outcomes (Western, 2019). Nietzschean (1887/1998) views were utilised to review the effectiveness of leader and member exchanges inside GFECs and how this is built around a set of shared values to maintain positive organisational outcomes. Relationships have become more collaborative with the implementation of shared values which supports the maintenance of a positive operating environment, that has the potential to produce good institutional levels of achievement. The utilisation of a Nietzschean (1887/1998) lens highlighted the significance of managerialist forms of leadership post-incorporation which demonstrates a direct correlation with the advancement of a neoliberal economic agenda into the FE sector. The chapter recognised that leaders maintain positional power, therefore, leaders can adopt hybrid forms of leadership (Gronn, 2008) when the situation and policy contexts demand a pragmatic change in approach to resolve institutional challenges.

Chapter 3 Culture

This chapter outlines the development of the concept of culture, the intent of the approach is to ground the working concept of culture anthropologically and then to investigate current thinking on organisational culture. The chapter is supported by a series of theorists, from the ideas of Edmund Burke and the spirit of the nation to current examples of corporate cultures within GFECs. An incremental acknowledgement of cultures present in societies draws on the seminal work of Williams (1963) and the more controversial work of Geertz (1993, 2017). Corporate cultures are central to the chapter and this section is supported by the works of Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Schein (2017). There is a specific requirement to place corporate cultures within an FE context and this is correlated with a discourse on neoliberal government policy and the impact of both these concepts on the development and current state of cultures within GFECs.

The Evolution of Culture

Culture is an amorphous, flexible, abstract, and contested concept (Dimmock, 2002; Schein, 2017). Culture throughout this thesis relates to the organisational and related anthropological views of the concept. The thesis discusses the evolution of cultures present in the FE sector since the advent of Incorporation and is concerned with the behaviours of individuals in their own GFEC environments. Williams (1963) describes through a series of his own literature reviews the evolution of culture aligned with the growth and changes in UK society from the Industrial Revolution to the middle of the twentieth century. Williams (1963, p.1) starts this seminal cultural discourse by mapping the changes taking place at the time of the Industrial Revolution through the use and definition of five words: “industry, democracy, class, art and culture”. The socio-economic, political and artistic contexts through and post the Industrial Revolution demonstrate the significant changes to UK society after the shift from an agrarian life to an industrial life for the citizens of the UK. Williams (1963, p. 8) proposes that the concept of culture as a “whole way of life” was recognised in the 1840s as a reaction to the industrial

changes to life and the distinct creation of social classes. Williams (1963) utilises the views of the politician and philosopher, Edmund Burke, to describe the development of the state, moral and civic society in England throughout the nineteenth century. Burke noted that a spirit of the nation was to become the national culture; inextricably linked to an accepted set of social habits (Williams, 1963). Williams (1963) provides a significant historical context to the creation of what culture is in modern society and is helpful in analysing the importance of community in establishing culture from a leadership perspective. Culture has developed since the nineteenth century from a new meaning attributed to a word, towards an understanding of a way of life in a particular setting to acknowledging the behaviours of indigenous people in their own environments (Geertz, 1993). In the context of the research, an examination of principals, middle managers and teachers in their own FE settings, through an investigation of their lived experiences will provide information to define the macro and sub-cultures in individual GFECs. Williams (1963) provides a commentary on the journey through two hundred years of cultural studies, providing insights into the socio-economic forces that have shaped our cultural understanding of British culture and society.

Geertz's (1973), *Interpretations of Culture*, is another seminal text but by no means a universally accepted approach to studying cultures (Kuper, 1999; Yoshida, 2007) which like Williams (1963) strives to provide a consistency in how modern UK society understands the concept of culture. Geertz (1973) develops the anthropological investigation into people and their cultures. The text is peppered with personal and on occasion satirical discourse on the field of anthropology. Geertz (1973) outlines the importance of systems and symbols in shaping the culture of a group in any society. He analyses what distinguishes one group from another but outlines the universality elements of culture from a global context. Dimmock and Walker (2005) reinforce Geertz's (1973) observations, that groups are separated and shaped by their values, however, they successfully argue that with the increased speed of globalisation, that very few culturally homogenous societies still exist. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p. 13) agree with the view of an assimilation of societies into a globally similar

group, where “symbolic membership” has become more important than a genetic one. Geertz (2017) advocates that despite globalisation, one would have to understand the natives perceptions of their society to understand their culture and not the interpreted view of the ethnographer. Culture is the view of the group, not what observers suggest it might be in relation to the functionality of the group, it is a set of values which allow the group to exist, as Geertz highlights:

A hunt for universals in culture, for empirical uniformities that, in the face of the diversity of customs around the world, and over time, could be found everywhere in about the same form, and, second, to an effort to relate such universals, once found, to the established constraints of human biology, psychology, and social organisation.

(Geertz, 2017, p. 43)

Geertz (2017) establishes the need to find and describe the commonalities in a culture that crosses over into other cultures which allows both forms to exist (Hofstede et al., 2010). Social systems are central to cultural existence, structures within societies support these systems (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). Geertz (2017) strongly suggests the importance of people in this process, he argues that people make the culture and are not added to one that already exists, one created for them. However, this view is not universally recognised by all theorists (Hofstede et al., 2010; Schein, 2017). Indeed, Eagleton (2016, p. 25) suggests that cultures in societies are “humanly manufactured”. In culture, symbols have provided meaning to groups and are manifest in their human behaviours, actions driven by the modernity of the recognised socio-economic environment and realised through biological, psychological and sociological studies (Geertz, 2017). Geertz (2017) concludes his text through a global comparison of the local cultural contexts and suggests that anthropological diligence when studying indigenous groups provides information to produce a global view of what cultures and societies are in an age of modernity.

Eagleton (2016) takes cultural studies out of the modern and into the post-modern world, through an aesthetical review of capitalism. Post-modern culture in relation to socio-economic policy is closely related to the emerging technologies and the changes to working practices since the 1970s. This highlights the decline of traditional manufacturing and heavy industry in the UK which is associated with the concept of modernity, post the Industrial Revolution (Harvey, 2005). Eagleton (2016) is supported by Schein (2017), highlighting that cultures assist society to define aspects of human behaviour but as a concept is not easy to define. Eagleton (2016) provides an extremely witty and thought-provoking commentary on current and pluralist perceptions of culture. He strongly advocates that culture does not require extreme forms of hybridity to outline cultural diversity. Increasing cultural discourse about a plethora of cultures can detract from critiquing the impact of the serious concepts of nationalism, colonialism and capitalism (Eagleton, 2016). Understanding what shapes global and local cultures is key to knowing what works in a socio-economic context, particularly what leaders value and how they get followers to follow them through the creation of a shared culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). Eagleton (2016) plots changing views on what culture is from the Industrial Revolution to the present day, working through a literary critique of the development of what culture means in relation to how society works. Eagleton (2016) agrees with Brown (1998) on how culture can mean “the values, customs, beliefs and symbolic practices” which shape a society or a group within that society (Eagleton, 2016, p.1). Moreover, this meaning of culture has transformed workplace practice since the 1970s with the growth of new technologies, performance strategies and business needs meeting the requirements of political contexts in Western societies (Brown, 1998).

Contemporary culture is a mixture of the anthropological view of the beliefs, values and practices of groups and entire nations with a configuration of historic political institutional views, however, the changing and challenging twenty-first century environment has led to an erosion of what are commonly known as traditional values due to an acceptance of neoliberal economic policies which highlights that culture remains a fluid concept (Dimmock, 2002).

Neoliberal Policy and Corporate Cultures

Neoliberal ideology like the concept of culture is a disputed label which originated through the work of Rustow and his peers in the 1930s (Gilbert, 2016). Neoliberalism was the name given to a set of economic principles which advocated systems of competition, free market principles and an impartial state (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism came to prominence through the work of Foucault and the counter arguments of the students of the 'Chicago School' centred on the theories of Milton Friedman. Friedman (1962) suggested that politics and economics had become reliant on each other and that new liberal ideas had moved beyond the concept of individual personal freedom being at the centre of democratic thought, towards neoliberal ideas which extol the market as the method to preserve capitalism as a reaction to the rise of socialist movements in many Western societies throughout the 1970s. A contemporary view of the concept is described by Gilbert (2016) as follows:

Put simply, neoliberalism, from the moment of its inception, advocates a programme of deliberate intervention by government in order to encourage particular types of entrepreneurial, competitive and commercial behaviour in its citizens, ultimately arguing for the management of populations with the aim of cultivating the type of individualistic, competitive, acquisitive entrepreneurial behaviour which the liberal tradition has historically assumed to be the natural condition of civilised humanity, undistorted by government intervention.

(Gilbert, 2016, p. 12)

Neoliberalism is paradoxical in relation to the FE sector, as it requires government to intervene in setting policy contexts to shape a certain set of free market principles through the introduction of NPM and the rhetoric of the necessity for the sector to modernise (Ball, 2017). Neoliberalism was popularised in the UK under the Thatcher government and the principles of neoliberalism have continued through successive governments (Jupp, 2015). Thatcherite policy demonstrated a distrust of local government and sought to erode their power; therefore, government intervention became a necessity to ensure FE continued to meet economic need (Bailey & Ball, 2016).

Harvey (2005) is a useful text to understand the origins of neoliberalism and provides significant context to understanding the contrast between classical liberalist individual freedoms and neoliberal free market attitudes (Freidman, 1962). Harvey (2005) explains the social inequalities linked with the rise of neoliberal economic policies, he describes in detail the role of national governments and their leaders in pushing to maintain and increase neoliberal ideas in the latter part of the twentieth century. Harvey (2005) outlines in some depth the correlation between what became known as the 'Washington consensus'; that is, the recognition of neoliberalism determining economic policies, being linked with a global order (Chomsky, 1999). Harvey (2005) develops his theme of the disadvantageous nature of neoliberalism for all in society by reminding leaders of Adam Smith's original ideas which outline how the creation of wealth has the potential to benefit all (Freidman, 1962). Harvey (2005) is determined through a running commentary on neoliberalism to strongly argue against its ability to create and increase social equality on a global scale, he warns political leaders of the growing creation of wealth and power in the ruling elites and suggests that neoliberalism is now an abusive term, in relation to the freedoms outlined by the ideals of classical liberalism (Chomsky, 1999). He suggests that since the 1950s neoliberalism has become a methodology to ensure the interests of the powerful at national level and Harvey (2005, p. 181) concludes his narrative with an observation, that "to live under neoliberalism also means to accept or submit to that bundle of rights necessary for capital accumulation".

Gilbert (2016) is concise with his views and provides a contemporary analysis of the danger which neoliberalism poses for growing social injustices in society. Gilbert (2016) is helpful for the thesis as he suggests that neoliberal policy coerces all within its sphere to accept and comply with the requirements of the state. Neoliberalism is the reality of capitalism being the dominant political and economic global ideology which inserts state apparatus to ensure its survival (Althusser, 1971/2014). The integration of capitalist ideals through contemporary neoliberal policy contexts in Western societies has reinforced social structures and increased gaps between ruling elites and the working class (Gilbert, 2016). He goes on to highlight how

neoliberalism has removed the challenging language of Keynesian economics, replacing it with fundamental capitalist prompts to the individual, to become entrepreneurial and put their trust in the power of the market to regulate economic performance. Althusser (1971/2014) suggests that the state through an adherence to capitalism and the structures it creates in society has become an all-powerful neoliberal force with no credible alternative available for the working class. Gilbert (2016) recognises Althusser's (1971/2014) suggestion, advocating that the working class have become addicted to consumption and the consumerism of capitalism which leads to the complacency and compliance with a neoliberal, late capitalist culture (Jameson, 1991).

Jameson (1991) advances the discourse on late-capitalist culture and its correlation with the post-industrialisation of UK society and post-modern views. Through a complex narrative he analyses the growth and appreciation of post-modern culture, outlining that culture itself drives late-capitalist ideas. Late-capitalism reinforces the emergence of government direction on the market and associated bureaucratic controls in a form of state capitalism which assimilates the public and private sectors (Jameson, 1991). This should not be an alien construct to society as Freidman (1962) states that:

The existence of a free market does not of course eliminate the need for government. On the contrary, government is essential both as a forum for determining the rules of the game and as an umpire to interpret and enforce the rules decided on.

(Freidman, 1962, p. 15)

Doherty (2007) acknowledges the ascendancy of a more interventionist state and proclaims this as the rise of the New Right. Neoliberal, late-capitalist ideas from the 1970s onwards became the central and guiding principles for economic policy (Harvey, 2005). Jameson (1991) recognises the dangers associated with the proliferation of big business into all areas of public life and suggests that a monopolisation of UK society by an acceptance of a global capitalist system as the hegemonic force supporting neoliberalism to be at the centre of our culture. Jameson (1991) is a voice against an acceptance of neo-liberal, late-capitalist culture,

suggesting that freedoms created by liberal views post-industrialisation are at threat through the growing power and acceptance of the status-quo in UK structures, perpetuated by an adherence to an idea of wealth creation for all by a market controlled by the few (Chomsky, 1999).

Gray, O'Regan and Wallace (2018) discuss the journey of neoliberalism from the 1930s to the present day, outlining its resilience and currency despite conditions of austerity in many European countries. They develop a discourse which suggests that the label of neoliberalism is now tarnished by the economic crisis of 2008 but is mercurial in character as it survives under contemporary descriptions of capitalism (Fisher, 2009). Gray et al. (2018) relate the hegemonic power of neoliberal policy in consumerist terms, they suggest that post-modern societies are immersed in the market to the extent that there is no alternative to it (Fisher & Gilbert, 2016). Gray et al. (2018) outline through a discussion on the language of neoliberalism that the consumer in contemporary societies has been deceived by the language of choice, a language which Jameson (1991, p. 275) warns against, he outlines that "the consumer has no choice whatsoever but whose selection is then rebaptised free choice". The neoliberalist, New Right policies espoused by the Thatcher government of the late 1970s as the cure to the economic downturn and social unrest culminating in the winter of discontent appealed to a society characterised by economic hardship and worker strikes (Doherty, 2007).

This break from a reliance on the dominance of Keynesian economics propelled the market into the recognisable alternative for the public and laid the foundations for a new type of society built around a changed set of social assumptions and cultural values (Hall, 1988). Thatcher's desire to accept increased free market principles into all aspects of the UK economy set the direction and subsequent culture for the education sector, with significant reforms being realised through the introduction of the 1988 ERA which outlined the acceptance by the UK government that the market and not the state would modernise and improve education and align it with governmental economic objectives (Doherty, 2007). The subsequent Incorporation

of the FE sector through the introduction of the FHEA (1992) placed GFECs as a central element of a wider neoliberal agenda introduced in the 1990s. FE became a trial sector for the marketisation and creation of competition witnessed in other public sector organisations, such as healthcare (Lucas & Crowther, 2016).

A plethora of contemporary literature since Incorporation question the value of performance measurement and suggest that there is an alternative to the culture of performativity (Ball, 2003; Boocock, 2014; Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). The social value of FE has been argued as an alternative measurement (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018), the research seeks to provide some useful information to the discourse on the contributions of GFECs as educational institutions of second chances (Collinson & Collinson, 2009). Boocock (2013) argues that the push for better performance indicators for GFECs leads to the commodification of students and the creation of a set of business oriented “incompatible values” for teachers (Locke & Maton, 2019, p. 3). Incorporation shifted the needs of the GFEC to be successful in relation to performance indicators and league tables, sometimes at the expense of the individual student (Smith, 2015). This new managerial culture questioned the purpose of FE and hampered the original neoliberal ideas of the New Right to move FE to increase skills required at a local level and support student social integration (Doherty, 2007). Hadawi and Crabbe (2018) suggest that a culture of performativity did not support the balancing of the skills agenda in the UK and that consequently, FE was an agent which contributed to the reproduction of society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990).

The concept of habitus and social dispositions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990) of students and their impact on institutional values and subsequent culture creation are a critical facet of the research. These concepts are important in understanding the reality of lived experiences in the FE setting and the tension between competing and complimentary leadership and teaching practices. Bourdieu’s (1970/1990) concept of habitus, outlines how every individual in society has a habitual space, structured by agents of socialisation, such as, family,

community and education. Habitus is a values-based system (McDonough & Polzer, 2012) and is a central concept to support a description of the potential challenges students may face to gain social integration and mobility and therefore, break the model of reproduction in society (Bourdieu, 1982/1992). Edgerton and Roberts (2014, p. 198) outline that habitus is “a set of acquired dispositions, the internalised interpretive framework, rooted in family upbringing and conditioning by one’s position in the social structure, through which one perceives the social world and one’s prospects within it”. Smith (2015) argues that choice for students may be restricted as GFECs through an adherence to performance indicators which may limit student choices and therefore, act as an agent of social reproduction and not social advancement. Neoliberalism created a market of choice for parents and students when considering entrance into FE (Hill & Lai, 2016), however, their social dispositions would suggest that parents and students are passive in the process as GFECs restrict the concept of choice through an acceptance of performative cultures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). Ball (2003) supports Bourdieu’s (1982/1992) views on the ability of social class to limit choice as the working class do not possess the privileged choices in relation to education that other parents possess (Hill & Lai, 2016). Bourdieu’s and Passeron’s (1970/1990) work on education and the reproduction of society provides significant context to the inequalities presented to students and staff within GFECs.

Students enter GFECs to conduct vocational training to meet skills gaps at local levels, many seeking a second chance with their education outcomes (Collinson & Collinson, 2009). However, at this stage in their education, potential and actual FE students have had their educational habitus already assigned to them through years of inadequate educational and social conditions which have pre-determined their choice to enter FE (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). Bourdieu (1982/1992) would argue that this choice is due to the FE students’ choice being dictated by their habitus through the inculcation of previous educational narratives. FE students lack the cultural capital to break from their habitus (Harker, 1984) and this is further exacerbated by neoliberal policy contexts for FE and the lack of free choice for

students, parents and teachers (Jameson, 1991). Smith (2015) argues that the re-culturing of GFECs post-incorporation has been determined by policies of marketisation and subsequent regulation, this suggests that leadership practice and the cultures they create can impact on teacher practice and professionalism (Ball, 2003). Teachers practice and the departmental cultures they create work towards GFEC objectives by adhering to a set of shared values (Schein, 2017), a teachers' habitus created by policy makers at the centre of neoliberal educational policy and leadership practices in individual institutions (Saatcioglu & Ozanne, 2013). This contradicts criticism of Bourdieu's (1982/1992) ideas of habitus as being too deterministic and that he fails to acknowledge the progressive purpose of education in supporting social mobility (Goldthorpe, 2007).

Allen (2002) provides clarity on the choices for FE students as he highlights that habitus has significant power to reinforce and reproduce social inequality as FE students overwhelmingly make educational choices based on their working-class habitus. The thesis utilises the lived experiences of principals, middle managers and teachers to understand their perceptions of the purpose of their roles and their institutions in breaking students' educational habitus and advancing their social disposition. Students in GFECs compete in their educational field (Bourdieu, 1982/1992) but are lacking in social and cultural capital to succeed against peers in academic institutions due to the social structures in contemporary UK society (Thompson, 2019). Neoliberalism has created a false narrative of choice and through an FE "policy hysteria" (Stronach, 2010, p. 23) policy makers continue to disadvantage students by not addressing social inequality structures prevalent in areas of deprivation where GFECs are located (Thompson, 2019). Habitus in areas of social deprivation is a barrier to attainment and a reality of late-capitalist ideas and the New Right's approach to education (Doherty, 2007). Students through these ideas of neoliberal policy makers have become "essentially utilitarian", human resources to drive the new knowledge-based economy (Coffield & Williamson, 2011, p. 18) driven by a culture of managerialism in GFECs since Incorporation. Fisher (2009) argues that since the late 1980s that only capitalist educational policies exist in FE to drive

governmental economic objectives through cultures of performance and the commodification of students. Fisher (2009, p. 3) draws on his own experiences and outlines with significant clarity that a “culture that is merely preserved is no culture at all”, a rejection of late-capitalist educational direction and the creation of managerial cultures in FE. Student habitus is made concrete through “control societies” (Fisher, 2009, p. 22) created by the commodification of students and the reliance on student attainment, linked to financial penalties for GFECs who underperform in the neoliberal creation of performance cultures in FE (Stronach, 2010).

Smith (2015) continues the discourse on the application of neoliberal policies to the FE sector, through the utilisation of a genealogical enquiry he explores the impact of free market principles on a single GFEC which demonstrates the wider implications for the sector. Smith’s (2015) historical context provides useful information which examines the cultural change for GFECs as a direct effect of Incorporation. Incorporation was the catalyst for the corporatisation of education in the sector (Leathwood, 1998) which produces new practices and cultures to achieve the requirements of the corporation (Smith, 2015). The new FE sector post-incorporation was a dichotomy of the business needs of newly established corporations and the student-centred pedagogical practices of teachers within GFECs (Elliott, 1996). Smith (2015) argues that the clash of ideals present in the sector between the corporation and teachers, highlighted the commodification of students and the introduction of new cultures prevalent in GFECs driven by new leadership methods established through a process of sectoral modernisation. Smith (2015, p. 25) argues that Incorporation was the catalyst for a change of personality for FE, whereby, corporate loyalty was underpinned by “performative cultures”, cultures produced by new forms of accountability and regulation; measured like private sector organisations on performance outcomes (Ball, 2003).

Brown (1998) through public and private sector case studies, examines organisational culture and its correlation with organisational performance. Brown (1998) is extremely effective at translating cultural theory to practice and identifies the need for all successful organisations to ensure their internal states align with the external environment (Schein, 2017). Corporate

cultures are seen as a formula for success (Brown, 1998) and this identification by the business sector was recognised through forms of NPM by policy makers as the model for effective performance in the FE sector (Ball, 2017).

Organisational Culture

Schein (2017) provides significant commentary on corporate cultures, tracing culture from an anthropological starting point to a contemporary view of how corporate cultures have become intertwined with corporate leadership. Schein (2017) outlines elements of culture needed to make corporations successful; his ideas are similar to those of Deal and Kennedy (1982) who advocate the need for four identifiable components of culture: practice, customs, beliefs and values. Deal and Kennedy (1982, p. 4) suggest that simply put, culture is “the way we do things around here”, Schein (2017) argues that this definition is too straightforward and does not fit with what he outlines as organisational or macro-cultures but does not include the other subcultures present in an organisation. Schein (2017) reviews the earlier works of Harrison (1979) and Handy (1978, 1993) on typologies of cultures present in different organisations. Schein (2017) suggests that these typologies capture the essence of the organisation, outlining their focus in a cultural type. Handy’s (1993) typology of organisational cultures is a useful framework for discussing the primary focus for the FE sector and individual GFECs. Handy (1993) proposed that culture could be linked to organisational structure (Cacciattolo, 2014), he articulates four types which are useful for describing cultures in GFECs:

- power culture, symbolised by a web, with control held at the centre;
- role culture, where employees have specific authority, controlled by regulation;
- task culture, a culture predicated on getting the job done, power and influence lies in the intersections of the net connecting people in the organisation; and
- person culture, where power is exercised by mutual consent between managers and employees.

Handy (1993) argues that each sector and organisation within it has a unique culture in relation to their own policy context and setting, and he suggests that each organisation will have a dominant culture but can possess elements of all four types, importantly not every employee will fit into a specific type of culture (Mullins, 2006). Schein (2017, p. 29) recognises the issue of cultural fit for employees in their organisations, he states that “cultures tell their members who they are, how to behave toward each other, and how to feel good about themselves. Recognising these critical functions makes us aware why changing culture is so anxiety provoking”. The thesis examines through the Nietzschean lens of the master and slave morality the relationships and exchanges between leaders and followers, between principals, middle managers and teachers. An understanding of the cultural context of the organisation at all levels will support findings highlighting the relationships present, where power is concentrated and used and how leaders set cultures through a clearly defined set of organisational values. Kelman and Hong (2016) suggest that changing the soft culture, the myth and stories associated with the organisation can be difficult, it is necessary to move the organisation language in a different direction through the creation of new observed behaviours (Schein, 2017).

