THE JOURNEY TO LEADERSHIP

A STUDY OF HOW LEADER-ACADEMICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEARN TO LEAD

by

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Abstract

There has been a significant increase in interest in the development of Educational Leadership in recent years, not least in the school sector. However, little research exists on how leaders in higher education have learnt to lead, particularly those in 'middle-leadership' positions such as heads of faculties and departments. This study explores the journey to leadership of eighteen leader-academics within six chartered and statutory universities in the south of Wales and the west of England. Semi-structured biographical interviews were used between November 2005 and April 2006 to secure academics' perceptions of their own life history, including the significance of their formative years, career trajectories, motivations, training and less formal learning, to equip them with the necessary attributes to lead.

The findings show that the nature of leadership for middle-level leaders in higher education is complex and demanding and requires a combination of management and leadership skills. Formal professional development for leadership was relatively uncommon. The majority of what leaders do is learnt, self-taught and acquired throughout their life history. The influence of critical incidents and significant people has a profound effect on how leaders have learnt to lead.

This study captures insights which should inform the future research agenda in higher education and highlights the possible inadequacies of formal leadership development for leader-academics in higher education. The challenge is to bring the informal processes of learning gained throughout a leader's life history into a meaningful context for professional development. By doing so, training and development initiatives can be brought into the leader's real world in a structured way to become more relevant and productive to those who

participate. Strategies include the establishment of formal mentoring systems, encouraging the formation of networks and providing guided critical reflection on practice, whilst promoting opportunities for collective articulation and sharing of experiences. A suggested framework for integrated leadership development is proposed to enable middle-level leader-academics to experience more planned and meaningful development. This should then enhance those aspects of leadership which have been acquired through individual life histories and consequently should better equip them to support, manage and lead their faculties.

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

BERA	British Education Research Association
CEL	Centre for Excellence in Leadership
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
LEA	Local Education Authority
LFHE	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
QAA	Quality Assurance Association
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UK	United Kingdom

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

Introduction

Over the past few years an extensive amount has been written on the subject of leadership within the compulsory education sector and, within higher education, much has been focused on the challenges of managing and leading universities and colleges (Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007). This has largely been due to United Kingdom (UK) universities being increasingly subject to external audit through research and teaching quality assessments which has had a significant impact on the way institutions are managed and led (Warner and Crosthwaite, 1995). This has had particular consequences for the university equivalent of the 'line manager': that is, the head of faculty (or in some universities called head of school or department). Despite this, relatively little has been written on leadership at middle-level, and very little of what has been written is based upon empirical research (Smith, 2005). What has been written tends to focus on what leaders do, rather than why they have become leaders and how they have learnt to lead. In my opinion, the prevailing framework of individual agency focused on positional leaders such as heads of departments or faculties is inadequate because leadership is not just a function of what these leaders do. Knowing what leaders do is useful as a starting point, but, without a rich understanding of how and why leaders become leaders, our understanding of leadership is incomplete.

A central theme of this research is encapsulated by Starratt's (1996) assertion "that we work as we live and have lived" (p. 3). How we work and lead depends, to a significant extent, on

who we are and what we have become, which, in turn, is a product of what we have been (Parker, 2002). This is important because effective leadership is conceived as a result of a lifelong process of learning and development (Spillane et al., 2001). Hence the intent of this thesis is to frame a greater understanding of the journey to leadership in order to inform how leaders learn to lead.

This chapter introduces a research project that seeks to examine the formation of academic middle-level leaders (hereafter called leader-academics) within higher education institutions in the south west of England and the south of Wales. Those who lead departments, schools or faculties (hereafter given the generic term 'faculty') are classed as 'middle-level' and only those who lead faculties which are rated as 'excellent' by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) were targeted, the implication being that by leading an 'excellent' faculty then it is likely to be indicative of good leadership. Due to documented residual differences (Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007) in the leader-academic role between research-led 'chartered' universities and teaching-led 'statutory' universities, the study includes both types of universities.

In this introduction, firstly the study is placed in context, providing a justification for the research. Secondly, the antecedents of the study are discussed. This is to illustrate the theoretical, conceptual frameworks and previous research that proved to be helpful in interpreting, analysing and discussing the lives of leader-academics. Thirdly, the research questions are presented. Finally, an outline of the research design deployed, the analysis of the interviews and the ethical considerations, are reviewed.

Setting the Context

There has been sustained interest and research into the development of effective leadership within education and other contexts. Despite extensive study in this area, Allix and Gronn (2005) succinctly summarise the dichotomy present in such research:

> "almost no area of inquiry or interest has shown itself to be more elusive, or more controversial, and also more confounding to human understanding, than the notion of leadership" (p. 181).

A study of how leaders learn to lead, it could be argued, is interesting and valid in its own right, but there are further, more fundamental, reasons to justify the research.

Firstly, despite increasing research on leadership in schools there has been very little research into leadership at higher education level. Robertson (1998) notes:

> "where research has been undertaken, it tends to describe arrangements, or provide a general critique of state policy, but has had little apparent bearing on the conduct of institutional managers" (p. 17).

There is a growing realisation of the centrality of middle-level leaders in making a vital contribution to school improvement and implementing education reform (Brundrett, 2007). In addressing the development needs of middle-level leaders in schools, the National College of Leadership introduced a programme for middle-leaders in 2003 'leadership for the middle-leader in schools,' in recognition of their importance in contributing to school success. Likewise the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) was also set up in 2003 in recognition of the importance of leadership within further education. Despite the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education being formed in late 2004 with the aim to: develop and improve the management and leadership skills of existing and future leaders"

(www.lfhe.ac.uk), generally the focus on the importance of middle-level leaders within higher education has had scant attention, as Smith (2002) confirms:

> "Management in HE, particularly at departmental level, is an area in which there has been relatively little empirical research. This is especially the case in the new Universities or former Polytechnics" (p. 293).