In contrast to hard, structural culture, soft cultural change takes time and a collegial approach between leaders and staff is central to the process, however, this approach became a challenge post-incorporation (Ball, 2003). Johnson and Scholes (1993) suggest that a cultural web is present within all organisations and that the existence of a hard culture is driven by the institutional leader and how they use control systems to influence staff behaviours. The FHEA (1992) is the seminal piece of legislation that changed the culture in the FE sector through an adherence to regulation, accountability, and a culture of managerialism (Elliott, 1996; Randle and Brady, 1997). This foundation for the sector post-incorporation produced a new set of beliefs and values for leaders in GFECs to assimilate into their practice (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 2017). New heroic leaders set new organisational direction and with it, a set of new business-oriented values, a “cultural change from the centre” (Simkins & Lumby, 2002,

p. 11). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) argue that a link between national priorities and organisational cultures exist, they strongly suggest that culture is not an ancillary object linked to an organisation but a holistic concept which binds an organisation and gives it purpose. FE priorities have been inextricably linked with the direction of governmental policy since the late 1970s (Guthrie & Pierce, 1990) and the need to change FE priorities through a model of regulation, accountability and performativity are central elements of this policy context (Ball, 2003). Biesta (2010) strongly argues that this change in policy context was the move away from the actual purpose of education, which is to educate and not to measure and the changing policy context led to the decline in liberal forms of education to be replaced by curriculum that could be measured and feeds the government's skills agenda (Whitty, 2002). Metaphorically; performativity, managerialism, and corporatism have all been used to describe the culture in FE (Randle & Brady, 1997; Simkins & Lumby, 2002; Ball, 2003). Morgan (1986) explains how the metaphor of machine and organism were central to getting internal and external stakeholders to think about organisations in a contemporary way, linking the purpose of the organisation with the values and objectives it aspires to achieve (Brown, 1998).

Brown (1998) goes further than Morgan's (1986) explanation and suggests that organisations are now political bodies, where politics and control of power are central to the setting of corporate culture. Power, trust and autonomy all feed into the narrative of current GFEC environments (Jameson, 2010) and the research seeks to provide through the perceptions of principals, middle managers and teachers the cultures present in GFECs and whether followers in these institutions are accepting of these cultures. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) suggest that establishing a community of shared purpose is key for any organisation in achieving its intended outcomes. Central to this community form of culture is the development of recognised rituals and practices, delivered through a recognition of positions of power, status and authority (Schein, 2017). Rituals are salient in the FE environment as they tell all staff members how to value and celebrate individual or organisational success, they are unwritten rules which set organisational behaviours (Deal &

Kennedy, 1982). The location, external policy context and the backgrounds of the staff in the GFEC can all set the purpose and values of the institution (Robson, 1998). What is common in GFECs is the recognition of competing purpose and the requirement to recognise the dichotomy of achieving both business and student-centred outcomes (Feather, 2016). Schein (2017) suggests that culture in any organisation can be built on artifacts of what internal and external stakeholders, see, feel, and hear in the institution, this can relate to the values staff discuss or the clothes they wear. These artifacts are determinants of what employees describe as how it feels to work in a certain organisation (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

FE Organisational Culture

Brown (1998) supports the view that culture in an organisation is a way of life for the individuals in that organisation (Williams, 1963). Brown (1998) provides significant context relating to the elements of that culture, outlining the shared experiences, mode of operation and the basic assumptions of staff, shaped by their values and beliefs gives them an understanding of their actions and gives meaning to what they do. Organisational culture is a shared phenomenon in any institution and provides the organisation with guidelines for behaviour and information on who is in charge and who controls the sources of power (Brown, 1998). However, no culture in any organisation is completely shared or accepted (Schein, 2017), as Brown (1998) strongly argues this variation in thinking about a single corporate culture leads to the production of sub-cultures in GFECs (Robson, 1998). Sub-cultures can exist in a GFEC based on the size of the organisation and the location of a homogenous group within that organisation (Brown, 1998). Sub-cultures are built on communities of practice in GFECs which on occasion can conflict with other departmental sub-cultures and often lack the agency to shape the macro culture of the institution (Feather, 2016). Schein (2017) outlines how the working practices over time in any organisation acknowledge the power of leaders in the organisation in setting organisational objectives, the values used to achieve those goals and the subsequent macro culture they create. Culture in GFECs reflect the hegemony of cultures of performativity (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000) and how the audit culture imposed on GFECs created a macro

business culture for leaders and managers and a de-professionalised student-centred culture of teachers (Boocock, 2013). Schein (2017) explains how subcultures or silos are created by a set of shared assumptions on how teachers can behave and complete tasks while trying to achieve the dichotomy of business and student needs (Shain & Gleeson, 1999). The subcultures in GFECs can still exist if the leader accepts that they can, as the leader can shape the subculture to fit into the drive to achieve organisational objectives (Schein, 2017). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) acknowledge this approach by the leader as the power which can integrate subcultures by recognising their importance and how they can exist in the post-incorporation GFEC (Boocock, 2013). However, cultures are shaped by the policy makers and leaders (Hofstede et al., 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012; Schein, 2017) in the FE sector and this has aligned with leadership development since the Act of Incorporation, as leaders have to engage with organisational culture to support the attainment of organisational goals (Lumby, 2012). Organisational culture is continually evolving in individual GFECs and is interlinked with the behaviours of the leader and the institutional direction they require the organisation to take. The thesis will provide some information on the impact of leadership approach on cultures and how this has changed with fluid policy contexts for GFECs.

Leadership Approaches and Institutional Culture

Leadership in the thesis is examined to provide information about the effectiveness of heroic and distributed approaches, and whether a more localised form of eco-leadership is an appropriate method to meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders in a contemporary and challenging FE environment. Collinson and Collinson (2009) outline how principals in GFECs moved from a heroic to a distributed form of leadership, leadership that moved from the masculine values of performance, regulation and financial outcomes to a new more feminine era. This process highlighted an emergence of a culture of duality, accepting the need to meet institutional objectives while still allowing subcultures which value the teaching and nurturing of students (Gleeson, 2001; Gleeson and Knights, 2008; McTavish & Miller,

2009; Torrance, 2013). There was a recognition after the first decade of heroic forms of leadership that leader coercion and an audit culture had received nothing further than a tacit acceptance by teachers for reasons of professional survival (Shain & Gleeson, 1999). GFECs as a business, in competition with other providers had been driven by a masculine approach to organisational culture with what could be described as a form of toxic leadership (Matos et al., 2018). The re-culturing of FE post-incorporation developed macho-management driven by NPM approaches to organising GFECs (Smith, 2015) which was challenged by a need for leaders to ameliorate the cultures present in their own GFEC, to meet all stakeholder needs (Crowther, 2013). FE became a fractured sector post-incorporation as GFECs had to serve two masters, “the needs of industry and the purposes of education” (Locke & Maton, 2019, p. 2). Ball (2003) advocates that the macro culture of the sector was one of corporatisation, through NPM, FE had become a politicised form of education which was significantly shaped by performance indicators (Boocock, 2013).

Corporate cultures correlated with parallel heroic forms of leadership and were significantly shaped by the power of the leader, as power through the process of marketisation was “invested in the Principal” through a culture of power and regulation (Shain & Gleeson, 1999, p. 449). Power, role and task cultures (Handy, 1993) were evident in GFECs with the heroic leader due to increased control by policymakers in central government which led to increased bureaucracy and greater accountability (Leathwood, 1998) through a culture driven by performativity (Ball, 2003). During this stage post-incorporation power culture was significant, which marginalised and challenged teacher’s professionalism (Elliott, 1996) which fundamentally set new roles for teachers, linked with achievement of performance targets and increased financial responsibilities (Locke & Maton, 2019). Boocock (2014, p. 354) argues that this form of institutional culture was a “means-end thinking college culture”, where leaders set organisational objectives based on the current FE policy context, this provided a shift in organisational focus, to a rationality based on regulatory and financial objectives (Ball, 2017). Coffield et al. (2008) argue this became the shift in FE cultural ethos, from student-centred

values to a process of strategic and enforced compliance. This created a culture of power in the leader and how they established trustless relationships with their followers (Jameson, 2010), who had decreased autonomy as professionals and became immersed in their task culture of achieving students, whatever the cost (Boocock, 2014). Power culture in FE is multi-dimensional and is linked with the approach of the leader and their willingness to distribute authority throughout the organisational hierarchy. Lumby (2012) states that strong culture is desirable in any institution, linked to one overarching approach to engage all staff through a set of shared values driven by the focus of the leader. Lumby (2012, p. 580) summarises the leader and member exchanges post-incorporation as the “dominant culture is likely to be working in each school or college in favour of some and disadvantaging others. In other words, culture is implicated in the modulation of power”. The dominant culture for the first decade post-incorporation was that of performativity (Ball, 2003) this placed strain on principals’ and teachers’ relationships, with many teachers associating performance measures with changing GFECs into “conveyor belts rather than educational institutions” (Feather, 2016, p. 101). However, Lumby (2003) suggests that this culture of performance was the reality of the changes enforced on the FE sector by neoliberal educational policies and this process of NPM now placed more responsibility on teachers to ensure students achieved, with this development, the role of teachers was to change which inevitably led to the long-term evolution of a new principal and teacher member exchange (Lumby, 2003).

Changing Leadership and Culture

The FE sector had been centrally driven by government policy for the decade post-incorporation, with funding being linked to student achievement and student educational outcomes being driven by a curriculum to fit the governmental skills agenda (Crowther, 2013). The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government of 2010 signalled a change in FE direction, the FE policy context was now one of increased flexibility to deliver a wider range of qualifications which were more student focused and quality assured (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). However, this change in direction was challenged by a reduction in funding due to austerity

measures required to reduce government spending in the public sector which created a crisis in identity and culture for the FE sector (Feather, 2016). Governmental agencies encouraged inclusive cultures and communities of practice to engage rather than alienate teachers from leaders in GFECs (Hodkinson et al., 2007).

Leaders in GFECs shifted away from power cultures to a distributed approach to their leadership which challenged the dynamic of the existing person culture (Handy, 1993) between leaders and teachers, the relationship exchange was to evolve into a dissemination of power to individuals throughout the GFEC (Crowther, 2013). Distributed forms of leadership became more accepted in the sector but although advocated as the new way to encourage collaboration between leaders and teachers (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2005), some argued that it was little more than an illusion, providing a sense of acceptance of new managerial policies and culture (Gunter, 2012; Ball, 2017). Leaders had to engage more with staff in a collaborative approach to resolve institutional issues, leaders were required to engage in developing dominant but positive cultures to foster a collegial approach which would benefit both parties (Lumby, 2012). Kiersch and Peters (2017) suggest that leaders had to rebuild trust relationships with followers in GFECs, acknowledging the need to establish an inclusive and shared values culture. Therefore, teaching sub-cultures could exist with a focus on student-centred pedagogical practice as long as leaders could align these sub-cultures with a predominant and established managerialism in FE (Schein, 2017). The basic assumptions of the FE sector were aligned to the continuing mantra of doing more with less (Fletcher, Gravatt and Sherlock, 2015) and the development of more interdependency between leaders and followers but “leadership is both determined by and shapes the culture and context of a college” (Jupp, 2015, p. 178). Power cultures remained in distributed approaches to leadership in GFECs as did the bureaucracy associated by performance management tools and the role culture developed by performativity (Ball, 2003). Typologies of culture in individual GFECs were still dependent on the approach of the leader, the need to ensure positive outcomes for students and their willingness to distribute power (Torrance, 2013).

Performance cultures still exist in GFECs (Boocock, 2014) despite recent changes to leadership approaches, ineffective principals fail to instil a sense of common practice through a set of shared values across the whole college which impacts on performance outcomes (Jupp, 2015). Clarity of the educational mission (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018) encourages a shared and collegial culture which can have a positive impact on principal and teachers' relationships and can alter any master and slave dynamic that exists in the institution (Nietzsche, 1886/2003, 1887/1998). Teachers can now have more power in the person culture (Handy, 1993) evident in the GFEC, the control system in the college is agreed through teacher involvement with leaders in shaping a set of shared educational and business values to meet institutional objectives (Bush, 2020b). However, the emphasis for advancing a supportive and strong culture remains the responsibility of the principal (Krapfl & Kruja, 2015) and they must ensure that power, trust and accountability are the key relationships that require constant attention to maintain positive cultures (Jameson, 2010).

Culture is based on the history of the GFEC and the principal must understand how staff realise where the institution has come from and where it is intended to go to (Schein, 2017). The principal is the most important factor and influencer of institutional culture (Krapfl & Kruja, 2015) and they must develop a culture that fits external policy contexts and respects the role of teachers as educational professionals (Jupp, 2015). This supports the principal to maintain significant power by leading through a form of "distributed leadership-culture" (Hartley, 2007, p. 84). Hadawi and Crabbe (2018) argue that there needs to be another cultural change in the FE sector, one not predicated on a managerial culture subordinate to forms of regulation and benchmarking, suggesting that each GFEC has their own cultural identity which they can build on in relation to local and regional student and employer requirements. The FE sector is continually challenged by educational policy contexts (Boocock, 2019), the challenges of austerity, Brexit, devolution of education responsibilities and competition for students provide GFECs with continuing priorities to develop their strategies and culture (Keohane, 2019). This

uncertain environment for GFECs requires principals to change their practice and that of their staff to meet new economic and educational policy contexts (Jupp, 2015). Central to this practice creation is the generation of shared and stable values (Hofstede et al, 2010). This stability can be achieved through a recognition of the importance of teaching and learning to produce positive student and institutional outcomes (Jupp, 2015).

Quality teaching and learning is a basic value in GFEC cultures and an increased focus on this fundamental institutional element supports changes in other types of practice across the college (Hofstede et al., 2010). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) argue that if the cultural purpose of the institution is wrong it will have a significant impact on organisational outcomes. Leadership has to move beyond a reliance on purely managerial methods to ensure positive institutional outcomes and this is a challenge for principals in an age of institutional and individual survival (Boocock, 2013).

Challenges to FE Culture

Culture like policy contexts for the FE sector is ever-changing and leaders who maintain their institutional status quo and do not move their cultures forward risk institutional failure (Lumby, 2012). FE is at a crossroads and leaders need to work with external stakeholders to develop a new mission for their GFECs which recognises the social value of their institutions (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). GFECs are challenged by the requirement to achieve constantly changing educational policy direction and principals in the sector need to balance the needs of staff and external stakeholders (Jupp, 2015). Present cultures in GFECs are aligned to the deregulation and period of austerity driven by the policy of government to reduce public sector spending (Hodgson et al., 2015). Boocock (2019) describes how leaders in GFECs recognise the need to distribute more areas of responsibility in their institutions and to promote positive principal and teacher exchanges which supports the removal of silo working in the sector (Schein, 2017). Ball (2017) suggests that division between the priorities of policy makers and the needs of the FE sector persists, and that managerialism is very much evident in the sector (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). These changes in the decade after the election of the coalition government

in 2010 have produced some relinquishing of control by FE principals and the development of more collegial cultures in colleges (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). This approach supports the need to develop more localised approaches to delivering GFECs to employers and students to meet their needs through the establishment of extensive networking systems (Dennis et al., 2020).

Localism is a concept that should drive GFEC strategies in future, these should be based on relationships of trust with external stakeholders and driven by local knowledge through local networks (Keep, 2016). Central to this approach is the continued distributed and collegial cultural approach in GFECs which must move away from central control (Boocock, 2019). Leader and member exchanges are required to evolve further and create relationships of trust which recognise the business and teaching priorities of the sector, this can be realised through an acceptance of neoliberalism (Hodgson et al., 2015) in FE policy and achieved by further devolution of policy direction to local actors (Dennis et al., 2020). This shift in policy requires a realisation that there is an alternative to total late-capitalist ideas (Fisher, 2009), leaders and teachers in GFECs should acknowledge that FE has evolved significantly since Incorporation and is now equipped to provide specific opportunities for students which provides them with the ability to develop their own agency and advance social mobility. Trust, power and autonomy levers are required to become more balanced in the exchanges between leaders and teachers and this supports the creation of collegial and positive cultures in GFECs (Jameson, 2010) which create a new mission for the sector (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). The thesis is designed to capture the views of principals, middle managers, and teachers in the study GFECs and how it supports the creation of strong and positive cultures, driven by a common purpose (Hofstede et al., 2010). Concurrently, the thesis will also provide information on the perceptions of the existence of macro and subcultures, it seeks to provide information on how freely teachers follow leaders in the cultures that they create, a significant focus is the levels of managerial and student-centred cultures present in these FE settings. This element

of the thesis will contribute to an analysis of leader and follower's member exchanges and outlines the level of power invested in the principal.

Summary

This chapter investigated the development of discourse on the concept of culture. The origins and anthropological views of the concept produced useful information regarding the importance of relationships to culture (Schein, 2017). The concept was then applied to the FE sector and how GFECs became corporatised with the advent of Incorporation in 1993. Typologies of culture were investigated in relation to their prevalence and relevance for GFECs, and the alignment to changing policy contexts. The chapter articulated how neoliberal educational policy ideas have influenced FE cultures from Incorporation and provides some useful information on how these policy contexts can impact on the social dispositions of GFEC students (Goldthorpe, 2007). Managerialism produced hard cultures in GFECs, with heroic forms of leadership perpetuating a pressurised operating environment for staff. However, with changes to leadership approaches in GFECs and the advancement of distributed leadership, GFEC cultures softened and a collaboration between leaders and staff produced a more collegial culture within the sector. GFECs have a significant responsibility to recognise and challenge neoliberal policies when they have a negative impact on students' habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990) which can support advancement with their social mobility. The chapter argues that leadership influences organisational culture and the correlation between leadership approaches, driven by challenging policy contexts outlines how neoliberal ideas persist and impact on GFECs and their culture of operation today. The concepts of power, bureaucracy and the importance of the person in organisational culture are still evident in GFEC culture and remain central points of investigation to provide some information from the research for GFECs.

Chapter 4 Research Methods

Introduction

The thesis aims to establish information relating to leadership approaches, cultures in GFECs and how these concepts impact on organisational outcomes. The research approach utilised is one which aspired to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants in relation to the following MRQ and SRQs:

MRQ 1: To what extent do the approaches to leadership of GFEC principals sustain a culture that enhances institutional outcomes?

SRQ 1: What are principals' perceptions on the evolution of F leadership and regulatory control?

SRQ 2: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of leader-member relationships in their GFEC?

SRQ 3: Do staff freely follow leaders or is there a culture of 'have to'?

SRQ 4: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of culture in their GFEC?

SRQ 5: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of the present priorities and challenges for their GFECs and the impact on organisational outcomes?

This chapter outlines the research approach to gather participant's individual stories which will provide information of potential interest to GFECs, allowing them to reflect on institutional operation. The chapter begins with a philosophical starting point, acknowledges my position as the researcher and outlines my approach and methods to gather and investigate participants' perceptions. This is an interpretive hermeneutical examination of the concepts of leadership and culture from the perspective of the participants. It is participant's interpretation of the concepts of leadership and culture which supports an interpretive, qualitative approach. The research is designed to understand what participants think about the concepts, from their unique perspectives. An interpretive hermeneutical approach was selected as it supports a

process of social engagement between the researcher and the participants, a concentrated examination of dialogue and text which has the ability to produce meaningful data through a collaborative discussion on the arguments already existing about the thesis topics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

Philosophical Perspective

Social research is a product of scientific research methods and a relatively new approach utilised to understand the world we inhabit (von Wright, 1993). Contemporary Western philosophical approaches to understanding the world suggest that you cannot fully understand social issues through the application of scientific methods (Williams & May, 1996). Seventeenth century philosophers Locke and Descartes questioned what knowledge is, and how do we know that knowledge is true (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997)? Hughes and Sharrock (1997) highlight the arguments between logical positivists and the philosophy of the metaphysical, they outline that positivist truth could only be explained by science, whereas the metaphysical, that is questions of existence and reality of existence is established by examining the world through social methods.

Descartes through his theory of '*Cartesian Dualism*', argued that the mind and body were separate elements of the physical and non-physical, and that the mind was a blank canvass, therefore, all knowledge came from experiences with the real world (Williams & May, 1996). Scientific philosophers, such as, Comte and Mill argued that only through measurement and experiments could the knowledge we attain of the real world be valid (von Wright, 1993). This view became disputed by the alternate epistemological position, where knowledge is socially constructed, expressed by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century philosophers, Durkheim and Weber (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). Indeed, Durkheim and Weber suggested that knowledge was a product of asking social questions about the world, highlighting that there became a need for the emergence of social sciences to address social, economic and political issues in ordinary life (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). Therefore, the thesis is predicated

on an examination of social and political issues relating to the FE sector and the study GFECs. As a social researcher it is important for me to establish my own knowledge from the outset of the investigation, my view on the reality of GFEC practice and how I seek to gain new knowledge through the research process. Grix (2019) suggests that it is necessary for the researcher to establish their ontological and epistemological starting point to support them to identify the approach they need to use to gain new knowledge. St Pierre (2016, p. 6) supports this view, outlining that the researchers' current "onto-epistemological commitments" have the ability to shape researcher knowledge by conducting established and iterative processes. However, St Pierre (2016) warns the researcher not to be set on using a preconceived best method and encourages a review of the researcher's philosophical starting point before selecting any method. Throughout any research enquiry the researcher must be conscious of what is true and what is real (Jackson, 2013). Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) highlight that reality and truth are a question of interpretation for the researcher, therefore, the researcher has to ensure a level of integrity when positioning their truth by contrasting it with what they know to be false (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Grix (2019) is concise in outlining that researcher approach is best when:

The relationship between what a researcher thinks can be researched (her ontological position) linking it to what we can know about it (her epistemological position) and how to go about acquiring it (her methodological approach), you can begin to comprehend the impact your ontological position can have on what you decide to study.

(Grix, 2019, p.61)

Therefore, as a practitioner in a GFEC my ontological position has been shaped by my own experiences as a lecturer and senior leader in an FE setting and my epistemological position for the thesis is to acquire new knowledge through an analysis of participants perceptions of the concepts of leadership and culture. This point of reaching a new understanding is argued by Gadamer (1960/2004, p.305) as a "fusion of horizons", a development of researcher knowledge based on their interpretation of what they outline as truth (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Indeed, researcher subjectivity supports the creation of new knowledge through an examination of social conditions (Hammersley, 2011). Crotty (1998, p. 13) is helpful to the researcher highlighting the need to justify their chosen approach in supporting their truth resulting from their investigation but arguing that this truth is not absolute, it is “suggestive rather than conclusive”. Truth through my approach to research recognises my research position and as the researcher I am aware of my own educational values, my axiological position in relation to leadership, cultures and outcomes of GFECs.

This awareness goes beyond an academic research exercise to one which is aspirational, a concern to understand the reality of GFEC settings and what I as the researcher see as valuable to conducting the research (Cohen et al., 2018). Values are shaped by researcher background, experiences of the world and the subject under investigation (Malterud, 2001). As the researcher I acknowledge the views of Hammersley (1990) that validity and relevance of the research are essential standards, but a reflective stance is clearly necessary due to the nature of interpreting the perceptions of the participants (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In essence, as the researcher I am not telling it as it is but how I see it, I am trying to put myself in their shoes and interpret participant perceptions (Nutbrown, 2010). Furthermore, I recognise the dichotomy faced by the thesis participants in relation to GFEC business and student-centred needs, as I have been privileged to have conducted all three positions. My own educational stance acknowledges the emotive nature of performativity but seeks to understand participants’ ability and desire to use performative measures to meet their institutional stakeholder requirements, this is supported by the use of an interpretive, hermeneutic approach.