Secondly, leadership is essential in all organisations and educational organisations are no exception (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995; Seagren, 1993; Smith, 2002). Indeed the modernising and development of effective leadership is a prime aim in the UK government's reform agenda (Woods, 2005). It is clear that academic leadership is a central component in striving towards academic excellence and that such leadership is important (Knight and Trowler, 2001; Rowley, 1997; Busher, 2003, 2005). However, it is also evident that it is not only leadership from the top which is critical to organisational success, but leadership throughout the organisation. Seagren (1993) claims that higher education institutions (HEIs) differ from many organisations because leadership is a more shared phenomenon than in most profit-controlled enterprises. He suggests leadership requires more focus on empowering activities than in most types of organisations, because faculty ownership is basic to academic institutions. A number of writers reach similar conclusions (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995; Johnson, 2002; Busher, 2003). The point is illustrated well by Rowley (1997) who argues that leadership:

> "is important in managers at all levels in higher education and should not be viewed as the sole preserve of the senior manager…the future of academic institutions depends on the development of effective leadership skills at all levels in the organisation" (p. 78).

Thirdly, if institutions are to have effective leaders and leadership development, it is necessary to address effective ways in which leaders learn. Recent research writing has dispelled the myth that 'leaders are born not made' (Knight and Trowler, 2001; Chartered

Management Institute (CMI), 2004; Braid, 2007). In doing so, writers have argued that the use of effective management and leadership development has a direct impact on organisational performance (Rowley, 1997; Buckingham, 2001; Whiteley, 2003). One of the key findings from the recently published CMI research (2004) into leadership development trends researched over the last eight years from 500 organisations, is that job experience contributes to effective leadership and is more highly valued than innate ability. Indeed, Ribbins and Gunter (2002) lament the lack of research on:

> "leaders (what leaders are, why and by whom they are shaped in to what they are) and how they become leaders" (p. 362).

If experience plays a pivotal role in shaping leadership, as such research suggests, this must provide a powerful argument for determining how leadership training and development programmes are constructed. However, evidence also suggests (Johnson, 2002; Aziz et al., 2005) development programmes largely focus on generic leadership skills, which although important, do not focus enough on targeting "life history as an equally central element of such programmes" (Parker, 2002, p. 38). By implication, learning to lead therefore, cannot be done purely by course attendance and, indeed, appears to be an unwelcome form of development by those with significant experience of organisational life and leadership, as the following extract by a leading leadership trainer indicates:

> "Idealistic, inspirational style of leadership teaching might work with people with less experience of the real-life work environment but did not wash with middle managers who understood the reality of organisations and had already had the joy of being managed by the far from ideal, real-life boss" (Lampel in Braid, 2007, p. 9).

It would be logical to assume that the best informed of these choices are made by those in leadership positions who are allowed to reflect on their preparation for leadership. This is why a life history approach is taken in this research as, it allows reflections of past events in

a chronological manner to be articulated, in the belief that incremental experience is particularly important in shaping how leaders learn to lead, and as a result:

> "by knowing more, better and differently about educational leadership we can make informed choices about teaching and learning" (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002 p. 372).

This study is, therefore, intended as a contribution towards understanding how and why leader-academics are formed, how much of being a leader is learnt from experience and in particular, which experiences have most significance on how leaders learn to lead. With this in mind, a framework of the factors which influence a leader's formation can be proposed for the leaders in this study. Suggestions can also be made as to leadership development opportunities which could and should be developed in order to best equip leader-academics for leadership at middle-level in higher education.

Antecedents of the Study

The literature available, which is written on leadership within higher education, tends to focus on two main areas. The predominant area of research surrounds describing and analysing the role and changing role of the leader-academic (Middlehurst, 1993; Jackson, 1999; Bolton, 2000; Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Wright, 2001; Smith 2002, 2005, 2007; Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006). Here the focus is on what leaders do and what they are increasingly expected to do within a managerialist paradigm.

Although these pieces of research span a fifteen-year period, post-Education Reform Act (1992), there is a convergence of opinion regarding the role of the leader-academic in higher education. They all portray a diverse role which involves balancing the functions related to management of the faculty whilst also providing strategic leadership. Their research also

suggests a further layer of complexity which is the result of the nature of the relationships between a leader-academic, within the university, and their subordinates, who are also colleagues. Whilst some differences are noted between chartered and statutory universities (Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007), the increasing movement to a managerialist paradigm for both types of institutions appears to have meant a convergence in role, irrespective of the origins of their university. This study, therefore, draws on this literature in order to understand the nature of leadership for the leader-academic.

 To a lesser extent, the other area of research within higher education has been based on understanding and exploring the training and development needs of leader-academics in order to effectively fulfil their role (Kolb, 1984; Knight and Trowler, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Aziz et al., 2005). In general, the researchers in this area lament the lack of training and development for the leader-academic (Johnson, 2002; Aziz et al., 2005; Smith, 2007). There appears little consensus as to which dimensions of the role, training and development should be based upon. Aziz et al. (2005) argue that this is because effective training and development cannot be considered generic and, as Hellawell and Hancock (2001) confirm, is more dependent on contextual learning. However, Knight and Trowler (2001) do provide a framework of seven types of knowledge (control, people, educational practice, conceptual, process, situational and tacit knowledge), which has been useful in this research, to compare with the experiences of the leader-academics in this study. The importance of succession planning is identified as one area in which progressive development of potential leaders can be achieved. Thus, some literature on succession planning is also reviewed (Campbell, 2003; Gronn and Lacey, 2004; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2005; Fink and Brayman, 2006; Quinn et al., 2006). This allows insights into effective leadership talent identification, development,

succession and retention as important aspects in creating the next generation of leader-academics.

As a result, whilst it is relatively well documented what leaders do, and to some extent what training and development they could benefit from to become and take on the role effectively, we know less about how and why they do it. It is, therefore, also necessary to draw upon the wider field of leadership research within education and beyond, to illuminate further understanding of the field and provide, potentially, more helpful insights. This can, then, be related to the practices within higher education. There were two key areas in the school literature which helped to frame this study. The first of these to be reviewed is the literature on the general field of leadership in education. In particular, the work by Southworth (1999), Harris (2003) and Gunter (2004) is significant in enabling an overview of the field of leadership in education.

Defining the concept of 'leadership' is difficult as there are numerous competing theories about what leadership actually means. Reviewing the literature surrounding leadership was useful in order to place the concept of leadership into context.

Harris (2003) discusses how transactional leadership theory dominated the leadership research field until the early 1980s. This theory was based around the leader-follower dichotomy, where leadership involved "doing something for, to and on behalf of others" (Harris, 2003, p. 16). It was brought into question because of its focus on the operational management of systems and processes rather than the leadership of people. The emergence of 'transformational' leadership, seen by some as the 'new paradigm of leadership' (Gronn,

1996; Southworth, 1999); provided a focus away from the work of Foster (1986, 1998) and

Grace (1997). Southworth (1999) argues that transformational leadership involves "a special

form of power" (p. 50), whereby the leaders work with others to transform practices which

are considered undesirable in educational institutions. It is, therefore, not only about

managing structure but also seeks to impact on the culture of the organisation (Harris, 2003).

However, by his own omission, Southworth (1999) declares the future of such leadership as

"bleak" (p. 63) because of the restrictive policies and practices which increasingly leaders

within education are finding themselves compelled to work within. Since Southworth's

research, new theories of leadership have emerged: for example, post-transformational

leadership (Day et al., 2000), which reflects the competing tensions which education leaders

are increasingly operating within. The essence of post-transformational leadership is twofold,

according to Harris (2003). Firstly, it encompasses the notion that effective leaders are:

> "constantly and consistently managing several competing tensions and dilemmas,
> and, secondly, effective leaders, are, above all, people-centred" (p. 19).

Secondly, it would, therefore, appear that this leadership theory is one of contingency where

leaders act according to the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Most recently, leadership studies have focused on the dispersal of leadership to those who

have most influence on various important aspects of education and has been termed

'distributed leadership' (Gronn, 2002; Gold et al., 2003; Harris, 2003; Gunter, 2004).

Dispersing leadership throughout the educational establishment may, therefore, be

considered a form of protracted delegation which resonates with the recent view that

leadership should not be seen as the preserve of the minority, but more the responsibility of

everyone who has a desire for improvement and, in doing so, builds capacity for

improvement. Thus the importance of the middle-leader embraces the concept of distributed

leadership. However, it could be argued that this style of leadership is just another form of "benign delegation" (Gunter, 2004). Can the person at the 'bottom' of the educational hierarchy, for example, exercise leadership outside of this 'distribution'? On the contrary, it could be argued that this is another way of making the organisation more democratic. There are no direct answers to these questions as each will be situationally specific. What is clear is that leadership remains an elusive concept and there is no agreement as to what ideal 'leadership' within educational organisations should comprise.

This review of the literature on leadership in the compulsory educational sector provides a backdrop against which trends in leadership in higher education can be compared. Whilst the literature on leadership in higher education is more limited, the discussions on role highlight a greater consensus on a more common leadership style than within the school literature. Post-transformational and dispersed leadership resonate with the type of leadership in this sector. This is mainly for two reasons. First, faculties enjoy more autonomy within the overall organisational structure by having a strong subject-based culture, which allows leaders to emerge within the faculty in research and /or teaching specialisms which consequently gives rise to dispersed leadership. Second, the dual role that most leaders exercise, that of academic colleague and leader of a faculty, promotes post-transformational leadership.

The second key area of research drawn from the compulsory education sector which helped to frame the study, was the literature on life history. There are a number of key texts, in particular Kelchtermans (1993), Day and Bakioglu (1996); Gronn (1999), Parker (2002) and Ribbins (2003). The research on leadership through life history tends to polarise around core

themes of enabling and developing leadership, 'stages' and 'phases' of leadership and the importance of critical incidents, people and professional identity.

The literature in support of life history as a means of identifying the journey to leadership argues that people develop their views and values over periods of time and that experience influences how leaders learn to lead. Parker (2002), in his research where he studies head teachers, concludes that acknowledging the person's life history is crucial to nurturing the special qualities that capable leaders bring to the role. Busher (2003) and Olesen (2001) likewise, believe life history is an important means of questioning learning processes and is integral to how leaders learn to lead and how this helps them to form their professional identity. Consequently, it is also important to take into account literature which refers to the tensions between external and internal views of 'self', the degree of 'self' knowledge (emotional intelligence) and that 'self' will always be subject to some degree of invention (Busher, 2003; Usher, 1995; Kehily, 1995; Olesen, 2001).

Both Day and Bakioglu (1996) and Gronn (1999) identify four stages within which leaders progress. Day and Bakioglu (1996) suggest the four phases of 'initiation', 'development', 'autonomy' and 'disenchantment'. They also suggest there can be sub-phases within the first two phases ('initiation': idealism, uncertainty and adjustment; 'development': consolidation and extension). Gronn (1999) outlines a common pattern for head teachers who appear to progress through from 'Formation' stage (infancy to adulthood), 'Accession' (preparation for higher roles), 'Incumbency' (headship) and finally 'Divestiture' as retirement approaches. Ribbins (2003), in his study of head teachers, also suggests career stages incorporating those defined by both Day and Bakioglu (1996) and Gronn (1999), to propose a modified

framework. He diverges from the earlier two models at the third stage, suggesting that leaders can take one of two main routes at this stage, depending largely upon whether the leaders have positive or negative feelings about the role they are in at this stage. Although no comparative research is available for leaders at higher education level, much of what is researched for leaders within schools may be applicable to how leaders within higher education learn to lead.