Paradigms

The utilisation of the appropriate research paradigm is essential to understanding the philosophical elements of social sciences (Wahyuni, 2012). Conducting research of social and physical phenomena requires the use of different paradigms, and assessing the causal

explanations of different types of phenomena may require the use of complex interpretive methods to explain social issues (Williams & May, 1996). Jonker and Pennink (2010) state that a research paradigm is a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived and acts as a framework to develop thinking and knowledge about phenomena. Ontological philosophical approaches outline how the researcher perceives reality and epistemological approaches describe the process of researcher beliefs supporting the generation and use of knowledge which is valid and acceptable (Wahyuni, 2012). Williams and May (1996, p. 136) outline a valid view that “research issues will be informed by moral and ontological considerations about the social world, whereas methods chosen will contain epistemological assumptions about the operationalisation of the research question and the best means for obtaining the knowledge required”. Therefore, the researcher’s beliefs and values support the selection of a particular paradigm which promote a research methodology behind a specific research process (Wahyuni, 2012).

I have been a senior leader, middle manager and teacher in several GFECs, and my beliefs and values are displayed through my personal philosophy on educational purpose. I strongly believe that GFECs have to provide opportunities for individuals to develop and contribute to wider society (Dennis et al., 2020). However, I recognise the tensions which exist between leaders and teachers on the best way to achieve this which is signified by the dichotomy created post-incorporation by competing business and student-centred pedagogical approaches (Elliott, 1996). Bell (2014) argues that the starting point of a research process is a critical time when the selection of a paradigm must have alignment with the research phenomena in order that the findings produce useful information to support improvements. As a researcher I must be critical of potential paradigms and select an appropriate approach to produce meaningful outcomes before starting the process (Denscombe, 2014). Henwood and Pidgeon (1993) support my assertion outlining that critique when selecting paradigms is required to align research approach with research purpose. Williams and May (1996) acknowledged Henwood and Pidgeon’s (1993) views on moving beyond purely positivist

approaches to answer scientific questions, highlighting that the world is unpredictable and therefore requires a human interpretation in knowledge production. Philosophical assumptions have been challenged since the recognition that positivist approaches are not the only way to understand the social world and social science research has identified with interpretive paradigms, but the selection of a paradigm is predicated on the researchers position in relation to the subject to be investigated (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). Indeed, as Denscombe (2014, p. 3) suggests, the choice of the paradigm must seek to advance the researcher's ontological and epistemological starting point through the use of the appropriate paradigm to gain the "best outcome from the research". However, the researcher must avoid epistemological determination which has the ability to distort and delegitimise their findings (Ormston et al., 2014).

Paradigm Selection

Selection of an appropriate paradigm is crucial to the success of a research process (Sparkes, 1992). Wahyuni (2012) agrees with the view of Sparkes (1992), consolidating the idea that approaches in contemporary social research should utilise a paradigm which is a best fit to produce data and information which has the potential to advance current knowledge of the research topic. The researcher must analyse the value of different paradigms at their research starting point, but they are also guided by their own beliefs in relation to paradigm preference (Williams & May, 1996). Carter and Little (2007) support this argument, outlining that as the researcher becomes more experienced, they establish a justification for the methods they use to gather data by using a correlating paradigm. I agree that this can happen within social research projects but acknowledge the distortion this potentially has for the production of biased outcomes (Sparkes, 1992). These issues reinforce the impact of researcher knowledge and philosophical views on research topics, a researcher "awareness of the social and historical contexts of claims to knowledge does raise a problem (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997, p. 9) for research objectivity. Therefore, I acknowledged my own values and research preferences and critically analysed all salient paradigms which mitigates the risk of the

utilisation of an expedient rather than an appropriate paradigm (St Pierre, 2016). The researcher must evaluate and select a paradigm that is the most appropriate for each individual piece of research, in essence they have to unpick the start of the process and not rely on the introduction of previously successful approaches to support the best outcomes for their research (Denscombe, 2014; Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Denscombe (2014, p. 3) provides concise advice for the researcher, suggesting that the researcher should not over-complicate the selection process, highlighting that good social research is predicated on a “horses for courses” selection process. Clough and Nutbrown (2012) highlight similar advantages of a straightforward selection process and although they acknowledge the inevitability of considering different paradigms, they advocate that researchers should not get consumed with using fixed and prescribed methods. The thesis seeks to understand the interpretations of participant views on leadership and culture, being cognisant of this requirement, my formulation on the use of different research paradigms was concise and concluded quickly at the start of the process.

To understand participants’ lived experiences and perceptions of the concepts, there was overwhelming evidence for the utilisation of an interpretive research paradigm and a hermeneutical theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998; Wahyuni, 2012). Krauss (2005) agrees with this approach, highlighting that researchers utilising a qualitative perspective need to understand and create meaning from participants, and this can best be achieved by immersing yourself into the actual institution under investigation, so you feel part of its culture. However, an interpretive paradigm can produce data which needs quantification, themes that permeate qualitative findings outline that the researcher must have knowledge of the positivist paradigm which supports rather than limits their research (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010). Clough and Nutbrown (2012) provide the researcher with some purposeful direction when considering complications with paradigm selection, they emphasise that:

A characteristic purpose of a methodology is to show not how such and such appeared to be the best method available for the given purposes of the study,

but how and why this way of doing it was unavoidable – was required by – the context and purpose of this particular enquiry.

(Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, p. 19)

Research Approach

The intention of the thesis is to capture the interpretations of the participants' perceptions of the concepts of leadership, culture and how they contribute to the improvement of organisational outcomes. However, supporting concepts are discussed relating to the development of middle managers and non-principals' role in the strategic and operational decision-making processes and the impact of both leadership approaches and culture(s) on outcomes. Specific reference to student outcomes in regard to how the curriculum impacts on their social disposition are supplementary questions posed throughout the thesis. The research strives to capture participants' perceptions of their world and generate information from their subjective meanings that they attach to their environment which is best achieved through an interpretive dialogue (Wahyuni, 2012).

An interpretive paradigm provides the platform for a highly detailed analysis of participants' narrative which constructs the reality of living in their world (Cohen et al., 2018). An interpretive approach acknowledges that the world does not operate independently of human knowledge (Grix, 2019). Therefore, truly objective research positions are not realistic, the researcher has to subject participants' interpretations of social phenomena to their interpretations (Cohen et al., 2018). This double hermeneutic meaning (Grix, 2019) recognises that individuals encounter the world differently and therefore, interpretivism supports a shared pattern of meaning between the researcher and participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Hermeneutics is concerned with meanings and language and is a useful supportive construct of an interpretive approach (Laverty, 2003). I agree with the view of Crotty (1998, p. 88) who argues that hermeneutics is defined as a "method for deciphering indirect meaning, a reflective practice of unmasking hidden meaning beneath apparent ones". Gadamer (1960/2004) reinforces the

requirement to utilise an interpretive hermeneutical approach to the thesis research, outlining that the process between researcher and participant creates the conditions to provide understanding of social situations through the creation of meaningful relationships by analysing lived experiences. McManus-Holroyd (2007) supports this assertion and states that through a process of understanding language the researcher can give meaning to the perceptions of participants. Hermeneutics provides the basis for the sharing of knowledge and meaning between researcher and participant (Crotty, 1998). Indeed, Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that hermeneutical opportunities presented by understanding what participants share with the researcher can be an emancipatory process for change within the educational sector.

An interpretive hermeneutical approach supports the thesis to understand the contemporary challenges participants face and have their views changed overtime. This approach can provide the outlet for participants to discuss their lived experiences, their emic or insider view of the research concepts within their own GFEC setting (Cohen et al., 2018). Mertens (2010) argues that the deeper understanding of participants' perceptions through an interpretive approach can be a transformative process by producing valuable information from a shared understanding of social meaning. Interpretive hermeneutics supports a reflective approach to gaining useful qualitative information, but the researcher must aim to achieve "empathetic neutrality" (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 22) which reduces the impact of their etic or external views. An awareness of potential issues with an interpretive hermeneutical approach is central to establishing what Gadamer (1960/2004) refers to as the truth. Truth in qualitative research is the reality of the social settings for participants which produces validity for the research (Hammersley, 1992). Crotty (1998) strongly argues that truth in social research has to contain elements of subjectivity through the interpretation of participants' meanings. The reliability of this approach, that is its ability to produce similar results in similar research settings is a concept the researcher must consider, therefore, an awareness of my own position in the process was continually reviewed. I recognise the privileged position I hold in the research process, as I know many of the participants and I recognise the sensitivity of examining their

lived experiences, therefore, a systematic reflexive framework to tell their stories will support the gathering of qualitative information and the interpretive perspective I will utilise in the thesis.

Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (2009) four stage framework is useful to support me through the process as it provides theoretical considerations of reflexive practice which support the reinterpretation of participants' lived experiences. Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (2009) framework, recommends the researcher to ensure they systematically review their techniques to gathering qualitative information by recognising the primacy of the interpretation of narrative through the utilisation of a hermeneutical process. Hermeneutics supports a synergy between the researcher and participants, through an analysis of dialogue which provides a truth to participant reality (Crotty, 1998). As the researcher I am aware of the policy contexts in which the GFECs are operating and my interpretation of their spoken words produces valid data for interpretation. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) outline in the latter two stages of their framework, the importance for the researcher to understand the political context in which they conduct their investigation and to understand the power and authority they bring to the interpretation of participants' language to provide meaning to the research concepts. A reflexive approach will support me to review how I collect and collate knowledge through the employment of a process of "systematic reflection", (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 9). This approach prompts the researcher to carefully consider all data collected and to reflect on its impact on the investigation which will support the quality of research outcomes. A reflexive approach enhances the researchers' ability to consider the salience of the perspectives, stories and numerical data relating in the thesis to GFEC outcomes when forming deep and meaningful interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

I know about the FE world due to my position within it, and through reflexivity I can make sense and meaning from participants' views and therefore, I am mindful of my subjectivity with interpretation (Denscombe, 2014). This criticality supports the development of an approach which acknowledges the differences between researcher knowledge and enquiry outputs

(Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). An interpretive approach allows the researcher to interpret rather than measure and the reflexive element of the thesis recognises researcher perspective which can support them to provide meaning to participant perceptions (Crotty, 1998). I was cognisant when embarking on the research process of its personal nature and that a qualitative methodology propelled me to act as a voice for the group, I represent in the research process by telling stories of their lived experiences (Collins, 1991). Denscombe (2014, p. 82) suggests that the researcher should try and “suspend” their own ideas and beliefs about the concepts being investigated in the process and respect the very real humanist elements involved in capturing participants’ stories of their GFECs. Braun and Clarke (2013) capture the essence of qualitative research approaches, they do not assume that the same understanding and meanings will be produced every time by different researchers, they suggest that the data captured should go through a process of subjectivity and can generate some meaningful information through a researcher form of interrogation of participants’ stories.

Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

Qualitative research approaches are designed to produce a sense of validity to a social science investigation, Sapsford and Jupp (2006) stress that appropriate qualitative research design will establish methods to produce information which can withstand scrutiny and be recognised as valid. The thesis proposes that through an interpretive hermeneutical approach, useful and valid data will be produced through a detailed examination of the lived experiences of the participants. My view on this sense of validity is based on the authenticity of the research conducted within the thesis. The concepts investigated provide useful conclusions which may be of use for other GFECs in similar settings. Lewis et al. (2014, p. 357) support my assertion, outlining that “validity captures one of the key strengths of qualitative research – its ability to describe a phenomenon in rich and authentic detail and in ways that reflect the language and meanings assigned by participants”. Validity has to reflect the actual situation and policy contexts of the GFEC being investigated, this process will provide their FE truth (Denscombe, 2014). Utilisation of a qualitative methodology is not a static process and using an interpretive

hermeneutical approach would produce different qualitative data than using an alternative (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Therefore, reliability through replication for another researcher using a different approach would be a challenge. Lewis et al. (2014) highlight two issues which support the view of the challenges with replication and reliability in qualitative research. Firstly, they suggest that qualitative research is the investigation of highly complex phenomena in a social setting and therefore, results provide context for that particular setting. Secondly, qualitative research is a dynamic methodology which can change during the process, the researcher must adapt when circumstances change throughout the investigation and therefore, can be impossible to replicate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) are concise in outlining the issues with reliability in a thesis while using a qualitative methodology, stating that it would be naive to expect a form of reliable data given the context of the individual organisations and the ability of a researcher to generalise these findings onto other institutions in the sector.

Generalisability through qualitative research is a complex process and it is particularly difficult when using a hermeneutical process to examine the perceptions of the participants as the language they use will change due to location and policy context (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Generalisation will also be affected by the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher which may impact on outcomes (Lewis et al., 2014). However, as Yardley (2008) strongly argues, there would be little point in conducting qualitative research if you could not use the findings to develop concepts studied in a social setting. I agree with this sentiment, and advocate that the thesis is a localised study which can develop wider theory which could be applied in other settings; a form of theoretical generalisation (Smaling, 2003). Indeed, this builds on the earlier work of Stake (1978) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) who developed a view of naturalistic generalisation, a generalisability built on the researchers own knowledge of the concepts and research settings. Yin (2014, p. 147) in a comparable analysis of data collection reinforces this argument, he states that the “goal is not to conclude a study but to develop ideas for further study”. Yin (2014) recognises the difficulty with generalising data to other settings but acknowledges that these challenges are superseded by the need to build

explanations through research and warns against the utilisation and application of prescriptive research rules.

Methods

Research methods utilised by social science researchers are tools used to collect empirical data (Denscombe, 2014). Research in social science is conducted to improve social settings, it is a moral act which requires the researcher to use methods which generate a clear picture of participant reality by producing meaningful evidence about the research concepts (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Therefore, like the determination to utilise a paradigm and methodology a considered approach must be used to determine the method which is fit for purpose (Cohen et al., 2018). As a researcher I have utilised a qualitative methodology in previous research and to compliment this approach to understanding lived experiences a semi-structured interview was chosen as the investigative tool to produce data for interpretation. Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, 1986) was considered as a potential approach for gathering the stories of the participants but the close relationship the researcher has with some of the participants warranted the removal of their explicit voice and limit the impact it could have on participants' perceptions (Hackmann, 2002). Interviews are the ideal tool to gather information in relation to participants' lived experiences and proved essential to exploring and establishing participants' understanding of leadership and culture in their institutions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 23) highlight that the research approach outlines to the researcher the reasons for "using a particular research recipe", and the subsequent methods utilised are some of the ingredients necessary to produce meaningful data.

There are several interview methods, some formal, some less formal, and the latter category allows the researcher to change the process which is supportive of a qualitative approach (Lewis et al., 2014). Kvale (1996) makes a salient argument that interviews are a valuable method in constructing an understanding of knowledge, generated by conversations which through human interaction produces data of a social situation. I support this assertion and

acknowledge it as a fundamental instrument to gather attitudinal data throughout the conduct of the research (Denscombe, 2014). Surveys and questionnaires although effective in qualitative approaches lack the intimacy required to produce personal perceptions of the thesis topics from the participants (Denscombe, 2014). Cohen et al. (2018, p. 506) acknowledge that interviews are the only appropriate method in a qualitative approach to support “multi-sensory” channels of communication between researcher and participant. The researcher has to tell the stories of the participants from the interview, a construction of lived experiences with the interviewee moving beyond a traditional conversation to the telling of an emotional story (Nunkoosing, 2005). A formal, structured interview does not give the researcher the required amount of flexibility to gain real insights into the lived experiences of the participants, therefore, a semi-structured interview was the most suitable method for the thesis (Cohen et al., 2018).

However, as a researcher, although confident that it was the appropriate method to use, I remained vigilant, and I did not take the method for granted (Fairclough, 1992). I recognised the need to understand the techniques necessary to produce unique outcomes from every interview. An interview has the potential to produce more meaningful outcomes than other qualitative methods as the interviewee displays some motivation to participate by accepting the opportunity (Oppenheim, 1992). The interview schedule was piloted with colleagues not associated with the research to establish any areas of difficulty and the efficacy of the method to generate meaningful information. The schedule was subsequently reviewed on completion of each group which highlighted the schedule’s ability to produce meaningful qualitative data. Interview schedules were produced for the three participant groups. Throughout the conduct of the nine interviews, I could see the motivation of the interviewees to engage in a dual relationship (Braun & Clarke, 2013) which added pace to the process which required control. I recognised my privileged position and the sensitivity required throughout the interviews and provoked new insights through supplementary questions and allowed a sense of openness by not contradicting participants and allowing them to speak freely (Cohen et al., 2018). I was known to six of the participants so remained as objective as possible so they would

concentrate on answering the open questions and with all interviewees the onus was on me as the researcher to establish rapport (Kvale, 1996). The sequencing and open-ended nature of the questioning supported a funnelling process, going from a broad perspective to one where more specific answers are produced by probing through supplementary questioning (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Clough and Nutbrown (2012, p. 161) suggest that the researcher must conduct “radical planning” when constructing interview questions which supports the interviewer to utilise a process of in-depth and specific questions to hear the participant’s voice. Participant voice is the recognition by the researcher that participants must express their perspective on research questions in their words. Voices should not be altered or inhibited by the researcher and the interpretation process should contain many voices, not just the perspectives of an individual group (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Indeed, Crichton and Childs (2005) outline the importance of utilising the actual words stated by the participants within an analysis to support the reader to understand the raw data. This process will provide positional perspectives on the research by the different participant groups (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012).

Interviews are the qualitative tool to give people with no voice a voice, (Nunokoosing, 2005) the opportunity to conduct an educational dialogue between researcher and participant which has the potential to uncover hidden meaning in their perceptions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). A process of “radical listening” (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, p. 25) in the interview process supports the researcher not to merely hear the participant but to interpret their voice in a meaningful way which produces persuasive data to affect change. Radical listening forces the interviewer to not only hear the participant’s voice but encourages them through a reflexive process to remove their own perspective from the situation (Siry et al., 2016). The researcher through an interpretive hermeneutical approach in the thesis has therefore got to change their questioning when hearing answers from the participant which require further investigation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This reinforces the decision to interpret participants’ interpretations of the thesis concepts through a semi-structured interview method. Denscombe

(2014, p. 175) recognises the method choice utilised in the thesis, arguing that it is the appropriate method to gather data based on, “opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences” which are shared with the researcher and to be treated as privileged information.

Sampling

The context for selecting research participants and the ideas used to develop the framework for gathering data was a fluid process. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 was a critical planning consideration when designing the study. The research was not predicated on a specific type of GFEC; therefore, convenience sampling was selected as the primary method to engage GFECs in the thesis (Cohen et al., 2018). A convenience survey was sent to seven GFECs across the Midlands and the North of England with all seven outlining their intention to contribute to the research. My target was to conduct the study in three GFECs which ironically proved to be the exact number who would eventually provide information as the other four institutions withdrew due to mounting pressures on principals relating to the pandemic and the impact on their institutions. A purposive sampling approach was required to choose the participant groups. The production of meaningful information in relation to the thesis themes would be provided from teachers, academic middle managers and GFEC principals; all three participant groups are able to provide perceptions of the concepts relating to the research (Denscombe, 2014). However, individual participant selection within each GFEC was through a convenience sampling exercise, each Principal sent out a message asking for support with the research, and I was presented with a randomised sample of participants who pro-actively sought to contribute to the process. The process for selecting participants in the institution was based upon a first response approach to the email circulated by the Principal. The Principal sent a message they produced which included the description of the research and the participant information supplied by the researcher. The participant information was then passed back to the researcher by the GFEC Principal. This could present a potential issue for the research, as the power imbalance of Principal and participants could produce a coerced or potentially influenced participant. At the start of each interview with the non-

principal participants I discussed any possible influence from their Principals and all responded that this was not the case. This was apparent within their interviews, all were able discuss issues freely and openly, and participants used challenging language when they described issues relating to their specific GFEC. Moreover, the participants from all three participating GFEC were knowledgeable in their roles and brought significant experience and expertise which was extremely useful to produce meaningful outcomes to the thesis (Cohen et al., 2018).

The nine participants were all passionate about their roles and their institutions and this proved a valuable stimulus to explore the themes of the research through a semi-structured interview process. Initially, I did not design the study with any significant relationship to the pandemic and this was a concern when considering the lived experiences and stories I sought to capture. However, interviews conducted through a face-to-face process through a period when lockdown had been lifted and GFECs had returned to face-to-face contact was of significant value to the research. The issues relating to connectivity and the ability to clearly see and hear the participants responses was improved through this process. Moreover, as Vogl (2013) outlines, interviews which lack face-to-face contact are highly impersonal and prevent the building of rapport and remove the natural elements encountered through human interaction. Deakin & Wakefield (2013) reinforce this argument outlining that in person, face-to-face interview processes are still the gold standard, but they do highlight that other forms of interviewing can be considered when face-to-face interviews cannot take place. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in neutral spaces within GFEC locations, and this supported the ability of participants to talk freely and allowed me to use my position as researcher to get a feel for the politics and positionality of their responses (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Participants outlined their educational stories with context to their individual histories, only Teacher 3 has pre-Incorporation experience, although other participants have considerable experience as outlined in their biographies in Appendix 6. I was confident that I could utilise open questioning techniques to support the participants to provide their perceptions of the specific areas of

research in the thesis and I could then use an interpretive hermeneutical perspective to analyse the information they provided (Cohen et al., 2018). Sample size was predicated on what amount of qualitative data was required to provide useful and credible information relating to the major concepts being investigated in the thesis. I was concerned about the quality rather than the quantity of the information and this was achieved by examining three GFECs in three different locations (Patton, 2002). One had a rural location; one was in an affluent city and the last was located in an industrial town. The different locations and the three participants in each GFEC would provide quality interpretations of their individual settings and did not limit the production of meaningful data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Patton (2002) outlines the salience of my approach, acknowledging that the data sampling exercise was purposive as it would provide rich and in-depth information about the participants' views of the concepts in their own settings. The inclusion of the three GFECs in three different settings and the interviewing of participants through a process of radical listening (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012) would provide diversity to the qualitative data collected (Patton, 2002). Convenience sampling supported a self-selection process for participants which gave the research some stratification as the original seven GFECs contacted were different in terms of location, size and purpose (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Denscombe (2014) suggests the reality for most researchers is to use a form of convenience sampling as it is an appropriate system which is not expensive in relation to time and resources.

Ethics

Research is an incremental process and throughout every stage of the thesis I considered ethical issues which could impact on the research process and its findings. The position I hold in relation to specific participants is a potential ethical disturbance, but this has been significantly mitigated by their unambiguous support to contribute to the thesis. Through careful and radical forms of enquiry I am well equipped to tell the stories of the participants and provide valid meaning to their educational reality (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Although, the thesis is a small-scale research task, researcher bias was at the forefront of my thinking

from the research design stage until research completion. Conscious of my own educational values and beliefs, I reflected on possible misinterpretation of participant interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) and at every stage reviewed the validity of information gathered through interviews and how much actual voice I had given each participant when they told their story (Sharp, 2009).

As the researcher I had to acknowledge the sensitive nature of the conversations in the interview process and advised all participants of assured anonymity and confidentiality in the nature of storing and using their stories to provide meaningful data. Conscious of the potentially intrusive nature of a semi-structured interview into their educational reality I reassured participants through the issue of a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and the signing of an informed consent form. Informed consent is valuable to any research task and outlines the withdrawal mechanism for participants and how their data will be stored and utilised. Initially, the issuing of this form could be a shock for participants as they may feel exposed by the actual research process (Cohen et al., 2018) and therefore, reassurance relating to anonymity for participant's identities is central to a positive process and outcome (Denscombe, 2014). The research concepts being analysed in the thesis were not sensitive and have been discussed in other texts (Ball, 2003; Lumby, 2003, 2012; Boocock, 2019) which removed any need to hold information back from participants, this supported an open and honest ethical approach (Denscombe, 2014). Openness was achieved through my reflexive positioning throughout the research which supports the production of quality data which makes the thesis have some value, systemic reflection endows interpretation and was achieved through a hermeneutical examination of researcher and participant dialogue (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

Process of Analysis

The collection of data through nine interviews provided the thesis with a wealth of rich data for interpretation. However, this volume of experiential data required a significant amount of

refinement to support the production of useful outcomes from the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis provides the thesis with the flexibility for the researcher to interpret themes from the data collected and does not overcomplicate the analysis by having to conform to a prescription prevalent in other analytical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Indeed, as Sharp (2009) argues, data analysis should not be a difficult process, but researchers can make it a complicated activity. Boyatzis (1998) outlined that thematic analysis is a method utilised in social science research to encode qualitative data, supporting the researcher to condense the data into manageable streams through the recognition of themes in the raw data collected from the research process or from data which has direct correlation with the research topic. Braun and Clarke (2006) build on this description, highlighting that thematic analysis is an appropriate qualitative analytical tool for identifying patterns or themes in research data.