In this study, there is a focus on the first three stages of the personal and professional lives of leader-academics as outlined in Gronn (1999) and Ribbins' (2003) models to explore the importance of early socialisation, education and career on the journey and development to leadership in higher education.

Within research on stages of headship, researchers also identify critical incidents and significant people as being instrumental in shaping leaders. Likewise, research on life history which does not specifically incorporate phases of leadership (Goodson and Walker, 1991; Parker, 2002) reach similar conclusions on their importance. Parker (2002) goes as far as suggesting that critical incidents and people helped shape the way the leaders in his study lead and were "crucial" in their preparation for leadership roles.

The study, reported in this thesis, draws on aspects of the interviews with the eighteen leader-academics which consider the influence of critical incidents and significant people as important in shaping attitudes and values.

The Research Questions

A review of research into leader-academics and how they learnt to lead produced a range of significant questions, of which four were crucial to this study:

1. What is the nature of leadership for middle-level leader-academics in higher education and is there a difference between the nature of leadership at middle-level for those in chartered and statutory universities?

2. How much of what leaders do is learnt, taught and acquired and is, therefore, a product of their life histories; that is, how much of being a leader is learnt from experience and the knowledge of 'self'? What particular experiences such as personal, social, educational and career – prepare them for the role of leader?

3. Do leaders in higher education go through distinct life phases in the same way that research suggests for school head teachers? To what extent does the influence of critical incidents and significant people impact on how leader-academics learn to lead?

4. What kind of formal leadership development do middle-level leader-academics experience before and after appointment? In what ways do they learn and does this differ between chartered and statutory universities?

The first research question was necessary in order to place the study in context. The second and third research questions were designed to establish each individual's journey to leadership - how and why leaders became leaders through their own experiences and the significance of these experiences. The fourth question targeted specific development opportunities in order to establish if the journey to leadership was also influenced by their organisation assisting them in this journey through more formal means of development and succession planning. This should, therefore, enable a better understanding of why the respondents have become leaders and how they have learnt to lead and, consequently, generate tentative recommendations regarding what kind of leadership formation enables leaders to lead.

Research Design

According to the humanistic approach, "to gather and theorise from the experiences of those who are leaders" (Ribbins, 2003, p. 56), the conceptual framework was conceived as a set of 'multiple realities' of the leaders researched and how their "destinies" had been shaped by social, political, cultural and economic values and forces during their career. To gain such an understanding I argue that a positivist, objectivist approach to collecting the data about the lives of leaders would mask much of the very individualistic and context-specific life and career experiences which have contributed to the life history of leaders.

The research strategy for data gathering was, therefore, qualitative in approach, the research methodology being a survey in the form of in-depth interviews. The survey approach is distinctive from other methodological approaches because it allows:

> "a combination of a commitment to a breadth of study, a focus on the snapshot at a given point in time and a dependence on empirical data" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 7).

However, there have been frequent critics of this approach, largely surrounding the issues of validity and reliability. The inability to generalise is seen by some as a major flaw in such research because life history explored through in-depth interviews can be seen to be atypical rather than representative. I would argue, as have others (Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003), that this methodology provides a richness of data which enables the development of a valid knowledge base, which could inform the development of educational leadership and is relatable to the experiences of others.

For the reconstruction of the leaders' life history, a research procedure was developed in which semi-structured biographical interviews constituted the main technique. Interviews were held with eighteen individuals who were identified by QAA ratings as leading successful faculties in higher education institutions along the western section of the M4 corridor. It was considered essential to interview a range of leaders from both chartered and statutory universities due to residual differences reported in the literature (Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007) which still exist in the two types of universities. The leader-academics were contacted, and asked for their consent to participate in an interview (Appendix 1). The interviews were aimed at stimulating the leaders to reflect back on their life experiences and to tell their personal and career stories. Interview questions were based around the themes of life stages, critical incidents, significant people and professional development in order to gain an understanding of how these leaders have learnt to lead (Appendix 2). The interviews were taped and transcribed and the data coded. The data was then analysed according to the themes questioned and any others which emerged. The stories were compared

systematically, looking, interalia, for any commonalities, remarkable differences and recurring patterns.

Creswell (1998) points out that, in a qualitative study, the role and close distance between the researcher and the participants have implications for bias within a study. The use of semi-structured interviews inevitably will create a closer relationship than the methods employed by a quantitative study. Denscombe (2003) suggests that the data collected is "affected by the personal identity of the researcher" and what this means "as far as the person being interviewed is concerned" (p. 169). Although I was not familiar with any of the interviewees, it was necessary to acknowledge this when analysing and making conclusions from the data.

Ethical Issues Entailed in the Research

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) guidelines were adhered to in order to ensure ethical practice was followed. Informed consent was first needed. Access could have potentially been an issue and the correct routes in gaining permission to interview within each education institution were followed.

The confidential and anonymous treatment of participant's data should be considered the norm when conducting research (BERA, 2004). Ethical issues of confidentiality and the level of personal involvement between the subject and the researcher should be considered. As I am a lecturer in a university, I had the advantage of being an 'insider' to gain access and a degree of empathy for conducting the research. However, my position also had a potential disadvantage as some of the interviewees may be colleagues or work in institutions which could have been considered 'the competition'. This could have been an issue when

exploring life history, because the very nature of the method can reveal some sensitive information which the interviewee may not wish to be made public or disclose to a fellow academic. This could have affected the degree of information and insight the subject was willing to reveal to the researcher. Confidentiality must be maintained and trust established in order to satisfy interviewees that they would not be named or made identifiable in the analysis. As a result, the reliability of the interviews could be brought into question as:

> "The impact of the interviewer and of the context means that consistency and objectivity are hard to achieve. The data collected are, to an extent, unique owing to the specific context and the specific individuals involves. This has an adverse effect on reliability" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 190).

However, it is also questionable as to whether reliability is essential within the context in which they work as the very nature of qualitative interviews provides a unique insight into each leader's lives at a particular point in time.

Reporting the Findings

Findings are reported in discursive style and are broken down into themes relating to the research questions and are supported by tables and quotations from informants. The discussion of findings relate to the substantive, theoretical and methodological issues, linking key findings with the research questions and the literature reviewed. The purpose of the findings is to illuminate how a selection of leaders have learnt to be leaders. It is intended that the outcomes of this study will further inform the research agenda, as well as providing the beginnings of relatable insights for leader-academics both in respect of their own practice and reflexivity and to those carrying out succession planning and leadership development within their higher education institution. In particular the research may highlight the implications for leadership development programmes. There is increasing recognition that

leaders in higher education are not being equipped with the skills needed to lead effectively. Consequently, a number of development programmes (e.g. 'Top Management Programme for Higher Education' run by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education : www.lfhe.ac.uk), have recently been devised. This research may cause further questions to be asked regarding if such programmes are meeting the needs of leader-academics.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five parts. The first part, Chapter One, introduces the subject area and summarises the literature that has influenced this study. It provides a background against which the analysis of the interviews with the leader-academics takes place. The second part is divided into three chapters (Chapters Two, Three and Four) and discusses the literature and conceptual frameworks which underpin this study. The third part, Chapter Five, explains the research design of the study to locate and justify the research approach taken. It includes the nature of the sample, the method of data analysis and the ethical issues underpinning the work. The fourth part, Chapters Six and Seven, presents and discusses the findings of the research. Finally, the fifth part, Chapter Eight, summarises the findings and outcomes of the research, draws conclusions in the light of the findings and links with previous research. It also suggests further research work which could be done in this area.

PART TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Chapters Two, Three and Four

The literature on leadership in generic terms is both extensive and diverse. In this chapter it is proposed, firstly, to put the research into context by selecting a number of pertinent studies to review the wider field of the study of leadership. I will then review a number of significant studies which have contributed to the understanding of both the field of life history research and that of leadership formation. These studies are considered to have been significant in providing theoretical concepts, research approaches and key themes to underpin this research. As there is under representation of leadership studies in higher education and particularly for the middle-level leader-academic, literature is drawn from other sectors, particularly the compulsory education sector, where more extensive studies are available.

Academic research publications, based on both empirical data and on scholarship will be reviewed, as will practitioner publications based on accounts of personal and professional experience. The majority of authors are located in the UK and Europe, but, as most of the literature surrounding leadership has been "derived from North American and European sources" (Harris, 2003, p. 14), the review will also be drawn from writers from Europe, North America and Australia to achieve a more diverse and balanced review. The context within which the latter authors are writing will, therefore, be noted, as transferability of ideas may be restricted to the cultures and academic practices within which they are set. Government reports and literature from relevant agencies will be reviewed, such as the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the National College for School Leadership

(NCSL), the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD), the Chartered

Management Institute (CMI) and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE).

To do this, an extensive literature search was carried out. Firstly, key words surrounding the

topic of leadership were put into journal and Internet databases to identify the range of

literature in this area. By doing this, key subject areas and authors were established both in

compulsory and higher education. Work by these authors was then reviewed, together with

references and bibliographies, which provided further information of other relevant works.

This began a second trail of investigation and a narrowing down of relevant publications. At

the same time I set up a ZETOC alert to be notified of advance information on the contents

pages of a selected range of journals. Thirdly, I interrogated Internet search engines, such as

Google Scholar, to identify any pertinent articles which I may have missed through a 'key

word' and 'key author' search within the leadership domain and reviewed the education on-

line facility at www.leeds.ac.uk/educol for conference papers. The British Education Index

proved an invaluable resource to access Athens for journals on leadership and higher

education from 1998. Finally, I also reviewed appropriate websites, for example; Leadership

Foundation for Higher Education and the National College for School Leadership for

specific information on activities within the field. The culmination of these activities allowed

the identification of five key areas that would be useful to review as they were to underpin

my research and provide conceptual frameworks upon which the thesis could be based.

The five areas of investigation are: the wider field of leadership; the nature of leadership for

leader-academics in higher education; the significance of life history in learning to lead;

leadership themes: life stages, critical incidents and significant people and the professional

development, training and succession planning for leadership. Thus the review is on a thematic basis, rather than in chronological order, taking the key issues and themes one at a time.

Chapter Two

The Nature of Leadership

The Wider Field – The Study of Leadership

The complexities and turbulence of modern organisation environments in recent years have placed leadership under critique. As a result, there is a burgeoning amount of literature on the subject both in academic circles and the professional field. This increased interest in the study of leadership, I would argue, has been inspired by the 'science of management' which, although the basic principles originated with Taylor (1911), prevailed in the 1980s and was popularised by such advocates as Deming's (1975) 'Total Quality Management', Senge's (1990) 'Learning Organisation' and Peters and Waterman's (1982) 'In Search of Excellence'. This focus on outcomes resulted in the neglect of the human side of enterprise and to some this:

> "excessive managerialism has led to the call for the 'transformation' of managers and administrators into leaders" (Bhindi and Duignan, 1997, p. 118).

This can be coupled with influential reports in the UK (Handy, 1987; Constable and McCormick, 1987) which suggested that the UK had a shortage of effective leaders to ensure competitiveness, fuelling the surge of interest in leadership. As Harris (2003) agrees; "leadership is currently in vogue" (p. 9).

As with organisations globally, educational reform has paralleled this trend with a renewed emphasis upon: "improving leadership capacity and capability in the drive towards higher standards" (Harris, 2003, p. 9).