Thematic analysis complemented an interpretive hermeneutical approach which proved to be pivotal for the research in understanding the language of the participants and reflecting the reality of their FE settings (Crotty, 1998). Interpretive hermeneutics supports the researcher to find the indirect meaning in language and unmask their subjective understanding of their social world (McManus-Holroyd, 2007). Gadamer (1960/2004) acknowledges that the approach creates a shared understanding, built between the researcher and the participant, as language will disclose the world in which they both live. My privileged position as the researcher was one supported by knowledge and experience of all three roles of the participant groups, having performed these positions in GFECs. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2009) support my argument, and outline that as the researcher I had a sectoral dialectical ability to interpret participants' perceptions of the research topics. Indeed, my own experiences supported me to have familiarity and distance from the language as I possess a preunderstanding of the research topics being examined and therefore, an interpretive hermeneutical approach is the logical instrument to examine participants' experiences (Kaplan, 1964). Gadamer (1960/2004) describes my position as having connectivity to

subjective knowledge, a historical horizon formed from my pre-existing knowledge and experiences, and an ability to combine these attributes to the language of the participants to form a collaborative social description.

The conduct of an interview is a collaborative dialogical method between the researcher and participant which aligns researcher experience with potential data themes (Grix, 2019). Interviews are a direct system of verbal interaction between the interviewer and interviewee which reflects how the interviewee understands the world around them (Cohen et al., 2018). The researcher has the ability to provide a voice for the participants' world (Collins, 1991) and a duty to illuminate their truth, by validating their stories, through what is already known about the research topics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Interviews are not a straightforward instrument to gather qualitative data (Nunokoosing, 2005) as the interviewer may have to discuss topics which may be emotive to the interviewee and therefore, the researcher must be honest and authentic throughout the process (Oppenheim, 1992). Conscious of the sensitivity of interviewing participants about the leadership and cultures in their institutions, I utilised a people-centric approach which supported me to produce a shared understanding of the research topics, rather than pre-determining participant behaviours (Cohen et al., 2018). Interpretive hermeneutics suggest the researcher should continually reconsider and reflect on the conversation between interviewer and interviewee (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), and this was maintained in the process by a process of radical questioning and radical listening (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012).

My experiences in conducting the roles of the participant groups supported me to understand moral dilemmas articulated by the interviewees and how the policy context of FE might be shaping their answers (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Questions on leadership to principals was a salient emotional challenge for this group of participants, highlighted by the considered way in which principals answered these questions. Rapport is central to free-flowing dialogue in the interview process (Denscombe, 2014) and this was established with all participants at the start of the process. This produced meaningful results, as participants became comfortable

with the setting through a radical listening method by the researcher which established an awareness that the interviewer was learning from the process (Siry et al., 2016). Clough and Nutbrown (2012) reinforce the requirement for the researcher to be seen as hearing and providing voice to the participant, which encourages them to speak freely as the researcher is receptive to the collaboration and creation of dialogue (Siry et al., 2016). The semi-structured interview was successful, providing the researcher with the flexibility to develop lines of enquiry through supplementary questions and allowing the participants to tell their stories (Denscombe, 2014). It was evident in the interviews that a level of inhibition existed in the teacher group to fully disclose information, however, I continually developed and built relationships with this group by acknowledging and providing a level of empathy with their perceptions. Nunkoosing (2005, p. 698) agrees with this approach, outlining that “an acute awareness of the flow of conversations, of a sensitive awareness of the interviewer’s theoretical and professional position” is a research skill which can produce high quality data. Familiar with the data produced by the interviews, a coding approach was introduced to support an analysis of the data and to capture the meaning of participant views (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Elements of inductive, theoretical, experiential, and constructive thematic analysis supported the production of information from all participant groupings, their views on the research concepts and how this compared to what the sector already acknowledges about these topics (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Searching those data by group and through a holistic approach produced themes which were overt, highlighting comparable and contrasting patterns (Alhojailan, 2012). This was conducted through a complete coding method, a method identifying everything and anything of interest in relation to the research concepts which enabled an establishment of theme relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Coding was conducted manually, and the review of data produced six prominent themes which required further analysis, the themes were coded as follows:

1. Leadership approaches.

2. Leader/member exchanges.
3. Followership.
4. Culture.
5. Institutional priorities.
6. Educational purpose.

Coding themes into informative categories provides an overview of relevant data for further analysis which makes the production of in-depth findings easier for the researcher (Joffe, 2012). The choice of a thematic analysis is justified by the production of the six categories as it provided the researcher with the flexibility to analysis the data (Nowell et al., 2017) from three vantage points (Denscombe, 2014). The subsequent analysis of the themes was conducted from an experiential thematic analysis of the participants by group, participants by GFCE and all participants. The latter group was established to highlight unanticipated insights from the analysis of the themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Roulston (2001) reminds the researcher that thematic analysis is a process which describes the real world for participants and researchers; outlining that they work collaboratively to find the truth but warns the researcher against romanticising over their investigation and that providing data meaning and establishing connections between themes supports the validity of their findings (Joffe, 2012).

GFEC 1 Ofsted grade 2 – medium size – rural	Principal 1 Middle Manager 1 (vocational curriculum) Teacher 1 (vocational curriculum)
GFEC 2 Ofsted grade 2 – large size – urban & rural	Principal 2 Middle Manager 2 (vocational curriculum) Teacher 2 (vocational curriculum)
GFEC 3 Ofsted grade 1 – medium size – urban	Principal 3 Middle Manager 3 (academic curriculum) Teacher 3 (academic curriculum)

Table 2 Participant Information

Summary

The chapter described the approach and methods utilised for research purposes in the thesis. The thesis aspired to tell the stories of the participants within their GFEC settings and their perceptions of the topics of leadership and culture. This has been achieved through the employment of an interpretive hermeneutical approach which supported an in-depth and focused piece of research which has produced a set of quality data. The researcher's ontological and epistemological positions were established through an understanding of their educational philosophy which manifested itself in acknowledging a student-centred form of progressive teaching while recognising the sector as a business function to meet governmental economic policy. The research process has provided information which is interpreted in the next chapter through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion

This chapter outlines the process of analysis and the search for themes which are hidden in the language of participants (McManus-Holroyd, 2007). A qualitative investigation of participants' lived experiences was employed to capture the complexity of their social worlds (Denscombe, 2014). The chapter reviews the research approach and subordinate method utilised to interpret the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants. Furthermore, the chapter assesses the effectiveness of the research approach and method used for collecting, collating and interpreting data. The data produced by the research approach is interpreted through a thematic analysis which establishes the participants' lived experiences of their settings and their understanding of how the concepts of leadership and culture impact on organisational outcomes. Impact is a grandiose statement (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2016) which has become a commonplace term utilised in educational language to outline demonstrable change and recognition of achievement in GFECs (Poole, 2017).

Through the analysis I have identified specific themes exposing challenges, tensions and areas of contentment and celebration for principals, middle managers and teachers. In relation to approaches of leadership, the participants articulate a recognition of the continuum outlined by Lumby (2003) and Gleeson and Knights (2008) which describes the journey from heroic to a more democratic, distributed form. Furthermore, principals outlined in detail how the changing requirements of the FE sector were driving their approaches to be concerned with localism and local networks (Boocock, 2019; Western, 2019) but approaches are subject to change due to the situational forces which dominate a geographical area and the educational context (Bass & Bass, 2008). The concept of culture was discussed in different contexts and participants' views on this important element of the thesis were mixed in how they understood the concept. I utilised opportunities to outline recognised terminology to describe the concept, and therefore, supported the production of detailed perceptions on macro and subcultures and how they impact on outcomes and the social dispositions of students in the research GFECs.

Outcomes were established through the perceptions of principals, middle managers (MM) and teachers in their GFEC. There was significant commonality between the views of all three levels of participant. There was a recognition that they included the data outlined in the National Achievement Rate Tables (NART) for the FE sector, however non-teacher participants made significant reference to business and financial forms of outcome which are measured by the Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Student experience, progression of students into HE or employment was an outcome articulated by all of the participants, however, there was a tacit articulation by some participants that this was an area that required a certain amount of focus. Teachers' perceptions of outcomes were different from non-teachers as they articulated the dichotomy of striving to adhere to the progressive pedagogical ideas of Dewey (1938) while observing the need to recognise prescribed regulatory outcomes (Ball, 2003).

Participants and the Contemporary FE Environment

The decade post- incorporation was viewed by many principals as a period of newly established freedom from local authority control and the impact this could have on college funding (Hodgson et al., 2015). However, incorporation witnessed the establishment of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) which had responsibilities for allocating funds for the provision of FE and to ensure that provision was made for assessing the quality of FE. The FEFC introduced unit funding which replaced full-time student equivalent funding. This was a tripartite approach which provided funding for student entry, on programme and achievement. Importantly, under this new funding mechanism 10 per cent of units funded was based on a national average and tied to student growth. Therefore, colleges with high levels of average funding had to significantly increase their student numbers to maintain their levels of funding. With funding control came the governmental requirement to improve efficiency through regulation (Fletcher et al., 2015). GFECs then faced ideas of NPM (Ball, 2017) and the increased corporatisation and managerialism of the sector (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). The sector provided different opportunities for staff within and from outside the sector. New roles

related to the quality of provision, teaching, learning and assessment, finance and student support services allowed teachers to progress into non-traditional routes of management. It also provided opportunities for executives from outside the sector to enter it at a senior leader level (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). Savours and Keohane (2019) highlight that there was a recognition that leaders did not need to have a teaching background to become principals in GFECs. Only two participants from the research groups had access to new roles created through the Act of Incorporation, the other participants have only known GFEC life as a life of managerialism in the post-incorporation environment (Goddard-Patel & Whitehead, 2000).

The introduction of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2001 produced a world of new and increased funding opportunities which created significant growth in the sector and the establishment of large college groups. However, the election of the Conservative-Liberal government in the aftermath of the financial crash produced a new policy context to cut funding. With austerity came deregulation and a change to financial measures. GFECs could borrow money for commercial ventures and explore non-traditional routes to increase their funding streams, such as, increasing sub-contracting provision. This brought a stretch and challenge to the sector and resulted in some incidents of financial mismanagement, as GFECs dealt with one policy failure by government being overlayed on top of the previous governmental strategy (Orr, 2020). The sector continued to contract through multiple mergers; a factor impacting on the career opportunities for the research participants. Moreover, progression has been further impacted by an inconsistent approach and access to leadership and management training, an issue highlighted by middle managers within the conduct of the research (Briggs, 2002).

Data Analysis – Participant Groups

Chapter 1 outlined the institutional contexts for the participating GFECs. This context was in relation to Ofsted grade, size, and their operating environment according to level of deprivation where they are located. GFEC 1 is a medium sized institution (Payne, 2008), Ofsted grade 2

and operating in areas of moderate deprivation. GFEC 2 is a large institution (Payne, 2008), Ofsted grade 2 and operating in areas of higher deprivation. GFEC 3 is a medium sized institution (Payne, 2008), Ofsted grade 1 and operating in areas of lower deprivation. The participants' information by job role is outlined in table 2, and this system is utilised to highlight individual participant perceptions throughout this chapter. Participant groups discussed related topics through the interview process, an outline of these question sets is shown in table 3.

Participant Group	Topic
Principals	Educational policy context Approach to leadership Culture(s) in your GFEC Purpose of your GFEC Contemporary issues
Middle Managers	Purpose of your role Change in your role Approach to leadership in GFEC Culture(s) in your GFEC Purpose of your GFEC Contemporary issues
Teachers	Purpose of your role Change in your role Approach to leadership in GFEC Culture(s) in your GFEC Purpose of your GFEC Contemporary issues

Table 3 Areas of interest in interviews with nine participants

Principals

The participants in this group shared some commonality with their practice through their perceptions of their role and the purpose of their institution. However, there was a range of views on specific issues. Interestingly, when asked about how present policy contexts restricts or emancipates them to lead their organisations, all three participants recognised the nature of government and their agencies, in particular Ofsted and the ESFA in steering their

institutional agendas, through financial and performance-based metrics (Ball, 2003). Indeed, Principal 2 stated that the current policy context made them an “*instrument of government, through funding restriction and regulation*”, a view also voiced by the other two principals. This suggests that there is an operating environment governed by neoliberalism (Ball, 2017) and that principals are individual followers of government policy contexts (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Principals 1 and 3 remarked how the Act of Incorporation had set the direction for the FE sector to be more focused on operating like a business, restricting principal’s ability to act independently, contrary to the concept of Incorporation, meaning that they were disempowered to lead their institutions through a totally student-focused approach. Principal 3 argued that they “*did not have their hands on all the levers*”, as a result of the government’s agenda to use GFECs as a vehicle to produce students to fill the skills gap in the UK. This was a recurring point of view, acknowledged by all three principals in the shaping of their institutional cultures and what concepts resonated with them as important to their roles. The perceptions of the principals outlined three quite different leaders, with different language, priorities and visions for their institutions. This supports the view that leaders in GFECs have different backgrounds, skills and values (Jupp, 2015; Savours & Keohane, 2019) which inform their leadership and how they lead their institution. It contributes to how they react to the changing policy contexts and the type of culture they choose to create in their GFEC (Lumby, 2012).

Middle Managers

This group of participants consisted of three middle managers who had responsibility for an academic area of their GFEC. They had different titles but had comparability with their responsibilities for a specific curriculum area, and they were not part of the executive decision-making processes reserved for senior leaders within their organisations. They had similar responsibilities in relation to finance, student achievement and student progression. MM 1 and 3 had a similar focus on student needs while recognising the demands of accountability through financial and achievement metrics. Their language was of student experience, but

very much tempered by the need to perform with an alignment to regulatory frameworks. MM 2 had similar perceptions of their role, but their language was more corporate and business like, they went through significant detail in how they had to grow their area and there was a need to *“explore business opportunities to generate income which is definitely linked to my KPIs”*. What was very evident was a managerial balancing act between the needs of their principals, their teachers and students, they articulated a role as an educational buffer absorbing a top-down and bottom-up demand for their time (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2013). This group like the principals, advocated that their journey in management had changed from being extremely focused on their teachers providing a student-centred approach, to days being more consumed with metrics and the concept of competition with other providers. MM 3 was the only one in this group who had been supported to develop their leadership and management skills through significant continuing professional development (CPD) activities. The other two members of this group had learnt on the job, and this was demonstrated in their language being reflective of the leaders in their organisation. Simkins (2000) suggests this form of organisational control reflected the introduction of NPM into the sector through the process of Incorporation and the subsequent reframing of academic managers responsibilities.

Teachers

This participant group were extremely focused on learners and learning. They talked in detail about the need to support and provide their students with a framework to succeed. They were focused on localisation and preparing students to enter the world of work or to move into HE. However, there was a recognition of an awareness of regulation and metrics. This was more evident in the dialogue with Teacher 2 than the other participants in this group. Indeed, Teacher 2 spoke of the need to have a *“thorough appreciation and understanding of data and achievement figures”*. All three participants described their ability to input into the direction of their individual departments but outlined a firm control by middle management and especially senior leaders. Trust was highlighted as an issue by Teacher 2, which correlated with the

concept of the de-professionalising of their role (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Boocock, 2013) and that coercive leaders created a form of organisational silence from teaching staff as they had to conform to the demands of regulation and performance (Jameson, 2010).

Leadership Approaches

Incorporation produced a new approach to leadership in the FE sector, an approach associated with a heroic, transformational type (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Crowther, 2013) of principal, one driven by a requirement to singlehandedly resolve potential issues associated with an educational form of NPM (Ball, 2017). Boocock (2019) suggests there has been a journey of leadership in FE since Incorporation, travelling from a heroic phase to a distributed stage and argues that leadership of localism is the direction of travel for the sector today. These ideas were explored through a number of related questions in the interview process to determine principals' lived experiences as managers and leaders in the sector. All three principals agreed that they had been more student focused earlier in their GFEC management careers and recognised that as they had attained more senior positions, there was a need to become more business focused in their leadership practice.

I utilised some radical questioning (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012) during this element of the interview to really probe and gain real-life perceptions of this important concept of the research and remove my own researcher experiences of senior leadership from the dialogue (Siry et al., 2016). The principals were asked about specific approaches they used and why and what shaped their need to use these approaches? Principal 2's views related significantly with the regulatory operating context they had already described. Principal 2 outlined their current approach to leadership was very "*priority focused*" and needing to ensure the institutions' reputation was maintained and recognised by regulatory agencies. Principal 2 recognised the journey of leadership outlined by Boocock (2019) and supported the view that a form of eco-leadership (Western, 2019) concentrating on meeting the needs of the local community was now, a new governmental agency driven priority. Indeed, Principals 1 and 3 had a similar

understanding of the journey of leadership approaches as Principal 2, they both described themselves as being distributed but recognised the education of localism (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). The challenge and changing focus for the principal group was evident in their retention of power. Although all three spoke with some authority on their use of distributive and eco approaches to leadership, they all made reference to their use of more directive approaches when challenged by a fast-paced and changeable FE policy context. Principal 1 outlined that *“we make our choices and approaches to lead given our local context, which is about the space to establish networking for the good of the college but I recognise that I need to demand more from my team to meet these business and student need”*. Principal 2 described their drive to change college direction, outlining that *“I can’t relax my accountability, so I have a system to get staff on board. I have to consider which approach to get staff moving towards us being an exceptional college”*. Principal 3 highlighted their knowledge and reflexive approach to support the *“anchoring of their college in its unique environment”*, they outlined that through their years of being a senior leader that it was *“knowing when to be heroic and when to be humble”*.

However, it was evident from an analysis of the dialogue that their lived experiences, in relation to the stability of their institution and the competing priorities they faced as principals, produced a different set of leadership values. Principal 3 described a financially stable GFEC and one with an outstanding Ofsted grade and this was likely to continue. This principal described how they were concerned with the authenticity of their leadership approach, to be honest and genuine (Kiersch & Peters, 2017) with their stakeholders, but particularly with their staff. Principal 3 understood their legitimate power gained from their position but discussed the requirement to change their approach to leading by replacing *“corporate managerialism”* and that *“you can’t hold onto a set of redundant, purely business focused values – you need to be authentic”*. Principal 1 also outlined significant concern for their staff and described their need to collaborate and work with staff in a partnership to ensure students were *“looked after holistically”*, highlighting a concern for not just student attainment of a qualification but the

need to prepare them for their next steps in the world of work or HE. Principals 1 and 3 had different pressures than Principal 2, and this was evident in Principal 2's language which made significant reference to a purpose centred around the achievement of a higher Ofsted grade. It seemed central to their mission outlining that it was "*a Governor priority and a priority that would benefit staff and students*", when probed why? Principal 2 described how it "*would lift staff to work in a grade 1 institution*". However, discussions with MM 2 and Teacher 2 did not reflect that this was a view recognised throughout the GFEC. The principals had similar experiences acknowledging that they were approaching the leadership of their institutions with a predominately distributed type of leadership, and they recognised a shift in GFEC purpose. The principals recognised their organisations as a central community hub for learning and meeting the needs of local employers and students as a priority, this was achieved through utilising eco and more directive methods when required.

However, due to a central objective of GFEC 2 being that of achieving a higher Ofsted grade, Principal 2 differed in language from the other two participants in this group. Principal 2's language did have a significant element of business orientation, performativity (Ball, 2003) and control from governmental agencies, which the other principals acknowledged but their answers displayed a more student-centric purpose for their practice. Boocock (2014) associates this with that of a performative leadership approach, indeed, Principal 2 is a creative and controlling leader when necessary, but this is from a transformational perspective (Muijs et al., 2006) striving to move the institution through a distributed form of leadership which displays characteristics of a systemic use of performative measures.

Abrahamsen and Aas (2016) describe the effect of policy contexts framing the approach for principals, is one with a focus that principals still need to meet governmental expectations of efficiency and better student achievement outcomes which is a consequence of NPM (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2013). Indeed, the impact of NPM demonstrates that although principals in the research GFECs are correlating their practice with a distributed approach and a recognition of a local educational imperative for their institutions, individual GFEC objectives can facilitate

“both a heroic individual perspective on leadership and a distributing and democratic-oriented leadership practice, and that the individual principal is in possession of power although leading in a distributed leadership culture” (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016, p. 84).

The use of an interpretive hermeneutical approach produced some meaningful patterns (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) relating to the power of the leader in the GFECs to demonstrate a recognised leadership approach which filtered through and was utilised by other layers of management. The three middle managers recognised that their principals set the organisational standard for leadership and it was principals’ behaviours that set a behavioural model for others in their institution (Gill, 2011). MM 2 highlighted that they had been “*exposed to autocratic control from the top and lacked strategic involvement for some issues but fully immersed in other areas when more time was available*”. MM 2 recognised challenges they faced from a top-down leadership approach but recognised that generally, “*senior management has changed and do try and set a more positive tone to daily business*”.

Davies and Davies (2009, p. 15) outline the importance of the leader in the behavioural standards of the institution, they highlight that leaders, “personal and professional values” support the moral framework for working in the organisation and provide staff with motivational drivers to achieve institutional objectives. The middle managers narrative in the interviews provided a meaning (Laverty, 2003) to their principals’ leadership approach, and this correlated with the language used by the principals to describe their approach. MM 1 and 3 described a distributed form of leadership used by the leader which subsequently became the approach used by managers on an institutional basis. MM 2 described both a “*distribution but on occasion a retention of power by the leader*” to move between a form of “*transactional and transformational approach which helped the principal meet the College’s targets*”. When pressed on this question MM 2 described through an understanding (Gadamer, 1960/2004) of the principal’s position that “*we have no choice as we are on our journey to outstanding*”. Indeed, MM 2 use of language displayed an acceptance of operating in a post-performative

environment (Wilkins, 2011) where their institutional custom and practice was “routinely prescribed and codified by a managerialist agenda” (O’Leary, 2013, p. 710). Torrance (2013) suggests that even with a distributed aspiration by principals, they are controlled by the direction of policy makers and therefore, an approach to power by Principal 2 determines the levels of empowerment for others in the institution. Moving through phases of transactional and transformational leadership may highlight issues of trust and the need to retain power by a leader in a specific policy context (Jameson, 2010; Eliophotou-Menon, 2013). MM 2 advocated that this is the experience of working within their institution, and through the dialogue of the interview suggested that on occasion the transformational approach can go to an operational authoritarian form, when targets are not met within required timelines. This lived experience reinforces that leaders in GFECs have the capacity and will to exploit different, and what they perceive as necessary forms of leadership to affect change. This is salient if a process is not expedient in supporting a policy objective which leads to a culture of enforcement rather than a process of collaboration (Coffield et al., 2008).

Boocock (2019) acknowledges this predicament for the college leader of today, he suggests that unless an actual policy context driven by localism exists for individual GFECs a quasi-heroic and distributed approach will continue to exist as the FE sector will still be significantly controlled from the centre. This enables the potential continuation of different values co-existing in GFECs; student-centred values of teachers and values of performativity driving the leadership approaches of principals (Lucas & Crowther, 2016).

The correlation between the values utilised to drive operational direction and performance in GFECs was evident in the language of the teacher participant group. Indeed, correlation was evident with the perceptions of the teachers and their corresponding middle manager from their GFEC in relation to a recognised institutional leadership approach. Teachers 1 and 3, like their middle managers recognised a democratic and distributed approach to leadership from the principal down to lower levels of management in their GFECs. However, Teacher 3

outlined that it is an approach “*of full discussion but sometimes the discussion can be focussed by the leader*”. The radical listening utilised in the interviews with Teachers 1 and 3 was a straightforward process, it did not require probing or prompting, it was an interpretation of their voices, which was a collegial voice (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012) for both institutions which highlighted a consensual form of working between teachers and all levels of management. The clarity of the dialogue with these two participants did not require any significant adjustment of my framing of my questions as the patterns emerged which provided meaning to this hermeneutical process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

The patterns of similarity in language by all participants from GFEC 1 and 3 in relation to the leadership approach in their GFEC was striking, all types of participant spoke freely and passionately about the recognised and productive form of leadership in their institution. Through my interpretation of their meaning of the leadership evident in their institutions, their language provided the authenticity to the research process, which was powerful and gave me a privileged look inside their educational world (Cohen et al., 2018). The similarity in language was also evident with participants from GFEC 2, however, the language used by all three participants from this GFEC was more abundant. Teacher 2, spoke in some length when asked any question, and I provided an environment to support answers to flow fully, to decrease levels of bias which can be a limiting process which could mask their voice (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

My use of empathy supported them to tell their stories; their stories were a genre of justification for why the leadership approach was required in their institution. Teacher 2 described with zeal how they felt frustrated as they could not always remain student-focused, as the “*lean nature of teaching has created the need for one eye to be political and keep looking at the achievement and other data*”. When probed on the lean nature of teaching they outlined how continual cuts in funding had meant a reality for them to do more with less (Gravatt, 2014). This suggests that managerialism impacts on all levels of staff within GFECs. Once again, like MM 2, Teacher 2 was not critical of their institution but of the changes to the sector, a continual

theme was that of pressure, lean and what they described as “*continual trimming of staff and resources*”. Hadawi and Crabbe (2018) would argue that Teacher 2 is a product of a failing FE system, a system today witnessing a plethora of funding cuts, ABRs, increased performance measures and ultimately a feeling for staff within GFECs of a loss of control and identity (Coffield & Williamson, 2011). Teacher 2 outlined a “*desire to get us all involved in the decision-making process, but this can be a bit forced by managers*”. Forced for the participant was that the process was not always transparent, and they outlined how the “*atmosphere can be a bit autocratic when it suits to get things done*”. Unlike the other two teachers in this group, Teacher 2 made significant remarks about inspection, and this was for them a significant driver in individual and organisational behaviour. This correlates with the journey to achieve a higher Ofsted grade by the principal. Leadership approaches as perceived through the dialogue with the three participant groups provides evidence which outlines how the approach of the principal does drive organisational behaviour and creates the operating environment for individual GFECs. The relationships between principals and the other two participants groups will support the production of data which provides further evidence of why and how GFECs operate in the current challenging period for the FE sector.

Leader-member Exchanges and Followership

Bush (2020b) advocates that the contemporary GFEC principal is required to employ a set of institutional shared values to create a sense of shared purpose within their organisations. The creation of institutional values, a connected vision and GFEC mission has been used extensively in recent years to portray to internal and external stakeholders an individual GFEC purpose (Hadawi and Crabbe, 2018). Central to this is the level of dominance of the principal and how they develop and implement these statements of organisational purpose (Gill, 2011). An important aspect of the research was to establish the nature of principal exchanges with middle managers and teachers and to understand how these relationships foster an educational environment of trust and empowerment for staff which would highlight the level of cooperation and willingness of those staff to follow the leader’s explicit direction which is

manifested in the principals' behaviour (Jameson, 2010). LMX theory originally focused on the levels of authority exchanges between the leader in an organisation and their subordinates (Dansereau et al., 1975). However, the theorists involved in studying LMX became interested in the dyadic relationships between an individual leader and individual subordinates and how these relationships became less formalised (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The dialogue through the interview process produced some meaningful information which analyses the levels of trust and reciprocal relationships evident in individual GFECs and do the behaviours of leaders in this process have a positive impact on institutional outcomes (Lunenburg, 2010). All three principals highlighted an approach in which they wanted to engage their staff through a collaborative approach to achieving good institutional outcomes. Principal 3 grappled with this part of their own leadership practice, their language was sincere in how they wanted their staff to recognise them as authentic and was genuinely concerned for their welfare during this challenging time for the sector. This principal was experienced and talked openly about "*an element of the educational game*" but outlined that they "*do not like to play it*" (Boocock, 2014), a term associated with having to comply with policy contexts in the FE sector, however, Principal 3 recognised that there was a personal choice in relation to how much focus you gave to this process. It was evident through the dialogue that Principal 3 was strategic in their approach and they discussed the importance of positioning their GFEC appropriately in the competitive educational environment (Barney & Griffin, 1992).

Principal 3 highlighted how their job was not "*sorting out what curriculum to run in different areas and what type of approach should their teachers take*"; they spoke widely about the responsibility of their managers and that they had full autonomy to conduct those processes. Principal 3 was concerned with how to keep their managers and teachers motivated and how they could influence managers to support teachers. Principal 3 did not speak in management language but in a voice of collegiality and informality. Principal 3 throughout the interview process displayed through their narrative that exchanges with subordinate managers and

individual conversations with teaching staff were informal and focused on creating a unified team moving in the same direction for their students but also for the benefit of the organisation.

Northouse (2019) suggests that this approach is a holistic in-group method (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) which has the potential to empower the workforce to act as independent and supportive units to achieve good organisational outcomes. This approach to leadership forges positive relationships between principals and their subordinates, it allows staff to contribute to the decision-making process and diminishes the need for punitive sanctions against staff as they have committed to the values of the leader and the institution which in GFEC 3 are student and staff focused (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). MM 3 and Teacher 3 agreed that the approach of the principal was one which supported autonomy and empowerment; MM 3 stressed that the principal displayed student-centred values, as did the organisation, they both described the student experience as good and that performance metrics for staff was not the issue it was in other GFECs. Teacher 3 highlighted that *“relationships have never been a problem here for me but I would say, the exchanges have increased and improved in recent years”*. MM 3 commented that Principal 3 was *“polite, approachable, interested, support, positive and forward planning”*. Likewise, Teacher 3 described the principal’s approach as being one of *“full discussion and they really show interest in the day to day”* with staff, outlining the recognition that leadership is a social influence process with followers (Uhl-Bien, 2006) which has the power to create self-managing teams (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). Collinson (2006) agrees with this view of leader and follower relationships, arguing that social space is created in an organisation by the behaviour of the leader and the shared values that they create. This process generates an environment of mutual trust which supports all in the institution to achieve their shared goals.

Principal 1 had significant experience but was relatively new to post, essential to their approach was the repositioning of the institution internally and fostering positive exchanges between the role of the principal and all other staff members. This was part of a dual approach to become more student than business focused. The principal was aware of the reciprocity in

behaviour required between the principal and staff to support a productive GFEC; central to a productive institution was the building of good relationships with staff (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). Principal 1 outlined in their dialogue that the sector had been “*disempowered since Incorporation*” and since being in post at the GFEC a fundamental aspect of their leadership was to “*mitigate against staff from being disenfranchised through the implementation of a collaborative approach*” to resolving the institutions challenges. Principal 1 was passionate in their description of having embedded a community in the GFEC built on student-centred values (Delanty, 2003). Principal 1 was clear in their institutional vision which was to be recognised as being “*brilliant*”, by embedding a culture of brilliance in the institution. This was a collective approach, created with and implemented by the staff; a team effort to develop, talk, act and be recognised as brilliant by all stakeholders (Jupp, 2015).

Principal 1 was aware of it being seen as a cliché, through changing outstanding for brilliant, however, they stated that staff agreed in the development process that it was less business and regulatory focused and proved to be a unifying vision. Principal 1 highlighted that staff had stated that it was a totally different focus and feel to previous initiatives to achieve better outcomes for the institution, and staff had suggested it was a progressive initiative and one which inspired and motivated them to build relationships internally and externally for the benefit of their students and the institution (Malakyan, 2014). MM 1 and Teacher 1 agreed with the perceptions of their principal, outlining how the vision of the GFEC had galvanised the staff with the leader and they now shared one identity; the concept of being and aspiring in all aspects of their academic life, to be brilliant. Collinson (2006) suggested that the staff in GFEC 1 display the characteristics of identity-based followers, staff who have conformed to the motivations of the leader and the organisation. The followership evident in GFEC 1 was cohesive and organic, developed around a vision which provided empowerment and aspired to improved organisational success (Malakyan, 2014). MM 1 stressed the changing operational nature of the institution, outlining how “*clear, visible and distributed leadership had increased everyday discussions with the principal*” and this had refocused the institution on

the student experience. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) would argue that Principal 1 through their behaviours is building respect, trust and a mutual understanding with their staff which has the ability to motivate staff and provide them with the support to manage their own performance.

Principal 2 was passionate about a central aspect of their mission which was the embedding of shared values which had been developed by staff on completion of a merger post ABR. Principal 2 spoke in terms of *“we as a leadership, I lead through my management teams”*, highlighting their approach to be collaborative and bring staff with them on their journey to achieve better institutional outcomes. However, the dyadic relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) with all staff across the organisation were not as apparent in their dialogue as others in the principal participant group had outlined. Through listening intently to the dialogue (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012) I interpreted that this was a continuing process which was acknowledged by the other participants from this institution. MM 2 and Teacher 2 suggested that this had improved, and relationships were good between leaders and staff, but they highlighted a formality on occasion, and perceived issues of trust between the leader and other staff members in their institution. They were supportive of the principal and recognised the challenging period for the GFEC and the sector, however, their dialogue provided evidence of their lived experiences which outlined a GFEC in transition, moving direction and institutional priorities to meet the needs of regulatory agencies, students, and local stakeholders. MM 2 acknowledged that the institution had been *“through a tough time with the merger but things have improved and are moving in the right direction but it’s tough”*.

Their perceptions detailed how higher-performance levels could be achieved with the creation of more trust and empowerment between the principal, senior leaders, and other staff members. Jameson (2010, p. 48) agrees with this view, highlighting that *“without trust as a mediating factor and binding force, inter-systemic slowness and breakdowns in functioning are far more likely”*. GFEC 2 is becoming high performing in many areas, this was acknowledged by all three participants from this institution, however, relationships between leaders and staff are not yet reaching their full potential, the middle manager and teacher

through their dialogue highlighted a will and drive for improvement but did not feel sufficiently developed or involved in the decision-making processes. Therefore, the principal could consider their own capacity to perceive the needs of their staff which has the potential to improve the relationships in the institution and support more positive outcomes (Gill, 2011).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) outline through their use of LMX theory the importance of positive relationships between principals and subordinates and that exchanges between principals and their staff are a fundamental aspect which can support institutional success (Jameson, 2010). Undoubtedly, the dialogue with all three participant groups highlights that relationships have changed between leaders and staff through their experiences of working in GFECs post-incorporation. Teacher 2 described how their focus had always been their students, but this had been challenged through the need for *“an appreciation of data and achievement”*; this admission reflects the view of Ball (2003) who advocates that through neoliberal market policies and the introduction of NPM, teachers have become more accountable, and they have become de-professionalised. Ball’s (2003) specific language was not used by any of the teachers in the research, however, they did acknowledge that although their mission was to support the progression and achievement of students, that business and performance targets were recognised.

Master and Slave in Contemporary GFEC Context

The research utilised a Nietzschean lens to analysis the relationships between principals and staff to provide some points for further investigation. All three principals described their implementation of a values-based approach. Principal 1 and 3 described values based around students with a recognition of business needs, Principal 1 highlighting that their approach was *‘to maintain a positive external focus, while building a progressive and collegial system for engaging staff’*. However, Principal 2 outlined values of their organisation which prescribed a way of working for their staff to meet all institutional priorities. Nietzsche (1886/2003, 1887/1998) developed themes relating to the use of power and position which has significant

relevance for the research. Nietzsche (1886/2003, 1887/1998) provides some historical context to examine the position of the principal, their power, and their use of it to set organisational direction, and to understand its utility for maintaining an educational moral purpose in meeting the needs of students or through an approach which meets the needs of the individual (Kain, 1996). Principals have the ability by the authority of their position (Northouse, 2019) to lead in a heroic style, however, recent thinking on approaches to leadership in the FE sector recognise that a more collaborative approach is more productive (Harris, 2004; Gronn, 2008; Torrance, 2013; Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). However, principals can adopt an authoritarian or master morality (Nietzsche, 1887/1998) to their approach when the challenge of policy contexts impacts on the objectives of their institution. MM 2 and Teacher 2 recognise that they have been subject to a more masculine approach (Collinson & Collinson, 2009) driven by organisational direction and survival. MM 2 outlined that *'it can be seriously pressurised every day, but that's the nature of the business'*.

Nietzsche's (1886/2003, 1887/1998) master morality is reflective of the heroic leadership once commonplace in GFECs (Collinson & Collinson, 2009; Crowther, 2013), and the interview process produced qualitative data to outline how it can exist in GFECs today. Slave morality for Nietzsche (1886/2003, 1887/1998) is the values of those without power; GFEC staff crave more development and involvement in the decision-making process as they are disempowered, and they aspire to work collaboratively with their principals to improve institutional outcomes for all stakeholders. Kiersch and Peters (2017) suggest that principals who accept this democratic collaboration with staff can move beyond the moralities and views of masters and slaves, and build a framework of trust, based on balance and unbiased values which builds an educational community for the benefit of the principal, staff and students (Janaway, 2007). The research provided information on the position of teachers and their democratic position, with a recognition of changes to that environment from the act of Incorporation. Indeed, teachers' views on emancipation for their practice by the approach of the leader produced useful attitudinal data relating to their operating environment in the

context of principals having to meet the needs of regulation and funding agencies. The language of all three principals established a personal agenda to establish a collaborative approach and work with teachers to improve organisational outcomes. Principal 1 and 3 and their middle managers and teachers in the research provided information which suggests that they have moved beyond authoritarian or master approaches and have accepted a more democratic educational purpose driven by shared values, however, there was a recognition by middle managers and teachers in these GFECs that this was built on the willingness of the principal to support this process through valuable exchanges which are inevitably within the power of the leader (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). MM 1 outlined that *'when needed I expect the reins to be tightened and you can't blame anyone, it is the world we work in'*.

Teacher 1 outlined that *"there is a new fresh feeling to how the principal interacts with staff, not that the old one didn't but there is definitely more familiarity in the process"*. Principal 2 acknowledged the premise of a holistic democratic approach in their institution, however, the dialogue provided by the middle manager and teacher from this GFEC demonstrated an acceptance of a new educational morality, a morality driven by the market and facilitated by the approach of the principal (Hunt, 2015). Indeed, the language of middle managers and teachers across the research highlighted that a set of educational values driven by NPM was forced upon them and was now the reality for the FE sector (Rutherford, 2018). However, Nietzsche's (1886/2003, 1887/1998) views provide further context to the research as his discourse would suggest that principal's ability to change values, objectives and institutional missions is dependent on the changing nature of the educational and business environment in which GFECs operate. The research has outlined a journey from heroic to distributed leadership and provides some evidence that principals are having to consider the needs of localism and everchanging policy requirements driven by recent reduction in funding (Boocock, 2019). These environmental conditions may require the use of less democratic and inclusive approaches to leadership, indeed, the priority of achieving a higher Ofsted grade for GFEC 2 has produced some interesting dialogue from the middle manager and teacher in this

institution which highlights that, when necessary the principal has reverted to more autocratic forms or a masterly approach to their leadership. Principal 2 recognises the imperative for personal and GFEC survival which will be achieved through improved institutional outcomes and therefore, a hybrid form of leadership which can display masterly values of leadership can exist in contemporary GFEC principal practice (Smith & Riley, 2012).

Culture

The three principals were able to suggest what culture is and what it looked like in their institutions. All three acknowledged that it shaped their organisations in relation to how it operated (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) and that it existed at many levels and in different forms (Schein, 2017). Indeed, their dialogue through interview produced a recognition that the culture of the sector had changed to be associated with a more business-oriented culture (Brown, 1998) due to the operating environment and the requirements of regulation and funding. There was a recognition that cultures in their institutions had become their way of life (Williams, 1963) and these were primarily a top-down approach to mirror their organisational values. Indeed, Principal 2 stated that *“the way I act as the leader drives the culture in the College”*, highlighting the importance of leadership in establishing culture (Lumby, 2012). Principal 1 and 3 stated similar attitudes relating to their leadership and its impact on institutional culture, Principal 3 highlighted both principal’s views that their *“leadership is used to impact on the culture”* and that *‘it was utilised for the creation of a positive working environment’*.

What was very apparent in their language with regard to culture creation was that all three principals actively spoke against the idea of corporatism, Principal 1 was positive that their institutional culture was *“not corporate, but a collegial drive to sustain and improve the college”*. All three described positive, progressive, warm, friendly, and professional cultures they had implemented and aspired to sustain. This section on cultures in the principal’s dialogue was in stark contrast to all other questions which recognised the influence of

neoliberal and capitalist ideas impacting on their institutions' operations (Gilbert, 2016). This implies an aspiration that principals are determined to create a positive and equitable working environment which should impact positively on staff performance and organisational outcomes (Jameson, 2010). However, it does suggest a lack of understanding regarding the impact of culture; a recognition of neoliberalism should acknowledge the impact of adhering to its rules and regulations on institutional operations and therefore, culture. MM 3 and Teacher 3 agreed with the cultural context outlined by their principal. MM 3 suggested that *"it feels like we are working together for the needs of our students at a focused and local level, it really is positive"*.

However, MM 1 and 2 and Teacher 1 and 2 described through their experiences a more business and performance-oriented culture, but there was also recognition of the aspirations of the principals to create a collegial culture in their institutions. The participants in GFEC 2 were the most vocal in their dialogue about a culture of achievement and a culture of pressure driven by a need for survival. MM 2 stated that although *'for me it's all about the students achieving but the culture is about achievement – that's it, all achievement'*. Their narrative on cultures acknowledged the impact of performance measures and funding cuts (Ball, 2003; Lucas & Crowther, 2016) on the academic sub-cultures and the macro-culture of their GFEC. GFEC 1 and 2 participants attitudinal data provides some context to the impact of the capitalist policy agenda of government on education (Fisher, 2009) and provides evidence to suggest that leadership does drive culture in their institutions, however, and more importantly, that there is an acceptance of a new set of business and student-centred priorities (Rutherford, 2018). Indeed, this outlines that leader's creation of an inclusive culture does not totally mitigate the impact of an inherent culture of performativity (Ball, 2003). All middle manager and teacher participants suggested that leadership and shared values drive the formation of cultures in their GFECs, however, academic sub-cultures did exist which recognise performance metrics but were more focused on student outcomes from a teacher and middle manager pedagogical perspective. The teachers described their sub-cultures as strong and supportive of colleagues and there was evidence in the attitudinal data of a teacher culture,

separate from the ideas of a managerial culture; a culture with total concern for student progression and achievement which created tension with any concern for performative measures (Elliott, 1996; Boocock, 2013). Cultural aspirations of principals outlined in the research data were to create harmonious operating environments, however, the equity of operating within these cultures did not always meet staff needs (Randle & Brady, 1997) as the type of the culture created by the leader is used as a tool to improve performance (Lumby 2012). GFEC 1 and 2 are inadvertently creating cultures which covertly require an adherence to a business oriented, performance driven culture which have placed middle managers as the buffer between leadership and teacher priorities (Thompson & Wolstencroft, 2013). GFEC 3 is in a different position in regard to its performance and therefore, has the ability to realise a culture which recognises the importance of performative measures (Ball, 2003) but not to the extent that it is allowed to impact on their focus on all aspects of the student journey.

Institutional Priorities and Educational Purpose

The principals had remarkably similar perceptions of their institutional priorities. They all discussed the challenges of Brexit, finance, regulation, changing qualifications, localism and they were searching to understand what the next challenge would be. Principal 3 articulated that government policy changed at such a rapid pace that it is a challenge to forward plan as you may, as an institution, invest too much time and resources into the next policy, when all you need to know is what is a *“real goer”*; a programme with sustainability and what can *“we opt out from”*. Keep (2006) supports this view and advocates that government policy for FE has become an ever-changing process of manipulating the skills supply. Principal 3 outlined that FE had become a *“fayre of qualifications, a sort of cure all for the government”*. They all agreed that their purpose was to be transformative as an institution for the local community and their students (Dennis et al., 2020). Principal 2 referred to the concept of FE being a *“sector for second chances”* (Collinson & Collinson, 2009) and a *“sector to change students’ lives”*. What was significant in the dialogue was a recognition that some provision was outdated and that it continued to run because there was student demand, but it did not fulfil the changing

context of the skills agenda at a local or regional level (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018). Principals acknowledged that to secure funding and the sustainability of their institution they had to balance the dichotomy of business and student needs (Smith, 2015). Fletcher et al., 2015 support the concerns of the principals, highlighting that since Incorporation the ability of government through its agencies is able to control the sector and individual GFECs through performance measurement, inspection and significantly – funding. This was a major concern for Principal 2 who spoke with concern about the “*consequences of failure*” by their leadership on the students and importantly the staff of the institution. Principal 2 displayed genuine concern for their staff and emphasised the importance of getting the balance right between the requirements of students and the needs of regulators. Principal 2 highlighted that “*the last thing I want to see is more change and the reduction in colleagues that goes with it*”.

All three were open in relation to questions on issues of reproduction of society and social advancement. They acknowledged that the pressures from regulation resulted in the production of some students with qualifications which could stifle them from progressing into related jobs in their local areas, this was a concern that students may become trapped in their societal position (Dennis et al., 2020).

The principals acknowledged that improving the social mobility chances for their students was paramount to them and their staff but acknowledged that due to the challenges of operating in the sector that this was not always the outcome. Overwhelmingly, middle managers and teachers interviewed about reproduction of society and social mobility had markedly similar responses to their principals and all the GFECs shared the same concerns for their students and their institution. There was an element of being ‘*fed up*’ in their dialogue through the continual change of their curriculums, successive governments failure to recognise the potential of FE and the tacit acceptance of regulation (Stanton et al., 2015). MM 2 described their frustration in “*just rolling over courses to secure funding for my area and keep everyone in a job*” and spoke passionately about the drive to change the curriculum to support the progression into the world of work or into HE for their students. All six participants in these two

groups recognised that some provision in their GFEC resembled a production line of education which as Teacher 3 outlined did not always fulfil the needs of the local skills agenda and therefore, *“reproduces inequality in society”* as those students have not progressed. Teacher 1 supported this view but did speak passionately about the drive to *“evolve and move with the local economy and provide curriculum which lets our students stay or move out of the area”*. Fundamental, to all six participants was the ambition to improve the life chances for their students through their practice. They all outlined that they thought they did this for the majority of their students but due to curriculums they offered and the need to adhere to targets that they were pragmatic about their curriculum offer and its ability to support all students to progress (Boocock, 2014). Middle managers and teachers from GFECs 1 and 2 recognised the deprivation of their college locations and the challenges this presented for their students and the institution.

Allen (2002) reminds GFEC staff operating in areas of deprivation, dominated by working class families, that it is difficult not to reproduce society as students can have limited aspirations based on their habitus (Bourdieu, 1982/1992). Staff outlined that the majority of their students have significant educational aspirations but acknowledged that some students would select certain provision as their aspiration was to gain access into similar work as other family members and their peers. MM 2 acknowledged that certain students with a working-class habitus (Bourdieu, 1982/1992) did not have the aspiration of others as they felt they could not compete academically and were to a certain degree lacking in confidence, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979/1990) to succeed against students from areas of less deprivation (Thompson, 2019).