In particular in higher education, since the Further and Higher Education Act (1992), colleges and universities have to operate within a quasi-market. Economic and political pressures have put the spotlight on effective leadership, not only from the top, but the importance has also been cascaded down to all levels within the university. One of the results of this is that many leadership, strategic and accounting practices have been delegated to middle leader-academics such as heads of faculties, departments and schools.

Educational leadership has attracted a great deal of theoretical interest and debate. 'Leadership' as a concept has been contested with little agreement between researcher and commentators as to what it actually means (Southworth, 1999). Allix and Gronn (2005) refer to "the phenomenon" as leadership and agree that "it remains in large a theoretical enigma and paradox" (p. 181). Although there is no single definition that satisfies everyone, there is some agreement that 'leadership' should be differentiated from the terms 'management' and 'administration'. Leaders and managers play different roles and make different contributions – leaders have followers, managers have subordinates. Those who make the distinction (for example: Zaleznik, 1977; Kotter, 1990) portray the leader as someone who develops vision and drives new initiatives and a manager as someone who monitors progress towards objectives to achieve order and reliability. Increasingly, it is recognised that, whilst leadership and management are juxtaposed in theory, in practice the distinction between leadership and management is blurred (e.g. Adair, 2006; Muijs et al., 2006). Leadership is one dimension of a multi-faceted role. In education, it is increasingly recognised that the traditional model of a leader as head, is no longer appropriate. Leadership has increasingly become associated with individuals at different levels within an organisation and that improvement is strongly associated with the effectiveness of leadership throughout the

organisation (Jackson, 1999; Gronn, 2002; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Deem, 2004; Heck and Hallinger, 2005; Muijs et al., 2006; Brundrett, 2007).

Past writings focused on situational leadership (Blanchard, 1986) and, to some extent, transactional leadership. Situational leadership was seen to consist of four styles; directing, coaching, supporting, delegating, and four development levels on a progressive scale ranging from low competence/high commitment to high competence/high commitment. Transactional leadership could be equated with 'management' which relied on the leader-follower dichotomy, where leaders gave tasks to followers who carried them out within tightly controlled procedures. These two approaches to leadership were more concerned with structures and organisational purpose than people and, to some extent, have links with the origins of scientific management as espoused by Taylor (1911). In reaction to this, more recent research has focused on such concepts as cultural leadership (Southworth, 1999), where there are suggestions that organisational cultures are created by leaders; instructional leadership (Hopkins, 2000) where strategies are developed to promote effective teaching and learning and, transformational leadership (Foster, 1986, 1998; Gronn, 1999) which focuses on managing change and future outcomes. Such literature has increased the emphasis upon the links between leadership and the culture of the organisation and that leaders have the potential to change the cultural context within which people work. As a result, this literature realigns the leader-follower relationship to one where the relationship is based more for mutual benefit than power hierarchies.

More recent studies in conceptualising leadership emerging in the literature, and I would argue, of more relevance for middle-level leader-academics in higher education, are those of

post-transformational leadership (Day et al., 2000; Harris, 2003) and distributed leadership (Wallace, 2001; Gronn, 2002; Gunter, 2004; Rayner and Gunter, 2005; Muijs et al., 2006;). Although both are similar, in that leadership is considered not to be the domain of the 'leader', there are subtle differences. Post-transformational leadership focuses on two main aspects of leadership, suggesting that:

> "firstly, effective leaders are constantly and consistently managing several competing tensions and dilemmas, and, secondly, effective leaders are, above all, people-centred" (Harris, 2003, p. 19).

This style of leadership is based on the premise that leaders are able to interpret the situation and modify their leadership style to be consistent with the context and situation and, therefore, better able to cope with complex situations. In doing so, they do not act over others, but enable others to act by engaging the hearts and minds of followers whilst raising their levels of consciousness about the importance of goals they are pursuing for their organisation (Muijs et al., 2006). Thus, there is a distinct power shift from the earlier literature suggesting leaders have power 'over', to one of leadership power 'with'. This can clearly be seen in the literature on leader-academic changing roles within higher education. For example, in Smith's (2002, 2005, 2007) discussion of the role of the head of department and in Jackson's (1999) work on the role of the head of department in managing performance.

However, there is the implication in post-transformational leadership that the leader can mould and change organisational culture by engaging with its followers. Dimmock and Walker (2002) refute this, arguing that organisational culture is equally likely to, itself, change and mould leadership. This is especially likely in higher education institutions, where a strong subject-based culture exists which influences any proposed organisation change

(Muijs et al., 2006). The weakness of post-transformational leadership has more recently led to researchers and practioners espousing the value of distributed forms of leadership.

Distributed leadership is based on the premise that shared leadership is potentially more effective than a sole leader and, certainly in terms of 'learning to lead', staff are indeed entitled to learn through this experience in support of their professional development and career. Thus, distributed leadership reduces the power 'over', further suggesting that it is more than 'enabling others to act', to one of a shared responsibility to lead. This is of critical importance to middle-level leader-academics in higher education, who often share the dual role of academic team member and head of section, whether it be head of a department, faculty or school. It is also more relevant to the strong subject-based culture which prevails in higher education. Research has shown (Knight and Trowler, 2001; Muijs et al., 2006) that authoritarian forms of leadership are far less effective than collegial processes which involve staff in decision making and initiative taking.

Post-transformational and distributed forms of leadership are not necessarily contradictory, but sit alongside each other on a continuum of leadership. Indeed, Muijs et al. (2006) report on the term 'shared transformational leadership' as now being coined to describe the interaction of both types of leadership to promote reform and change in a more sustainable way by involving staff at all levels.