Contemporary Challenges

All three participant groups were asked through a process of word association what resonated with them and what did they perceive as a current challenge? Word association is related to the research of Jung in the early 1900s. Jung was interested in the presentation of words or

statements to participants and reaction time in relation to their answers (Leys, 1985). Word association tasks correlate with personal, emotional responses; the less delay in the response to the word or statement the more authentic the answer (De Deyne, Navarro, Perfors, Brysbaert & Storms, 2019). Twenty words or statements were utilised in this part of the process with one variable between the teacher participant group and the middle manager and principal groups. The word leader replaced the word teacher for the latter two groups. A full list of words and statements is outlined in Table 4.

Leader/Teacher	Responsibility	Survival	Anxiety	Challenges
Regulation	Pedagogy	Pressured	Enjoy	Playing the Game
Ofsted Inspection	Students	Staff	Competition	Collaboration
Opportunity	Marketisation	Achievement	Financial Rating	Restructure

Table 4 Word and statement association linked to contemporary challenges

The words and statements in the process were used due to their prevalence in literature post-incorporation. There was strong evidence from this data that issues of regulation, marketisation of FE, institutional survival and the need for achievement resonated with all participants, the issue of survival was the top concern for participants with eight responding to it as personal and institutional survival. Interestingly, one member of the principal group understood the challenges of the sector but did not classify the issues they faced as correlating with personal or organisational survival. Issues of responsibility and challenge resonated with principals, 100% ($n = 3P$) placed this as a personal challenge, as they articulated a specific concern for their staff in relation to their employment. Middle managers had different responses which reflects the individual challenges for them in their specific institutions. The leadership approach and subsequent culture created in the GFEC was also evident in the data, as GFEC 1 and 3 did not highlight the importance of inspection and regulation to the level of GFEC 2. The second biggest concern for all participants was associated with achievement. Seven participants highlighted the issue as a concern. However, two

participants from the principal group did not highlight this as a challenge but did recognise its purpose in college operations. Principals and middle managers made reference to student, finance and overall institutional achievement through their dialogue, however, 100% ($n = 37$) of teachers spoke only in relation to the achievement of their student with a correlating acknowledgement of how this reflected in their departmental data. Table 5 highlights the perceptions of current challenges to all participant groups.

All levels of participant recognise that they are operating in a challenging sector, this is evident in the acknowledgement of survival as being the most significant challenge; this is on a personal and institutional level (Boocock, 2013). Survival correlates with the need to achieve, and this was the other major challenge recognised by participants. Achievement is an essential element of institutional survival and this links with the need of participants to work with performative measures, the end starts to justify the means (Boocock, 2014). Indeed, this suggests that playing the educational game is a necessary operating procedure for participants in the research GFECs (Smith, 2015). Fisher (2009, p. 23) outlines that this has become an integral part of how FE operates, built on neoliberal educational policies and driven by “bureaucratically defined targets”.

Statement	Number of Responses (out of 9)
Responsibility	5
Survival	8
Collaboration	4
Pressured	4
Enjoy	5
Financial rating	5
Achievement	7
Regulation	4
Inspection	4
Competition	3
Marketisation	4

Table 5 Responses of participants to current challenges

Financial rating was another key challenge for the participants, 100% ($n = 3P$) of principals stated that maintenance of a good financial rating was central to preventing intervention from the ESFA and the FE Commissioner. Financial rating and funding were a central concern for principals, and they outlined how it was a significant regulatory lever (Fletcher et al., 2015) for governmental agencies to reduce or increase control measures on the sector when policy contexts changed. The data highlight that in both of the grade 2 GFECs the middle managers also identified with financial pressures and the significance of their institutional financial rating. This would suggest that the values and objectives of the principals is reflected in the values and objectives of subordinate managers in these institutions, outlining that for a GFEC to be effective principals must create an environment of accountability through the implementation and maintenance of shared values and organisational targets (Jupp, 2015). The middle managers from GFEC 1 and 2 accepted finance as an integral part of their practice which suggests that these GFECs have moved beyond a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003) into a post-performative environment (Wilkins, 2011). However, financial rating did not resonate significantly as a challenge with any of the teachers. All three teachers understood its importance; indeed, Teacher 2 did state that funding and the need to secure student numbers for their own courses were a major priority within their own practice. This perception relates to the theme of individual survival and suggests that this teacher recognised the connection between departmental and institutional survival (Boocock, 2013). All teachers had significant service and it was apparent through their stories that they preferred an era when teaching was their only priority but had accepted the need to work to achieve other organisational targets, including financial and achievement metrics.

This thesis is too small in scale to demonstrate if there has been a shift in GFEC teachers' professional identity but it is a worthwhile topic for further investigation. Wilkins (2011) suggests that teachers are realising the institutional necessity to recognise performance measures, and this could lead to new teachers in the sector normalising performativity (Ball, 2003). The data presents an educational dilemma; seven of the participants stated that

achievement was a contemporary challenge but only 3 participants stated that inspection resonated with them. All members of the teacher group stated that inspection was a challenge, and this suggests that inspection has become another performance metric which has been accepted and normalised into participants' practice. This suggests that inspection is rationalised by the GFECs and part of a performative culture (Boocock, 2014). Jupp (2015) outlines how Ofsted inspection is a major focus for GFEC leaders and how this has been woven into the fabric of college life. The teacher participants were not worried about inspection from a survival perspective but outlined that it was always a performance metric listed as a priority in their practice. They argued against it being a supportive process (Fletcher et al., 2015) for GFEC improvement and described it as a punitive process which challenged their values as professionals. The teachers outlined how their practice had become Ofsted ready which limited their freedom to be creative in the classroom. They recognised that their practice had narrowed over their service to become more standardised as performance metrics for teachers had changed and become aligned to achievement metrics (Beck, 2008).

Mills, Mockler, Stacey and Taylor (2021, p. 81) suggest this is "symptomatic of the current 'evidence era' operating" in education and that teachers can be risk averse and consider future-proofing their practice for potential inspection. Competition scored the lowest in relation to a current challenge, it resonated with 3 of the participants, these participants were from GFEC 2, and competition related to the challenge of new entrants into the marketplace within their local area for specific types of curriculum. Most participants stated that collaboration was the objective of their institution and the participants who identified competition as a challenge correlated its importance with that of collaboration, for these participants they highlighted the interdependence of both issues. They perceived it as a cyclical process; to reduce competition you need to collaborate with other local providers. This suggests that the sector has moved towards a collaborative model (Hodgson and Spours, 2015) and that this has been reflected in the internal operation of GFECs, with participants highlighting the importance of collaboration and support for colleagues within their individual institutions.

Collaboration demonstrates further movement away from neoliberal market principles and the growing importance to GFECs of the need to form networks with stakeholders at a local level to achieve organisational sustainability (Boocock, 2019). Dennis et al. (2020) suggest that GFECs are participating in a process of holistic engagement with stakeholders at a local level, to support the needs of their communities and students. This engagement has the potential to create leadership approaches concerned with networking and localism and challenge present institutional strategic positioning to support GFEC survival (Jupp, 2015).

Summary

The data provided from the research process produced themes which outlined that GFECs have changed since Incorporation and continue to evolve with the continually changing policy contexts for the FE sector. GFEC leadership approaches have also been challenged by the changing educational policies and levers of power (Fletcher et al., 2015) utilised by government and enforced with regulatory agencies. The data suggests that individual leadership approaches can be impacted by the values and priorities of individual principals in relation to changing policy contexts. Differing forms of leadership are required to address the issues facing the leader and the individual GFEC, however, the data highlights a significant move away from heroic models and a consolidation of distributive approaches (Crowther, 2013). There is an acknowledgement of the need to consider more networking at a local level as principals are mindful of the importance of stakeholder engagement and the need to support their communities and students achieve (Boocock, 2019). The chapter outlined how principal and staff relationships are more collaborative than in the time of a heroic approach and this has the potential to support institutional survival. However, the master type of leader (Nietzsche, 1887/1998) can resurge into individual principal practice when the levers of power (Fletcher et al., 2015) are firmly applied by regulatory agencies. The priority of survival requires principals to work with staff to get an appropriate balance of leadership in relation to business and student-centred requirements. Therefore, FE and its leaders need more policy stability so they can lead their institutions successfully and provide learners with opportunities to succeed.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

The previous chapter captured the participants lived experiences of leadership and culture within their own GFEC. Furthermore, the findings produced meaningful data with regard to the relationships between principals and staff, institutional priorities and challenges, and an outline of the GFECs institutional purpose. This chapter critically reflects on these data in four specific areas:

- the evolution of FE leadership in GFECs;
- leader-member relationships in the GFECs;
- culture in the GFECs; and
- competing priorities of GFECs.

These areas correlate with the MRQ and SRQs and support the production of a detailed set of conclusions. The latter part of this chapter highlights how the research has provided information to answer the specific questions set by the purpose of the thesis. This is followed by areas which are considered of potential importance and require further investigation.

The Evolution of FE Leadership in GFECs

In setting the context for the thesis I wanted to focus on approaches to leadership and the cultures present in the research institutions as these are essential elements of GFECs *modus operandi* (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Lumby, 2012). Establishing participants perceptions of these two important aspects of GFEC life would support an in-depth examination of institutional priorities and educational purpose. Leadership in GFECs has been subject to significant criticism since Incorporation and this criticism has increased over the last decade (Kennedy, 1997; Wilshaw, 2012, 2016). This negative critique has resulted in an evolution of leadership approaches adopted by individual leaders of GFECs (Crowther, 2013), producing

what the thesis recognises as a heroic type of leader in the decade post-incorporation which was replaced by a more democratic and distributed approach (Collinson & Collinson, 2009) as the heroic approach was acknowledged for its inability to build capacity and trust with staff (Harris, 2004). Teachers reacted negatively to increased accountability and enforced movement away from student-centred activities which was a result of the introduction of performative measures of control (Ball, 2003). Heroic leadership was encouraged in the FE sector as the transformative approach required to change the character of FE from being focused on student-centred pedagogies to a sector recognising the importance of marketisation and the requirement for the leader to become more entrepreneurial with a strong business acumen (Gleeson, 2001). However, through the hegemony of managerialism (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000; Simkins & Lumby, 2002) teachers became disenfranchised and disempowered due to this solo and heroic form of leadership (Crawford, 2012). The utilisation of a Nietzschean (1887/1998) lens was a supportive model to understand the depth of feeling outlined by the literature and the thesis data of the existence of an us and them culture (Simkins & Lumby, 2002).

The data highlighted the reality of a changing dynamic between the once heroic and masterly role of the leader and the powerless nature of the teacher (Nietzsche, 1886/2003, 1887/1998) being replaced with a sense of interdependence between roles in GFECs (Harris, 2004). The issues of trust and empowerment created failing institutions, and this coincided with policy makers advancing new ideas of more collaboration and partnership working between principals, staff, and external stakeholders to meet the changing skills agenda in the UK (Hartley, 2007; Crowther, 2013). Distributed leadership became the more prevalent approach to leadership utilised by GFEC principals as it was a system of engagement with staff in the leadership process, a form of leadership through the collaboration between the leader, staff and their operating environment (Edwards, 2011). Parker (2014) outlines that in some instances this can be a process where the leader actively distributes power to spread accountability rather than a specific strategy to improve the GFEC. The research conducted

does not support this view, there was a recognition by the majority of middle managers and teachers that they were responsible for provision in their areas, and this was described as a departmental approach to contribute to whole college improvement, however, the data highlighted the need for increased involvement in the decision-making process. Principals outlined that they utilised distributed forms of leadership and this was predominately confirmed by the data, however, there was a need for principals to retain power in a sector burdened by performative pressures (Bolden, 2011).

Distributed leadership is sharing responsibility across the GFEC, however, the approach is tempered by the operating environment being set by the current policy contexts for the FE sector; this context creates a situational approach (Thorpe et al., 2011) for the principal in which they must lead and motivate their staff to perform (Parker, 2014). The thesis has provided some meaningful findings which highlight how distributed forms of leadership are recognised in all the research GFECs, however, issues of power, trust and empowerment remain due to the individual leader and their requirement to achieve set institutional objectives. Managerialism is present in GFECs (Simkins, 2000) and this was reflected in the findings of the research; principals, middle managers and teachers understand the inevitability of performance measures (Boocock, 2013; Lucas & Crowther, 2016). The thesis articulates that the individual GFEC context shapes the approach of the individual leader, a GFEC which is financially stable and with an outstanding Ofsted grade is in a different position from another institution which is on the journey to achieve these criteria. Therefore, the research suggests that there is a need for individual principals to maintain power and change their leadership approach when required to support institutional sustainability. Muijs et al. (2006, p. 90) suggest that this could be achieved through a form of “shared transformational leadership”, an approach which utilised heroic and democratic elements to improve institutional performance, however, within this approach the leader has the means to retain power and drives direction through a top-down process. The research suggests that this is evident in the practice of all principals, as they acknowledge a requirement to change their approach when the pressures

of the sector change. The prevalence of an aspiration to include staff in the improvement process acknowledges that relationships in GFECs have changed in the last decade as the sector has become more deregulated and there has been a requirement for staff to take responsibility for their provision, as GFECs have become concerned with “demand-led and outcome-led funding” (Lucas & Crowther, 2016, p. 591). Therefore, masterly elements (Nietzsche, 1886/2003, 1887/1998) of heroic leadership remain in the principals’ leadership arsenal but the use of these methods is situational and not the dominant approach to leadership in the research GFECs. The thesis outlines that leadership has changed in GFECs and distributed forms are the preferred approaches of the individual principals, however, the findings described the requirement for not just a return to a heroic style (Bush, 2020a) when required, but the consideration of an ethical and eco-leadership (Western, 2019) concerned with the requirements of the local businesses and communities in the GFEC location.

All principals acknowledged the current policy contexts they operate in are challenging and with the introduction of the new EIF in 2019, regulatory frameworks are shifting GFECs to concentrate on local provision. Ofsted inspection has a clear focus on GFEC curriculum intent; therefore, institutions and their leaders need to qualify their provision and how it meets local needs. Hodgson and Spours (2015) outline how the FE sector has been encouraged to work collaboratively with other providers to holistically serve businesses and student need. Indeed, localism in institutional practice increases the need for further collaboration and the use of an eco-leadership concerned with establishing and making networks with partners successful (Boocock, 2019). The principals recognised this new addition to the regulatory landscape, and they are in the process of adjusting their approaches to meet this challenge. The thesis research outlined that the principals are working internally and externally with stakeholders to promote an awareness of this educational localism, however, they suggested that other regulatory requirements remain, therefore, their leadership conformed to the patterns in policy and are a collective or hybrid approach (Gronn, 2008).

Leader-member Relationships in GFECs

The Incorporation of the FE sector introduced new forms of managerialism and governance in GFECs, with power being centralised in the college leader (Shain & Gleeson, 1999). Heroic approaches to leadership in the decade post-incorporation would be successful if principals had the ability to redefine the practice within their institutions, this concept was predicated on staff adhering to regulation (Gleeson, 2001). Robson (1998) highlights that throughout this period GFEC staff witnessed decreasing levels of autonomy and a de-professionalising of their student-centred practice. Heroic leadership contributed to the creation of a culture of disempowerment for teachers and this was increasingly linked to the coercive behaviours of principals (Leathwood, 2000; Jameson & Hillier, 2008).

Heroic leadership was concerned more with outcomes than interaction between leaders and subordinates (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016) in GFECs which exacerbated issues of trust between principals and staff (Jameson, 2010). The thesis acknowledges the issues in leader and staff relationships post-incorporation with the need for principals to improve the effectiveness of their institutions as required by the new performance measures of regulatory agencies (Thompson & Wolsencroft, 2013). However, the major outcomes from the data highlighted the correlation between the changing approaches to leadership in GFECs and its link with changing policy contexts. These aspects which shape organisational behaviours created the need for more meaningful exchanges between principals and their staff and this would decrease institutional tensions through the creation of a professional habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). The thesis provides evidence that a will to collaborate exists between principals and staff and this is supported through the creation of a set of shared institutional values and the forging of more inclusive cultures (Harris & Spillane, 2008). LMX theory was useful in providing a relationship context for the research in not only analysing the different forms of relationship which exist but to support a critical evaluation of the quality and purpose of principal and staff exchanges. The need for the development of one shared identity was a

central finding of the thesis, this is primarily driven by the principal, however, GFEC leadership has recognised the importance of improving exchanges between principals and staff which has become the basis for positive institutional outcomes (Martin et al., 2016). Relationships have moved beyond formalised dyadic formats between the leader and subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) to addressing the concerns of multiple members of an institution through a realisation of a collective process, a collegial working between leaders and staff to have the best possible impact on student and organisational outcomes. However, the thesis findings recognised that the power and intent of the principal shapes (Torrance, 2013) the identity of the institution and the type of relationships that exist. The situational forces of current FE policy context, the location of the GFEC and the organisational direction which is determined by the aspirations of the principal and institutional governance can alter the dynamic of institutional exchanges (Hodgson & Spours, 2015). GFECs have had to change frequently with the policy requirements of government and the subsequent modification to performance metrics since Incorporation. Due to the continual pace of change the distribution of power and the acceptance of shared objectives for institutional survival has created the need for increased devolution of responsibility by leaders (Stoten, 2014).

The thesis provides evidence to support the view that leaders remain the point of power, however, principals in GFECs are striving for leadership through a holistic team approach and the level of inclusivity in the team is determined by the social actions between leaders and staff (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). The thesis suggests that principals in GFECs are prepared to define the inclusive nature of principal and staff relationships through the delegation of autonomy for practice, which creates mutual trust through positive exchanges, but this can be shaped by the control of the relationship and the will of the principal to listen to follower concerns (Malakyan, 2014). This is a progressive concept in GFECs, as the thesis outlines; the continually changing pressures on principals can reduce the freedom of movement they have to fully empower their staff and this process can impact on the quality of the distribution of leadership utilised by leaders (Eliophotou-Menon, 2013). However, the findings highlight

that principals are aware that the quality of relationships with staff are central to institutional performance and the maintenance of autonomous and productive teams (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Therefore, principals appreciate the galvanising effectiveness of shared values in supporting trust creation with staff and how they need to achieve the right balance between institutional objectives and academic freedom (Abrahamsen & Aas, 2016). The concern for localism outlines a further adjustment to GFEC operations (Lucas & Crowther, 2016) and this requires leaders and staff to build considerable networks with local stakeholders. The findings suggest that more relationships are required to meet local stakeholder requirements through building positive networks. Institutional objectives change to meet these needs which highlights that a collective drive is fundamental to meet this challenge and therefore, leader and staff relationships must remain positive to inspire staff to succeed. The research demonstrates that relationships and exchanges between principals and staff are now more inclusive as leaders have recognised the need to motivate and equip staff to work towards self-managing teams (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) as this will improve organisational performance through the empowerment of staff (Jameson, 2010).

Culture in the GFECs

The FE sector has been under increasing pressure to change due to the nature of government policy agendas since Incorporation (Leathwood, 1998). Globalisation and government requirements to deliver skills training to meet the demands of a service-based knowledge economy has continually changed the direction for GFECs (Guthrie & Pierce, 1990). Lucas and Crowther (2016) state that this was a continuation of the application of neoliberal economic principles to education reform and the subsequent need for the marketisation of the sector as government moved away from the concept of Keynesian economics. GFECs became increasingly business oriented as pressure on public funding for the sector increased. The educational sphere for teachers changed and an increase in methods of regulation introduced a level of corporatism into GFEC culture (Simkins & Lumby, 2002). Corporate cultures are the realm of profit driven private sector organisations (Schein, 2017), however,

Incorporation introduced a new business and performance environment for GFECs to operate in (Smith, 2015). A culture of performance (Ball, 2003) was introduced by government to support a market-based approach to FE which would bring about improvements and reward the productive and effective GFECs and their leaders (Doherty, 2007). The characteristics of GFEC cultures changed post-incorporation; the customs, conventions and language of these institutions which had been student-centred became challenged through ideas of competition, entrepreneurialism, regulation, and inspection (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Teacher purpose and identity moved from solely student-centred pedagogical concerns to matters concerning student recruitment, marketing courses and adherence to a plethora of performance management methods (Robson, 1998). Leadership approaches in GFECs set the tone of cultures present within each institution and post-incorporation these were centred on a culture of managerialism (Lumby, 2003). However, as approaches to leadership have changed since Incorporation to align with changing pressures in the FE sector so have cultures within GFECs. GFECs have transitioned from having managerial cultures to become centred around a culture of inclusivity and shared values which is achieved through a clarity of mission (Jupp, 2015). The thesis outlines through participant perceptions that elements of corporate cultures exist within GFECs and this concept is still prevalent due to the early forms of managerialism and the ever-changing financial and performance measures implemented by regulatory agencies. The thesis acknowledges that these levers of power (Fletcher et al., 2015) hold significant meaning for all staff within GFECs and remain a focus for principals and middle managers, but more of a distraction for teachers. The data suggests that participant principals reject the idea of corporatism but understand the levels of adherence required to mitigate significant regulatory interference. Principals understand the ability of their individual leadership approaches in shaping institutional culture and they outline a shift away from the legacy of managerialism to a macro institutional culture (Schein, 2017) which should be based around shared values and has the ability to meet all stakeholder expectations. The data highlight how GFECs through the leadership of principals recognise the requirements of a

neoliberal educational policy (Ball, 2017) and the reality of a capitalist (Fisher, 2009) driven skills agenda, however, they aspire to build trust and empowerment of staff (Jameson, 2010) through a process of collaboration which supports positive institutional outcomes (Harris, 2014). Indeed, the data suggests that there are three levels of focus for participant groups in relation to what matters to their practice which highlights the dichotomy which is present in GFECs (Smith, 2015). The data highlighted the following:

- principals – focus holistically on institutional business and student needs;
- middle managers – focus on business, however, very student aware; and
- teachers – focus on students, however, very business aware.

These data suggest that leadership awareness is central to management practice and this element of the research warrants further investigation which could be developed through a reflective conceptual framework (Brown, 2006), this could support GFEC leaders in their decision-making processes. The data highlights that one shared mission for all staff in a GFEC is an inclusive approach to galvanise staff and improve institutional outcomes, however, group focus within institutions can still be an aspect of culture which generates academic tension between principals and staff. Academic sub-cultures reflect the tensions which exist as different groups and departments will utilise different language to address the issues which concern them (Schein, 2017). Their institutional way of life (Williams, 1963) and educational purpose may be different from GFEC principals, but it is imperative for positive GFEC performance that principals align the sub-culture with the overall organisational mission (Schein, 2017). Lumby (2012) advocates that this can be achieved through a covert form of leadership power being exercised by the principal to ensure that alignment is achieved through a recognition by all levels that there is a requirement to meet institutional goals, some of which will be linked to performance measures. The adherence to metrics and a recognition of performativity existing in GFECs is captured in the data from the participating institutions, however, the thesis outlines that these institutions and their cultures recognise that they have

moved beyond a passive form of teacher resistance (Jameson, 2010) to performance measures, to a culture of student focus with a requirement to fulfil embedded and standardised GFEC metrics. The data suggests that the strive for the creation of inclusive cultures which recognise the requirements of evolving forms of regulation are now becoming commonplace in GFEC settings. This suggests that cultures within GFECs have adapted from cultures of managerialism (Lumby, 2003) and performativity (Ball, 2003) to cultures which recognise that leaders retain power and set the parameters for culture with staff, therefore, the process is collegial and not prescriptive.

The strategic compliance of the decade post-incorporation (Shain & Gleeson, 1999) is transitioning to recognising performance measures being a central characteristic of institutional practice, however, this is now viewed by GFECs through a cultural lens which has returned to one of significant student focus. GFECs are concerned with survival (Boocock, 2013) from an internal perspective of supporting staff and students and from an external regulatory position. The increasing pressures and requirement for principals and their GFECs to meet an agenda of localism is a current factor in shaping principals' behaviours which has an impact on the culture they stimulate within their institution (Boocock, 2019; Western, 2019). The data supports this view and reinforces the importance of the situational forces of government policy, regulatory measures and the needs of stakeholders on setting direction for principals and the subsequent shaping of institutional cultures into a set of assumptions and shared behaviours to meet the strategic need (Brown, 1998). Indeed, GFEC habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990) is driven by internal and external pressures and these are determined by institutional positions and the behaviours of principals (Gill, 2011). The data recognises this concept and outlines that in their current operating environments, GFECs have macro and subcultures which are compatible with organisational goals, shaped by principal behaviours into a professional set of working practices which strive to meet all stakeholder requirements. Boocock (2019) supports this view and reinforces the sense of survival understood by FE leaders. Survival can be achieved through the development and

maintenance of an adaptable and shared community culture between leaders and staff which recognises the requirement to meet regulatory metrics, but importantly fulfilling student and local requirements (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018).

Competing Priorities of GFECs

Incorporation has provided GFECs with increased levels of autonomy which have been moderated by the external pressures of funding, regulation, and inspection (Lambert, 2013). The utilisation of neoliberal economic policy by successive UK governments has reshaped the educational purpose of the FE sector to meet the requirements of a growing knowledge-based economy (Guthrie & Pierce, 1990). The need for obedience to neoliberal economic principles (Chomsky, 1999) was a deliberate process driven by government to encourage GFECs to adopt corporate and competitive behaviour to modernise their practice (Gilbert, 2016). The journey to improve institutional performance was affected by the paradox of deregulation for GFECs as they became controlled through a myriad of regulatory controls (Ball, 2017). Fletcher et al. (2015) highlight that the legacy of this managerialist approach continues today in GFECs with the imposition of ever-changing financial and achievement benchmarks. The findings highlight that all participants suffered from policy fatigue; the concept that principals had become sceptical about committing fully to policy initiatives as remaining passive would be more operationally prudent, than committing to a change that would not become a fixed area of focus in their institution. Middle managers and teachers are tired from the impacts of policy shift which led to changes in their practice, and inevitably required them to do more for less (Gravatt, 2014; Smith & O'Leary, 2013). However, the data outlines common GFEC concerns with the unfolding financial implications of Brexit, the financial health of their institutions and continual changes to performance metrics. The thesis does highlight a positive in changing priorities for GFECs; the shift in direction to deliver a suite of qualifications to meet local employer requirements which is a step change for policy context and institutions (Dennis et al., 2020). Hadawi and Crabbe (2018) agree that the FE sector is at an important juncture and suggest that GFECs need to move beyond the imposed purpose of neoliberal policy

makers and to embrace activities which can improve the social dispositions of their learners (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). A curriculum built with the intent to not only provide a qualification but to change the social disposition of students by developing them to fill local skills gaps would change their ability to access more social environments (Bourdieu, 1984). This was a worthwhile and new form of metric outlined by the findings which reinforces the positive purpose of increasing local networks between GFECs, local business and communities (Boocock, 2019). GFECs can now embrace the practice of implementing curriculum which moves practitioners away from the need to play the education game (Boocock, 2014; Smith 2015).

The game of commodifying students and processing learners like commercial objects which keeps funding for the institution at a high level but may result in some students being placed on the wrong qualification (Boocock, 2013). This approach highlights a systemic failure in policy towards GFECs (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018) which lives on through the legacy of managerialism in institutions but there is a need to refocus FE, making GFECs more productive by pursuing collaboration not competition and engaging with a more public social partnership working practice (Hodgson & Spours, 2015). Thompson (2019) argues that education curriculum is reinforcing the class status quo and stifling the ability of students from predominately working-class backgrounds to advance their social position. The recent change to FE policy outlines a concern with a requirement to engage in localism which has the potential to change GFEC students' habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990). The implementation of curriculum that provides the ability for students to improve employment and subsequent life chances is clearly a move away from supplying students to fill positions in a service-based knowledge economy (Guthrie & Pierce, 1990). This is a strand to GFEC operations which would mitigate against the greatest concern for GFECs – survival (Boocock, 2019). The data highlights that this is the biggest issue for leaders and staff. There is concern in relation to funding cuts and GFECs' ability to provide appropriate curriculum (Dennis et al., 2020) which could place staff in jeopardy of losing their jobs and GFECs of continuing their

operations. Lumby (2003) recognised that survival has been an issue with continual policy reforms and that decisions of leadership in relation to institutional direction and the culture they shape to meet these challenges is central to the longevity of individual GFECs. The FE sector has suffered from a lack of recognition by some policy makers and the public in their operating environments (Hodgson & Spours, 2015). Therefore, survival can be supported by building the esteem of the sector and moving the language away from traditional views of GFECs being the “neglected middle child” of education (Gleeson & Knights, 2008, p. 49). GFEC survival is predicated on supporting local networks and gaining acceptance that they are integral organisations for community growth through the provision of high quality vocational and technical education (Lucas & Crowther, 2016).

The data suggests that principals need to continue to develop their approaches, so they become hybrid forms which are adaptable, predicated on distribution and raising existing levels of empowerment in their institutions. This will support the needs of students while allowing staff to balance this need with the continued and changing measures of performance. GFECs have a specific purpose as the thesis recognises, a requirement to provide students with development and opportunities which will support them to contribute to society and assist them to progress in their desired pathway (Dennis et al., 2020). GFECs have to find a place in the educational system, adopting new forms of educational marketisation to generate income separate from government funding streams, improve their identity with stakeholders and through their curriculum reduce the social inequalities which their students can face (Reay, 2017). GFECs have had to cut their cloth to fit the tailored nature of the FE sector in relation to government funding, income generation and employer needs, the age of conducting learning for the sake of learning has disappeared. The thesis highlights that GFEC priorities remain a multi-faceted concept, driven by government policy and organisational strategy (Smith, 2015). GFECs are subject to “strategic drift” (Lucas & Crowther, 2016, p. 595) a concept confirmed by the thesis and manifest in the alien form of managerialism for GFEC staff in the decade post-incorporation. This drift is what GFEC staff now acknowledge as an

institution striving to be central to the growth of its local community with a recognition of a requirement to achieve good institutional outcomes for all stakeholders. GFECs will remain challenging environments for leaders, middle managers and teachers, however, the thesis agrees with other current research that a core belief of GFEC practitioners is to provide opportunities and do the best they can for their students (Hadawi & Crabbe, 2018; Dennis et al., 2020).

Summary of Research Questions

The primary purpose of the thesis was to provide data to ascertain:

MRQ 1: To what extent do the approaches to leadership of GFEC principals sustain a culture that enhances institutional outcomes?

The thesis outlines that individual GFEC leadership approaches are a significant influencer in how the staff in individual institutions operate and to what level they perform. This is set against a challenging and ever-changing policy context for the principal and their GFECs (Lucas & Crowther, 2016). The thesis recognises an ingrained form of distributive leadership practice but highlights that this can change quickly when challenges impact on the GFEC in relation to stakeholder requirements. The thesis outlines how principals are aware that a collaborative form of relationship with staff can support a culture which provides good levels of achievement for learners and support the survival of the institution.

The research approach required subsidiary questions to fully inform the main purpose of the thesis. The SRQs outlined the following:

SRQ 1: What are principals' perceptions on the evolution of FE leadership and regulatory control?

Leaders freely recognised the changes required to leadership since Incorporation and acknowledged the value of distributing leadership to all levels. This supported leaders with changing policy contexts and challenging workloads (Jupp, 2015). Middle managers and

teachers recognised the ambition of the principal to distribute power but highlighted that to a significant level, power remains at the centre of institutional leadership and resides in the principal. Ironically, the thesis recognises that power is still the discretion of policy makers and regulatory agencies (Fletcher et al., 2015) therefore, the intention to provide individual GFECs through Incorporation with more autonomy through the introduction of the FHEA (1992) created significant caveats to that autonomy through the power of regulation.

SRQ 2: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of leader-member relationships in their GFEC?

The thesis outlines that leader-member relationships have improved which correlates with changes in leadership approach. Relationships have become more collaborative, and this has coincided with an acceptance of performative measures as part of all staff practices in GFECs. Leader-member relationships are predicated on the values created in GFECs and this is driven from the oversight by the principal's vision for the GFEC.

SRQ 3: Do staff freely follow leaders or is there a culture of 'have to'?

SRQ 4: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of culture in their GFEC?

The thesis investigated culture from the perspective of how all participants recognised and felt about working in their GFEC and the sector. Culture is an emotive concept; it is about relationships and how people resolve problems (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), as it asks individuals to consider the conditions they create and work in. There was agreement across all participants that a collaborative culture formed the basis for individual GFEC operating environments. Participants highlighted that this approach, where individuals contributed to a unified concern; to achieve the best results for their institutions and students was driven by all. However, there were issues raised regarding institutional priorities and the balance within cultures to support business requirements against student-centred needs. The

participating GFECs acknowledged that staff generally supported organisational culture and institutional direction, but this was based on individual GFEC context. GFECs striving for higher levels of performance operate in a different context to others which face less challenges. The research suggests that leadership is central to supporting all staff through these challenges and there is potential to involve more staff in the strategic decision-making process.

SRQ 5: What are principals, middle managers and teachers' perceptions of the present priorities and challenges for their GFECs and the impact on organisational outcomes?

A central finding of the research was that all participants want the best outcomes for their students. This is from perspectives of students achieving a qualification, gaining social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1982/1992) and progressing to a positive destination, in employment or other forms of education. All participants recognised that the curriculum they had provided had contributed to a lack of progression for some students and this was set against the performative challenges of the sector. Recent initiatives have moved the discourse in relation to institutional priorities. The introduction of the EIF in 2019 places more emphasis on curriculum intent and the impact it has on students and their outcomes. This is working with the need to meet the requirements of communities and students at a local level (Boocock, 2019). The acceptance of the need to establish more networks through an eco-leadership approach is recognised as a route to change institutional priorities and enhance the chances of students. This recognition for change is tempered by the need for institutional and individual survival, this is a significant priority for all GFECs and their staff. It is driven by changing policy contexts and the use of powerful performance levers by government and regulatory agencies (Fletcher et al., 2015). Stability in policy development could provide GFECs with the space and ability to improve the social advancement of their students.

Contribution to Practice

The thesis has investigated issues relating to leadership approaches, culture creation and the impact these concepts can have on a GFEC. The thesis highlights that leadership approach and culture(s) are predicated on the operating environment of the GFEC, the individual leader, the followers' part in achieving organisational outcomes and the realities of each GFECs reaction to ever-changing policy contexts. I agree that there is a tacit acceptance by followers that they operate in a developing post-performative environment. I also recognise that there is a realisation by leaders and non-leaders that distributive forms of leadership in FE are more pragmatic and help to establish a shared vision and way of working, but it is clear that leadership approaches are the gift of the leader, and they will adapt and change quickly with changes in policy and the operating environment.

Culture in GFECs is not one of 'us and them' but of collegial relationships and a drive for inclusivity and partnership working. However, I recognise that cultures of pressure can still exist in GFECs based on the leader, their leadership approach and the policy context of the GFEC. The original contribution made by the conduct of the thesis is to add to the limited knowledge relating to leadership approaches in FE. I have utilised and applied the work of Ball on performativity which was predominately used to outline issues of performance measures, regulation and the de-professionalising of teachers within HE and school contexts. I have taken these well-rehearsed ideas from these contexts and applied them to the FE sector, and to the operating environments within the research GFECs. The application of performativity to an FE setting has created an original contribution to the limited understanding of leadership approaches which has already been established in contemporary literature. This highlights that like other aspects of the educational sector in the UK, FE and GFECs do operate in an environment of performativity but it is the approach of the leader which determines this significance of this concept to the operations and cultures evident in a GFEC.

Recommendations

1. GFECs and the sector could consider a holistic leadership and management development framework. This could be utilised with whole college career management to support the implementation of a consistent form of development for aspiring managers and managers in junior managerial positions in their institutions. This has the potential to develop managers, to provide them with the skills and resilience required to survive and make a positive impact on their institutional outcomes.
2. To encourage policy makers and senior leaders to become more proactive when considering changing policy contexts which impact on GFECs. This would potentially provide some stability for the sector and enable teachers within GFECs to allocate more time and resource on the development of student learning. This has the potential to improve student outcomes and support the development of a wider set of employment skills required to support the social chances of many learners within GFEC settings.

Limitations of the Research

The use of a convenience survey to establish GFEC participants resulted in the establishment of three participant institutions located in the North of England. The geographical location of the institutions has the potential to limit the relevance of generalising research outcomes with GFECs located in other areas of England. A wider projection of a convenience survey in future research has the potential to address this issue.

Further Investigation

The thesis raises questions for further investigation. Firstly, what are present forms of teacher identity within GFECs? Is it predicated on its relationship with performativity or does this limit the discourse? There is potential to develop a holistic interpretation based on what teachers and the sector values. Have the arguments moved beyond performative and post-performative (Wilkins, 2011) narratives and what factors support the analysis of teacher professionalism in

GFECs and the wider FE sector? This investigation has the potential to explore FE teacher standards and the correlation with educational policy contexts.

The second potential area for further investigation is the development of a conceptual awareness framework which could be applied to leaders and potentially other levels of staff in GFECs. It could be holistic and provide support for leaders and other levels of staff within a GFEC to reflect on practice. A model to balance the dichotomy (Ball, 2003) which can exist in GFEC operating environments. It could act as a model to support organisational development at an individual CPD level and at the organisational level. It could suggest potential development pathways for the training and progression of all levels of leadership.

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Appendix 1

Interview Schedule Principal

Title: To What Extent do the Approaches to Leadership of General Further Education College (GFEC) Principals Sustain a Culture that Enhances Institutional Outcomes?

1. Can you outline how government policy for the FE sector restricts or emancipates you to lead your organisation?

2. How would you describe the leadership approach you utilise in the College?

(probe concepts of managerial/heroic – distributed)

3. Have your ideas and application of leadership changed in your time as a senior leader?

(is it about business or students or both)

4. What does the concept of culture mean to you and how does it inform your approach to leadership?

5. How would you describe the culture in your College and what drives it?

6. What is the focus for your teachers?

(totally student focused or business)

7. What are the institutional outcomes you are trying to achieve?

(probe on student achievement, financial position, expansion/contraction)

8. How does your leadership approach(es) support/enhance these outcomes?

9. Can you describe the purpose of FE – your College in the process?
(probe on skills agenda, supplying students for the knowledge-based economy)
10. Do you have a view on your College and the reproduction of the local society given the curriculum you deliver?
11. Are there new challenges with the introduction of area-based reviews, the risk of insolvency (risk and reckless decision making), real cuts to funding with the advent of austerity?
12. Which of these words and terms resonates with you when you think about your role, the college and the contemporary FE environment? Do you regard any of them as being more important to you?

Leader Responsibility Survival Anxiety Challenges
Regulation Manager Pressured Enjoy Playing the Game
Ofsted Inspection Students Staff Competition Collaboration
Opportunity Marketisation Achievement Financial Rating Restructure

(Why did you find these important? Is there any words/terms that you think should be included when you think about your role, the college and the contemporary FE environment?)

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule Middle Manager

Title: To What Extent do the Approaches to Leadership of General Further Education College (GFEC) Principals Sustain a Culture that Enhances Institutional Outcomes?

1. Can you outline the purpose of your role in the College?
(what is your role – priorities)

2. How would you describe the leadership approach utilised in the College?
(probe concepts of managerial/heroic – distributed)

3. Have your ideas and application of leadership changed in your time as a middle manager?
(is it about business or students or both)

4. What training and support have you had to enable you to be an effective manager?

5. How would you describe the culture in the College?

6. What drives the culture in the College?

7. What is the focus for your teachers?

(totally student focused or business)

8. What are the institutional outcomes you are trying to achieve?

(probe on student achievement, financial position, expansion/contraction)

9. How does leadership approaches support/enhance these outcomes?

10. Can you describe the purpose of FE – your College in the process?

(probe on skills agenda, supplying students for the knowledge-based economy)

11. Do you have a view on your College and the reproduction of the local society given the curriculum you deliver?

12. Are there new challenges given the changing FE environment?

13. Which of these words and terms resonates with you when you think about your role, the college and the contemporary FE environment? Do you regard any of them as being more important to you?

Leader Responsibility Survival Anxiety Challenges
Regulation Manager Pressured Enjoy Playing the Game
Ofsted Inspection Students Staff Competition Collaboration
Opportunity Marketisation Achievement Financial Rating Restructure

(Why did you find these important? Is there any words/terms that you think should be included when you think about your role, the college and the contemporary FE environment?)

5. How would you describe the culture in the College?

6. What drives the culture in the College?

7. Does your team have a culture different from the College culture and does this align with the College's values?

8. What are the department/institutional outcomes you are trying to achieve?

(probe on student achievement, performance measures)

9. How does leadership approaches support/enhance these outcomes?

10. Can you describe the purpose of FE – your College in the process?

(probe on skills agenda, supplying students for the knowledge-based economy)

11. Do you have a view on your College and the reproduction of the local society given the curriculum you deliver?

12. Are there new challenges given the changing FE environment?

13. Which of these words and terms resonates with you when you think about your role, the college and the contemporary FE environment? Do you regard any of them as being more important to you?

Teacher Responsibility Survival Anxiety Challenges
Regulation pedagogy Pressured Enjoy Playing the Game
Ofsted Inspection Students Staff Competition Collaboration
Opportunity Marketisation Achievement Financial Rating Restructure

(Why did you find these important? Is there any words/terms that you think should be included when you think about your role, the college and the contemporary FE environment?)

Interview Teacher 2

AM Can you outline the purpose of your role in the College?

T2 My role as lecturer is to work across campuses to deliver sports qualifications, primarily for 16-19 year olds, to prepare them for routes into HE or to prepare them for industry. I think for the first time in many years that the BTEC qualification has been sufficiently overhauled that it actually gives me as a tutor with the ability to give these students something that they can use to gain employment on completion of programme. I felt previously that the previous programme did not give that access to industry but was steered to move them into other routes and forms of education. Now I think what we do here as part of my role is also that HE side of delivery, and through the development of a possible level 6 element we can support students from level 1 to hopefully level 6. We are trying to provide the opportunity for progression of students in the local community to actually fulfil, but firstly to inspire them to understand that that progression can take place. I think FE and my role in FE when I look back over my career from a teaching standpoint, definitely, is to help those students who have perhaps become frustrated or lost their way a little bit. In fact, it works as we have had level 1 and 2 students who have gone on to HE. So I actually think that the key role that I and FE play is to help those who have not done well in their mainstream education like their GCSEs, and I think that the main role that FE and this college provides is that opportunity and ability that schools don't have to help these students to progress, they know what the communities are around here and the type of student and their needs which we get. I suppose really the college gets it and has tried to change some curriculum to help those student priorities. We provide opportunities to link up with local employers, now in my current role with multiple pathways I think we have very good links with employers which helps the students' progress to university or employment. So, hopefully that's a fair description of what I see my role as being here really.

AM OK has your role changed then since you have been a teacher?

T2 I think it would be fair to say that my journey in teaching for me having worked in industry and coming into teaching has been very much student focused. Someone who initially came in purely with an interest in my subject and a desire to help others develop a similar interest and maybe move into that same field. I think personally speaking, having then moved into roles like managing and quality you then have to change your focus and I think this is perhaps a strange thing to say, but I think that perhaps business and achievement focus suddenly start to take on a greater part of your thinking. Basically, you have to have a thorough understanding of data and achievement figures. And I think that once you are in charge of an area and run an area and you are accountable and then all of a sudden, compliance meeting, the requirements of data in terms you are making sure your department is deemed to be effective and by which that means your area continues, your staff keep their roles etc., there is a requirement to appreciate that data and achievement becomes very, very important and almost take on a life of their own outside of perhaps what you originally moved into education for. Ummm, now I was head of an area for a few years and then headed up a practitioner team to develop staff and it was quite amazing to see from these the roles that the change away from learner focus was quite dramatic and I think in order for tutors, lecturers to perhaps progress they need to have an appreciation of the bigger picture, of the priorities the organisation wants from them, this is the model rather than learner focus and I think originally moving into teaching and I think it would be the same for most teachers that they would believe that achievement and learner focus is the same thing but they are not.

AM OK

T2 But I think now that just sort of really to brings that to life I think now I feel much more comfortable returning to a lecturing role which I have been in for a few years now, that I'm a more learner focused tutor than I had become when I took on a management role which really highlights the mixed message of FE at times, that whole priority of staff when thinking back to our purpose, you know what are we really here for. It goes back to industry and links and the links we have to get these students where they need to be.

AM Need to be?

T2 progression we are all about jobs and that sense of helping these communities, but as I have said we are far better at getting them into HE now, that whole movement from level 1 to level 6 and beyond, you know it's about aspiration. And sometimes I think that whole relationship between managers and tutors can be not quite right, they like me have lost that learner focus.

AM Like?

You knowas I said before its become a bit of doing what's right for the department as a whole not just what those learners need. But we are getting better at it as teams.....we have to. And I think for me that makes me feel more comfortable with what the students need in order for them to progress.

AM OK, right, slightly different question, how would you describe the leadership approach used in the College?

T2 UhhhI think the leadership approach is.....essentially it feeds down from the very, very top because we are a hierarchical structure in terms of how information feeds down. I think there seems to be a fairly sort of clear direction that the college is moving in, I think There is clear objectives of what it wants to prove in the future. I think it is making fair progress to where it is now. I think what I clearly see as there is a degree of politics to get from where we are to a grade 1. I think personally speaking that the approach we have had in our area has not changed from when we had a poor college grade to what we have now which is good, I think it's always been excellent and I think essentially that a lot of the times achieving a grade, a positive grade outcome, has been a particular management focus but what this particular team of senior leaders – managers are good at is having a clear strategy to more the college forward in these challenging times. Uhhh.....the actual management structure itself is a little bit light and there are gaps in the system – it is incredibly lean but I think I understand why it is as lean as it is given the current financial situation. There has been a continual trimming of

staff and resources due to the whole austerity issue. I think it perhaps puts too much pressure on teaching staff because when you look at their role and their range of responsibilities they have like learner registrations, learner claims, exam invigilation and more administrative style roles. Uhhh.....I think this can be about accountability or share accountability is perhaps a better way to talk about it. You know that departmental aspect working towards those strategic goals set from the top. There is a massive emphasis on compliance and as long as you are happy to work inside that compliance model think you will be OK. It's the nature of what we have come to do, the lean nature of the sector means a lean nature of teaching has created the need for one eye on the political and keep looking at the achievement and other data. I think that the leaders try to get everyone on message in terms of where we are going, sometimes it works well and sometimes the message doesn't get across and this can strain relations.

AM Alright.

T2 But I think is a very much data, achievement driven management style. What I would like to see is more quality and quality management of the right stuffteaching and improvements for students. But its not like it was when are grade was bad, then it was all about data, data, data and observation after observation. That's changed over the past couple of years with more trust perhaps given to teachers to get on with it while still looking out for the data. I think someone needs to take a bold step and say to Ofsted that there are better ways to do business and to support staff.

AM Ok can you tell me, are you involved in the decision-making process at departmental and college level?

T2 Uhhh.....Right at the very top it sits.

AM Do you have any involvement?

T2 I think we are actively engaged up to a point where it affects curriculum but in terms of operational and strategic direction that we will look to take I'm not too sure how much input

we get from that. Uhhh.....now I think recently when I think about some curriculum we have had some input but I think from the looming level of for example T Levels and the financial incentives for T Levels I don't think anyone has too much input and that's difficult for us as teachers. I think there is a desire to get us involved in the decision-making process, but this can be a bit forced by managers. So, I don't think we feed too much into the higher strategic levels, or planning. I think that's not great for getting everyone on the same page and can create a two-tier system.

AM would you like more involvement?