The Nature of Leadership for the Middle-Level Leader-Academic in Higher Education within Chartered and Statutory Universities

Since the Further and Higher Education Reform Act (1992), the old 'universities' and 'polytechnics' were brought together under a new framework and the title of university was extended to polytechnics. Both categories of university award their own degrees and are funded:

> "by the same funding councils and have the quality of their courses and research activities assessed by the same bodies" (Smith, 2002, p. 293).

However, it is evident from the literature (Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007) that despite the new framework, the universities have retained some of their different traditions. Consequently, the nature of leadership at faculty level (which includes their role, responsibilities, identity and degree of power) varies according to the type of university. It is therefore, important to differentiate between the two types of universities and I shall do this by using the terminology adopted by Smith (2002, 2005, 2007) from Palfryman and Warner (2000), namely 'chartered' to refer to the 'old' research-led universities and 'statutory' to refer to the newer teaching-led universities.

Heads of faculties in the chartered UK universities have traditionally been given considerable autonomy and have been:

> "viewed as professionals who can be relied on to deliver the performance needed because of their personal interest in and commitment to their subject" (Jackson, 1999, p. 147).

Heads of faculties operated within a laissez-faire approach to managing their sections and in many old universities acted more as "a chair for a group of colleagues" (Jackson, 1999, p. 148). In contrast, the former polytechnics were more bureaucratic, hierarchical and rule

bound (Smith, 2002) and had significant administrative responsibility, including allocating teaching duties (Jackson, 1999). However, post-1992 and the inception of the statutory universities, there have been increasing pressures for change in the role of head of faculty in both types of university. Reputations and significant financial consequences for faculties increasingly rest on high scores for both research assessment (RAE) and teaching quality assessment. Such external measurements of performance have had internal consequences on the role of the head of faculty. In particular, according to Jackson (1999), this has: "heightened recognition of the importance of effectively managing staff" (p. 142).

Leader-academics are increasingly aware that their performance will be judged against the performance of their faculty. Increasingly so, in both types of educational establishments, leader-academics are expected to be good managers, strategic leaders as well as distinguished academics (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Smith, 2002).

The term 'Managerialism' frequently appears in the literature to describe this new level of accountability in which leader-academics find themselves. Gleeson and Shain (1999) explain it as "a rational process, linked with new principles of funding, efficiency and professionalism" (p. 465). They argue that this process has reconstructed professionals as managers who are now of strategic importance to the "implementation of market and managerial initiatives" (p. 466). As a result, middle-level leader-academics such as heads of faculties have become:

> "an ideological buffer between senior managers and lecturers through which market reform is filtered" (p. 462).

A further concept emerging in the literature is that of 'entrepreneurialism' in higher education:

> "where academics and administrators explicitly seek out new ways of raising private sector funds through enterprising activities such as consultancies and applied research" (Deem, 2004, p. 288).

This concept is used by Clark (1998) and critically analysed by Deem (2004) to describe the ways in which higher education institutions are pressured to change their curricula, facilities and research due to enlarged demand from both government sources and the influence of globalisation.

Consequently, the impact of these new forms of academic work (managerialism and entrepreneurialism) requires new ways of managing and organising work and, in doing so, further heightens the importance of managers and effective leadership.

The Role of the Middle-Level Leader-Academic in Recent Years

Ketteridge et al. (2002) describe the leader-academic role as pivotal, but admit that it often feels like "the meat in somebody else's sandwich" (p. 179). As a result, the leader-academic has two key audiences, the faculty and the university, which have unequal power. According to Wright (2001), the managerialist discourse advises heads of faculty that they have been 'empowered' to achieve targets but argues that this is merely "reducing the person to a cipher for someone else's agenda" (p. 287). In contrast, Ketteridge et al. (2002) argue that despite the rise in managerialism altering the balance of power in favour of the institution, "the pull of the discipline undoubtedly remains strong" (p. 13) and quote that, according to Seagren (1993), an estimated 80 per cent of all university decisions are made at departmental level. Similarly Gleeson and Shain (1999) argue that, although leader-academics at middle-level are influenced by 'managerialism', they are "not determined by it" (p. 488). Inevitably,

I would argue that even if this is the case it serves to reinforce the increasing ambiguity and tensions of their role.

Prichard (2000) illustrates these tensions by suggesting that heads of faculty operate within two different types of 'knowledge'. On the one hand, they:

> "seek to constitute the department as strategically focused, customer orientated, excellent in teaching and research and effectively managed" (p. 28)

which Prichard (2000) terms 'Management knowledge' and, on the other hand, they seek to constitute departments as student-centred, teaching and/or research focused, collegially organised and possible politically active which he terms 'Professional Knowledge' (p. 29). Thus, this change from a professional focus to a management accountability focus has left many middle-level leader-academics constrained within a "framework of target driven accountability requirements" (Gronn, 2003, p. 93). He argues that it is these "environmental imperatives" which are now shaping the roles of education leaders. This is illustrated well by Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) observation in their study of the changing role of the middle-level leader-academic:

> "As the university have been compelled by government funding decisions to become more entrepreneurial and service orientated, so that they are increasingly customer-driven rather than producer-driven, the management of relationships with the external world has become more vital" (p. 194).

Despite this, much of the literature suggests that the range of formal responsibilities appear similar within both types of university (Bolton, 2000; Jackson, 1999; Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007; Knight and Trowler, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Aziz et al., 2005). Such functions include the setting and maintenance of academic standards, monitoring academic quality across the faculty, organising teaching and research, acquisition and management of resources, implementation of university policy, public relations and student and staff retention.

However, whilst the sets of tasks and responsibilities are broadly similar between faculties and institutions, Johnson (2002) in her study of leader-academics, found that the relative importance of each task, the exact means leaders engaged to achieve each and the goals they worked towards, differed in respect of the institutional and disciplinary contexts in which they worked. Middlehurst (1993) also suggests the importance attributed to the various functions may be different between heads of faculties and members of staff of those faculties. For example, it is clear that heads of faculty are aware that managing performance to meet targets is a vital role, whereas members of the faculty attribute more importance to being an advocate for the faculty and developing long range plans.