T2 Definitely..... it would give us a real chance to change these kids lives. We could make what we do more employer relevant and that's going to help them get those jobs out there in the community.

AM Have you asked to be more involved?

T2 It is not like that. It's OK talking to your line manager but that is as far as it can go. Their hands can be tied too. I know the top are doing things for the best of the college, but they can create an atmosphere of the management and us, the atmosphere can be a bit autocratic when it suits to get things done, from the tops' perspective.

AM So what are the relationships like between leaders and staff and that is from a view of all levels, what's the relationship like with your line manager, what is your relationship like with other more senior leaders?

T2 Well my boss is great, and we have a really open relationship, but he has a boss and the further you go up the more bureaucratic it seems to get. We have targets are boss and has targets and that goes up to the top.

AM and what about senior leaders?

T2 they really try to be open, and in fact, the top always tell us how it is when it comes to finances. In my 20 years here that's new. However, you can tell when the pressure is on that we can regress to type A management, just get it done.

AM but can you talk openly to senior leaders?

T2 They will stop and talk and that's new compared to older regimes, but they could probably be seen more rather than weekly emails, how about more face-to-face stuff.

AM So how do these relationships impact on outcomes and what are those outcomes?

T2 I think the outcomes are all Ofsted related and issues of finance. They go hand in hand, but we do talk about progression and where are students go. That whole piece on progression and progress has become important. The old achievement data never goes away but that is just the way the sector has gone, we don't like it in perhaps being so much of a focus but we can't get away from it. I think more openness would help, teachers like to know why we are doing it, like constant change, we have to find out from our boss and not the top but I suppose that is the way it is, that feed down of information. I think this leadership group are trying to change and that's good given the challenges.

AM What do you mean by trying to change?

T2 Being more open, more transparent, but it's hard. Given the need to constantly change what we do.

AM OK then, how would you describe the culture of the college – can you describe it?

T2 Uhhh....I think most people visiting would firstly be impressed by the nature of the building, it's initial impact from a cultural point of view is something that is set out to impress, I think with this organisation which runs lean and trimmed consistently for a number of years. The staff, the teaching staff here have become very talented at balancing a whole number of responsibilities which has brought staff closer together. I think there can be a culture of pressure in terms of all the extras we do. I think there is a lot of positivity but that links with a

substantial workload which sometimes can have a negative impact on the way people feel about the place. Generally though, I would suggest it is a positive place to work, it is generally a positive place to work but I do feel under the present climate that it can be a culture of pressure.

AM so is that your view of the overall culture, the organisational culture?

T2 Yes, we definitely have a positive team culture and I think we have watched a dramatic change in responsibility which has impacted on our way of doing things, we have had to adapt and get on with it. The fact of the matter is that we have become sort of managers responsible for our areas, and that all goes back to the top and the priorities they want us and the college to get. The team is very supportive of each other and other staff. I think in the current climate that's what we have to do, and I think our area. So, I think our sort of sub-culture is strong and one which means we have to support each other.

AM OK then what drives these cultures?

T2 The driver.....I am going to say the main driver is and feels a lot like survival particularly in the current political and health climate. I don't feel politically there is a massive faith from the government in FE. I think they constantly look for us to adapt and I think that the quality of what we offer can be compromised. Which means we find it hard to meet the needs of our community and I don't think politically that we are at the centre of policy. They don't value us as much as they could. Ummm..... I think the constant changes to qualifications is a reflection of that, there is not a recognition on the lives we change and the gaps we fill in the community. So, politically we are going in the college from a management perspective which is to be transparent, they talk about how tough things are and therefore we are always thinking about the next round of cuts and how we fight for our survival. This is all set against finance and the nature of Ofsted. Ofsted although we don't want to admit it drive what we and I do, you have always got to think about that phone call. So, we can just about see the end of the tunnel and then Covid hits and it's going to have a big hit on our finances. This just goes back to what the

government wants from us and the sector and then what the college want from our staff, so this creates that pressurised type of culture but the irony is it has forced us to work closer in teams and across the college and the individual campuses. So right now that macro culture is to survive in a climate that is not pro FE politically.

AM I was going to ask you about alignment of team and college values, but you have sort of answered it but to be clear, do you work towards a set of shared values?

T2 We have a pamphlet of values we staff created with the top a few years ago around the time of the merger. We all know what we are working towards and in some ways that just reinforces the things we do. We talk about the basics, honesty, supportive and the like and that is what the politics has created, that sort of supportive culture and that sort of strong teams which have to work hard so the college gets the achievement it needs.

AM what type of achievement?

T2 Well the whole Ofsted package, financial outcomes need to be good and the data, they both go hand-in-hand. You know when you talk about culture perhaps the politicians and Ofsted need to think about their role in what they want the sector to be.

AM So, slightly different question but you have touched on it in previous answers, so what is the purpose of FE can you describe it and what role does the college play in this?

T2 I think FE and the college fulfils the role schools and sixth forms don't provide. I feel we do that as a college by filling the needs of employers by equipping our students with the skills they need to get employment. I would certainly say from my time in education that what we do as a college better fits what's needed. I think that historically in FE the provision was that classic package of just general subjects and that was that sort of second chance to achieve what they didn't in school. I think what we have now is a much more specialised provision to fill that skills gap that the schools don't. So I think it's become more specialised, it's become more specific, it's become more responsive to local learner needs.

AM Do you think that is just your area or every area in the college? And I know that is unfair as you might not have knowledge of other areas.

T2 Difficult question to answer, from a broad cross section. It certainly has improved in our area, but there are other areas which perhaps don't have clear cut progression for our students into the community, so we could question it's value, but that can be FE, this sort of broad-church answer for everything post-16, some of it works really well, those specialisms and some of it is just bums on seats.

AM Bums on seats?

T2 You know the culture, Uhhh.....sometimes it's needs must we have to offer stuff, sometimes it's not right but that's what FE has always done. If the student doesn't fit an area let's find an area that will fit. We will make it fit. It's back to the finance. In fact I am not naïve, I know the importance of recruiting students to my course, it's about that survival.

AM So, what's your view on the college and your curriculum providing programmes which reproduce the society evident in your local community?

T2 Do you mean do we just produce loads of Brickies and Hairdressers that are not needed?

AM Well slightly more nuanced really, but I take your point. Does the college and your curriculum meet student expectations and allow them to get to where they want to be or is there some, or a lot of the elements that you have just spoken about?

T2 That's an interesting question, and in some areas of the college I don't even know where these students will go with their qualifications, this curriculum does not even meet the needs of the local society, but yes I can see that the curriculum is designed to meet the local needs so does just reproduce what's already there and perhaps this is the whole second chance think, which doesn't help these students with aspirations to get out of the area. Uhhh.....but some curriculum areas and would include my own area that we fill the gaps that society needs, but that more prevalent idea that anybody can achieve anything they want to be is not right.

Given the challenges some of these kids face we should measure the distance they have travelled. Actually, for them to secure full-time employment is a massive journey for them to go on. I think my curriculum area is more entrepreneurial and responds well to changes in the industry. Is it perfect no. We have 50 people on a coaching course, are they all going to become top class coaches and earn a decent wage, no. Most, the ones who get into employment will be in low paid jobs, so the reality I am afraid is that for the majority we are doing courses for courses sake. In that way we do reproduce the lower paid jobs in our community. Loads of these students end up in retail, now there is nothing wrong with that but we are not really squaring the circle. There are some unrealistic aspirations being put into their minds, by some individuals and I think FE is responsible for that to a certain extent and I think their needs to be more elements of realism in what we offer and what we do.

AM OK, then what are the biggest challenges facing the college given the operating environment?

T2 major issues are cuts in funding, the lack of stability, the constant need for change in the curriculum, so we have just changed our curriculum and we are probably looking to change it next year, then we have to think about the introduction of T Levels, so this constant change is not great. A big threat is to keep jobs, to keep people employed, Uhhh.....particularly as there is not much job opportunities in the area and the idea that our students will all get great jobs isn't right. All this is unrealistic. And right now although we try and collaborate and we do with the partners we have, there is growing competition from these new small, private, one man band providers, you know the government really need to sort this, I mean is that really FE? It's back to the political point, what do government want us to be, is it more about keeping young people of the street, are these the data outcomes they really want, low unemployment which is reflected in our achievement rate data.

AM OK, which of these words resonate with you in terms of your role and what you do? Which are the important ones? If they are not just say no.

AM Teacher.

T2 No – it's a given.

AM Responsibility.

T2 Yes – very much about securing those pathways for my students.

AM Survival.

T2 Yes – for me as an individual and the college it goes back to those finance issues we discussed.

AM Anxiety.

T2 No.

AM Challenges.

T2 No

Am Regulation.

T2 No.

AM Pedagogy.

T2 No – again a given.

AM Pressured.

T2 Uhhh...sort of goes back to culture.

AM Enjoy.

T2 Yes – but not as much as I did, too data driven.

AM Playing the game.

T2 I know what you mean but not important.

AM Ofsted Inspection.

T2 Yes – can shape what we do.

AM Students

T2 it's a given.

AM Staff

T2 Nope

AM Competition/collaboration.

T2 Yes try to be collaborative but coemption keeping in our area.

AM Opportunity

T2 No.

AM Marketisation.

T2 No.

AM Achievement.

T2 Yes – I am thinking data and probably survival.

AM Financial rating.

T2 No.

AM Restructure.

T2 No.

Teacher 2 Interview Coding Annotation

<p>AM Can you outline the purpose of your role in the College?</p> <p>T2 My role as lecturer is to work across campuses to deliver sports qualifications, primarily for 16-19 year olds, to prepare them for routes into HE or to prepare them for industry. I think for the first time in many years that the BTEC qualification has been sufficiently overhauled that it actually gives me as a tutor with the ability to give these students something that they can use to gain employment on completion of programme. I felt previously that the previous programme did not give that access to industry but was steered to move them into other routes and forms of education. Now I think what we do here as part of my role is also that HE side of delivery, and through the development of a possible level 6 element we can support students from level 1 to hopefully level 6. We are trying to provide the opportunity for progression of students in the local community to actually fulfil, but firstly to inspire them to understand that that progression can take place. I think FE and my role in FE when I look back over my career from a teaching standpoint, definitely, is to help those students who have perhaps become frustrated or lost their way a little bit. In fact, it works as we have had level 1 and 2 students who have gone on to HE. So I actually think that the key role that I and FE play is to help those who have not done well in their mainstream education like their GCSEs, and I think that the main role that FE and this college provides is that opportunity and ability that schools don't have to help these students to progress, they know what the communities are around here and the type of student and their needs which we get. I suppose really the college gets it and has tried to change some curriculum to help those student priorities. We provide opportunities to link up with local employers, now in my current role with multiple pathways I think we have very good links with employers which helps the students' progress to university or employment. So, hopefully that's a fair description of what I see my role as being here really.</p> <p>AM OK has your role changed then since you have been a teacher?</p>	<p>Progression and community</p> <p>Purpose of FE</p>
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T2 I think it would be fair to say that my journey in **teaching for me having worked in industry and coming into teaching has been very much student focused.** Someone who initially came in purely with an interest in my subject and a desire to help others develop a similar interest and maybe move into that same field. I think personally speaking, having then moved into roles like managing and quality you then have to change your focus and I think this is perhaps a strange thing to say, but I think that perhaps business and achievement focus suddenly start to take on a greater part of your thinking. Basically, you have to have a thorough **understanding of data and achievement** figures. And I think that once you are in charge of an area and run an area and you are accountable and then all of a sudden, compliance meeting, the requirements of data in terms you are making sure your department is deemed to be effective and by which that means **your area continues, your staff keep their roles etc., there is a requirement to appreciate that data and achievement becomes very, very important and almost take on a life of their own outside of perhaps what you originally moved into education for.** Uhhh, now I was head of an area for a few years and then headed up a practitioner team to develop staff and it was quite amazing to see from these the roles that the change away from learner focus was quite dramatic and I think in order for tutors, lecturers to perhaps progress **they need to have an appreciation of the bigger picture, of the priorities the organisation wants from** them, this is the model rather than learner focus and I think originally moving into teaching and I think it would be the same for most teachers that they would believe that achievement and learner focus is the same thing but they are not.

AM OK

T2 But I think now that just sort of really brings that to life I think now I feel much more comfortable returning to a lecturing role which I have been in a for a few years now, that I'm a more learner focused tutor than I had become when I took on a management role which really highlights the mixed message of FE at times, **that whole priority of staff when thinking back to our purpose, you know what are we really here for.** It goes back to industry and links and the links we have to get these students where they need to be.

Purpose

Data and purpose and priority

Purpose

Priorities

Priority

<p>AM Need to be?</p> <p>T2 progression we are all about jobs and that sense of helping these communities, but as I have said we are far better at getting them into HE now, that whole movement from level 1 to level 6 and beyond, you know it's about aspiration. And sometimes I think that whole relationship between managers and tutors can be not quite right, they like me have lost that learner focus.</p> <p>AM Like?</p> <p>You knowas I said before its become a bit of doing what's right for the department as a whole not just what those learners need. But we are getting better at it as teams.....we have to. And I think for me that makes me feel more comfortable with what the students need in order for them to progress.</p> <p>AM OK, right, slightly different question, how would you describe the leadership approach used in the College?</p> <p>T2 UhmmI think the leadership approach is.....essentially it feeds down from the very, very top because we are a hierarchical structure in terms of how information feeds down. I think there seems to be a fairly sort of clear direction that the college is moving in, I think There is clear objectives of what it wants to prove in the future. I think it is making fair progress to where it is now. I think what I clearly see as there is a degree of politics to get from where we are to a grade 1. I think personally speaking that the approach we have had in our area has not changed from when we had a poor college grade to what we have now which is good, I think it's always been excellent and I think essentially that a lot of the times achieving a grade, a positive grade outcome, has been a particular management focus but what this particular team of senior leaders – managers are good at is having a clear strategy to more the college forward in these challenging times.</p> <p>Uhmm.....the actual management structure itself is a little bit light and there are gaps in the system – it is incredibly lean but I think I understand why it is as lean as it is given the current financial situation. There has been a continual trimming of staff and resources due to the whole austerity issue. I think it perhaps puts too much pressure on teaching staff because when you look at their role and their range of</p>	<p>Educational purpose</p> <p>Leadership approach</p> <p>Leadership approach and policy context</p> <p>Leadership approach and strategy linked to priorities</p> <p>Link to culture</p>
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<p>responsibilities they have like learner registrations, learner claims, exam invigilation and more administrative style roles. Uhmm.....I think this can be about accountability or share accountability is perhaps a better way to talk about it. You know that departmental aspect working towards those strategic goals set from the top. There is a massive emphasis on compliance and as long as you are happy to work inside that compliance model think you will be OK. It's the nature of what we have come to do, the lean nature of the sector means a lean nature of teaching has created the need for one eye on the political and keep looking at the achievement and other data. I think that the leaders try to get everyone on message in terms of where we are going, sometimes it works well and sometimes the message doesn't get across and this can strain relations.</p>	<p>Changing nature of purpose</p> <p>Priority and data</p> <p>Trying to get followers</p>
<p>AM Alright.</p> <p>T2 But I think is a very much data, achievement driven management style. What I would like to see is more quality and quality management of the right stuffteaching and improvements for students. But its not like it was when are grade was bad, then it was all about data, data, data and observation after observation. That's changed over the past couple of years with more trust perhaps given to teachers to get on with it while still looking out for the data. I think someone needs to take a bold step and say to Ofsted that there are better ways to do business and to support staff.</p>	<p>Leadership approach</p> <p>Change in relationships</p>
<p>AM Ok can you tell me, are you involved in the decision-making process at departmental and college level?</p> <p>T2 Uhmm.....Right at the very top it sits.</p> <p>AM Do you have any involvement?</p> <p>T2 I think we are actively engaged up to a point where it affects curriculum but in terms of operational and strategic direction that we will look to take I'm not too sure how much input we get from that.</p> <p>Uhmm.....now I think recently when I think about some curriculum we have had some input but I think from the looming level of for example T Levels and the financial incentives for T Levels I don't think anyone has too much input and that's difficult for us as teachers. I think there is a desire to get us involved in the decision-making process, but this can be a bit forced by managers. So, I don't think we feed too much into the</p>	<p>Forced type of leadership approach</p>

<p>we offer can be compromised. Which means we find it hard to meet the needs of our community and I don't think politically that we are at the centre of policy. They don't value us as much as they could. Uhhh..... I think the constant changes to qualifications is a reflection of that, there is not a recognition on the lives we change and the gaps we fill in the community. So, politically we are going in the college from a management perspective which is to be transparent, they talk about how tough things are and therefore we are always thinking about the next round of cuts and how we fight for our survival. This is all set against finance and the nature of Ofsted. Ofsted although we don't want to admit it drive what we and I do, you have always got to think about that phone call. So, we can just about see the end of the tunnel and then Covid hits and it's going to have a big hit on our finances. This just goes back to what the government wants from us and the sector and then what the college want from our staff, so this creates that pressurised type of culture but the irony is it has forced us to work closer in teams and across the college and the individual campuses. So right now that macro culture is to survive in a climate that is not pro FE politically.</p> <p>AM I was going to ask you about alignment of team and college values, but you have sort of answered it but to be clear, do you work towards a set of shared values?</p> <p>T2 We have a pamphlet of values we staff created with the top a few years ago around the time of the merger. We all know what we are working towards and in some ways that just reinforces the things we do. We talk about the basics, honesty, supportive and the like and that is what the politics has created, that sort of supportive culture and that sort of strong teams which have to work hard so the college gets the achievement it needs.</p> <p>AM what type of achievement?</p> <p>T2 Well the whole Ofsted package, financial outcomes need to be good and the data, they both go hand-in-hand. You know when you talk about culture perhaps the politicians and Ofsted need to think about their role in what they want the sector to be.</p>	<p>Purpose and priority</p> <p>Pressure culture and team cohesion</p> <p>Strong supportive cultures</p> <p>Purpose and priorities</p>
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AM So, slightly different question but you have touched on it in previous answers, so what is the purpose of FE can you describe it and what role does the college play in this?

T2 I think FE and the college fulfils the role schools and sixth forms don't provide. I feel we do that as a college by filling the needs of employers by equipping our students with the skills they need to get employment. I would certainly say from my time in education that what we do as a college better fits what's needed. I think that historically in FE the provision was that classic package of just general subjects and that was that sort of second chance to achieve what they didn't in school. I think what we have now is a much more specialised provision to fill that skills gap that the schools don't. So I think it's become more specialised, it's become more specific, it's become more responsive to local learner needs.

AM Do you think that is just your area or every area in the college? And I know that is unfair as you might not have knowledge of other areas.

T2 Difficult question to answer, from a broad cross section. It certainly has improved in our area, but there are other areas which perhaps don't have clear cut progression for our students into the community, so we could question it's value, but that can be FE, this sort of broad-church answer for everything post-16, some of it works really well, those specialisms and some of it is just bums on seats.

AM Bums on seats?

T2 You know the culture, Uhhh.....sometimes it's needs must we have to offer stuff, sometimes it's not right but that's what FE has always done. If the student doesn't fit an area let's find an area that will fit. We will make it fit. It's back to the finance. In fact I am not naïve, I know the importance of recruiting students to my course, it's about that survival.

AM So, what's your view on the college and your curriculum providing programmes which reproduce the society evident in your local community?

T2 Do you mean do we just produce loads of Brickies and Hairdressers that are not needed?

AM Well slightly more nuanced really, but I take your point. Does the college and your curriculum meet student expectations and allow them

Purpose and priorities

Purpose, priorities and culture

Culture of survival

Purpose

to get to where they want to be or is there some, or a lot of the elements that you have just spoken about?

T2 That's an interesting question, and in some areas of the college I don't even know where these students will go with their qualifications, this curriculum does not even meet the needs of the local society, but yes I can see that the curriculum is designed to meet the local needs so does just reproduce what's already there and perhaps this is the whole second chance think, which doesn't help these students with aspirations to get out of the area. Uhhh.....but some curriculum areas and would include my own area that we fill the gaps that society needs, but that more prevalent idea that anybody can achieve anything they want to be is not right. Given the challenges some of these kids face we should measure the distance they have travelled. Actually, for them to secure full-time employment is a massive journey for them to go on. I think my curriculum area is more entrepreneurial and responds well to changes in the industry. Is it perfect no. We have 50 people on a coaching course, are they all going to become top class coaches and earn a decent wage, no. Most, the ones who get into employment will be in low paid jobs, so the reality I am afraid is that for the majority we are doing courses for courses sake. In that way we do reproduce the lower paid jobs in our community. Loads of these students end up in retail, now there is nothing wrong with that but we are not really squaring the circle. There are some unrealistic aspirations being put into their minds, by some individuals and I think FE is responsible for that to a certain extent and I think their needs to be more elements of realism in what we offer and what we do.

AM OK, then what are the biggest challenges facing the college given the operating environment?

T2 major issues are cuts in funding, the lack of stability, the constant need for change in the curriculum, so we have just changed our curriculum and we are probably looking to change it next year, then we have to think about the introduction of T Levels, so this constant change is not great. A big threat is to keep jobs, to keep people employed, Uhhh.....particularly as there is not much job opportunities in the area and the idea that our students will all get great jobs isn't right. All this is unrealistic. And right now although we try and collaborate and we do

Purpose and priorities, shaped by culture

Culture, aspirations and purpose

FE priorities

with the partners we have, there is growing competition from these new small, private, one man band providers, you know the government really need to sort this, I mean is that really FE? It's back to the political point, what do government want us to be, is it more about keeping young people of the street, are these the data outcomes they really want, low unemployment which is reflected in our achievement rate data.

AM OK, which of these words resonate with you in terms of your role and what you do? Which are the important ones? If they are not just say no.

AM Teacher.

T2 No – it's a given.

AM Responsibility.

T2 Yes – very much about securing those pathways for my students.

AM Survival.

T2 Yes – for me as an individual and the college it goes back to those finance issues we discussed.

AM Anxiety.

T2 No.

AM Challenges.

T2 No

Am Regulation.

T2 No.

AM Pedagogy.

T2 No – again a given.

AM Pressured.

T2 Uhhh...sort of goes back to culture.

AM Enjoy.

T2 Yes – but not as much as I did, too data driven.

AM Playing the game.

T2 I know what you mean but not important.

AM Ofsted Inspection.

T2 Yes – can shape what we do.

AM Students

T2 it's a given.

AM Staff

<p>T2 Nope</p> <p>AM Competition/collaboration.</p> <p>T2 Yes try to be collaborative but coemption keeping in our area.</p> <p>AM Opportunity</p> <p>T2 No.</p> <p>AM Marketisation.</p> <p>T2 No.</p> <p>AM Achievement.</p> <p>T2 Yes – I am thinking data and probably survival.</p> <p>AM Financial rating.</p> <p>T2 No.</p> <p>AM Restructure.</p> <p>T2 No.</p>	
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Participant Biography by GFEC – Tier 1 Sector Subject Area (SSA)

GFEC 1

Participant Type	Service Pre-Incorporation	Service Post-Incorporation	SSA
Principal	No	26 years 2 years as Principal 5 years as senior leader	9
Middle Manager	No	20 Years 10 years in middle management roles	9 & 15
Teacher	No	10 years teaching service	15

GFEC 2

Participant Type	Service Pre-Incorporation	Service Post-Incorporation	SSA
Principal	Yes (in teaching roles)	24 years in senior positions 17 years as principal	15
Middle Manager	No	12 years in teaching and management 4 years in middle management	8
Teacher	No	20 years in teaching and management Middle manager for 5 years now back in teaching position	8

GFEC 3

Participant Type	Service Pre-Incorporation	Service Post-Incorporation	SSA
Principal	No	13 years in senior positions 6 years as principal	15
Middle Manager	No	16 years in teaching and management	12

		11 years in middle management	
Teacher	Yes (in teaching roles)	27 years in teaching and management Middle manager for 8 years now back in teaching position	12