In addition to the myriad administration duties, which, according to Bolton (2000), takes up to 70 per cent of their time, many leaders retain some of their research (chartered university) or teaching responsibilities (statutory university) as faculty members (Aziz et al., 2001). Consequently, leader-academics have to:

> "combine routine maintenance, long-term planning and performance review with encouragement for department growth, development and collaboration" (Middlehurst, 1993, p. 134).

Whilst many leader-academics bemoaned the effects of the heavy workload on their personal academic profiles, some reporting to work over 60 hours per week in Smith's (2007) study, most enjoyed their role "in shaping the future of their departments" (p. 5). There are, therefore, obvious tensions and conflicts inherent in such a diverse range of functions within one role and between faculties. The ambiguity of the leader-academic role and the dual identity of the position is noted frequently in the literature, that of manager/leader and of academic colleague (Middlehurst, 1993; Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Deem, 2003). How leader-academics enact this role, according to Knight and Trowler (2001), will depend on six

factors within a 'given framework' constructed by the institution. These are: firstly, the nature of the activity as defined by the participants; secondly, the community of practice in which they operate; thirdly, the identity of the individual which is likely to be multiple, dynamic and situational contingent; fourthly, the meaning attributed to the role; fifthly, the discourse in which they operate; and finally, the technology available which will affect practice (p. 49).

In the first instance, this framework can be seen to be established in the method of appointment of the head of faculty. Within chartered universities, head of faculty roles are fixed term, rotating and filled on the basis of "staff consultation and peer election" (Deem, 2003, p. 245), whereas statutory university appointments tend to be through external advertising, management decisions and on a more permanent basis (Smith, 2002; Jackson, 1999). This, in turn, affects the way heads of faculties fulfil the responsibilities of their role. Deem (2003) suggests that, if the appointment is by management decision, then heads of faculties adopt a more managerial approach (with the accompanying responsibilities), than if the appointment is as a result of election. The role of head of faculty in the statutory universities is seen as a substantive appointment of: "line managers allocating duties within the overall workload agreement" (Jackson, 1999, p. 147).

Despite this 'management' emphasis, Jackson (1999) points out that the role is still very different from a line manager in industry. The collegiate emphasis and the professional status of academic staff serve to restrict the head of faculty role. He argues that heads of faculty reflect the university structure in which they operate. Similarly, Middlehurst (1993) argues that faculties are production units of universities and so leadership of the faculty is limited

within the confines of the structure imposed on them. This can be seen in Smith's (2005) research of two departments in a chartered and a statutory university in middle England. He concluded that the different emphasis on research and teaching in the two departments is:

> "reflected in almost every aspect of the way in which they are organised, managed and led. In the chartered university, the focus on research permeates every aspect of the way in which the department operates" (p. 454).

Knight and Trowler (2001) however, suggest that faculties are more sites of "cultural hammering, where culture is enacted and constructed" (p. 56) and argue that heads of faculty operate "within a web of localised meaning" and that they will apply meaning to their role which is "related contextually identified positioning" (p. 59). They argue that faculties operate within an open system and so are not only subject to internal institutional demands and external financial, assessment and target pressures, but also by other dimensions of cultural, ideological and technical influences. To some extent, this confers with Deem's (2004) recent analysis of changes within universities arguing that they are increasingly being influenced by globalisation (global spread of economic, social and cultural practices), internationalisation (sharing of ideas, knowledge and the way of doing things), managerialism and entrepreneurialism. As a result, Knight and Trowler (2001), in particular, believe that there needs to be a value system to enable heads of faculty to "add value" (p. 63) and that heads of faculty's role is more important than often recognised. This is particularly evident in the chartered universities, where appointments are less formal and indeed many heads of faculties "sought actively to avoid taking the role", suggesting that to be head of faculty was an "unwelcome interruption to research or teaching" (Bolton, 2002, p. 57). In fact, Smith (2002) illustrates this by quoting figures of the degree of loyalty heads of departments have to their own departments. In his research he found that 76 per cent of heads of departments in statutory universities believe their first loyalty is to their department,

whereas 53 per cent of heads of departments do in chartered universities. Hellawell and

Hancock's (2001) study found that the majority of leaders clearly wished to maintain some

academic profile, generally "regretting it could not be a greater one" (p. 184). This obviously

has implications for the degree of importance that they attach to the role. However, as Deem

(2003) argues, "new managerialism" has the potential to change both the culture and the

organisational form of the faculty. It is interesting to note that Deem (2003) suggests that

some women in particular may:

> "seek to subvert the intentions of new managerialism, using an approach informed
> little by adherence to the values of markets and business, but rather by valuing
> women's use of soft or people management skills" (p. 243).

This resonates with both Bolton's (2000) and Smith's (2002) observations of the heads of

departments' loyalties and resistance to change imposed on them.

Enacting Leadership

Having discussed the dichotomy of the roles and responsibilities attributed to the leaders'

role, it is now pertinent to review how leaders are able to enact their roles and

responsibilities within the context in which they operate. It would seem that a combination of

transactional leadership to fulfil the managerial side of their role and post-transformational

leadership to fulfil the leadership side, is necessary. Transactional leadership involves the

simple exchanges and operational aspects necessary in leadership (Northhouse, 2001),

whereas transformational leadership, and particularly post-transformational leadership

involves the strategic elements such as direction setting, developing people and redesigning

the organisation (Gunter, 2001).

Implicit in being able to enact the leadership roles is the capacity or potential of the leader to influence the beliefs, attitudes and actions of others. This can be through either 'Positional' power legitimised by the status and title of the leader or through 'Personal' power based on connections with influential people, expertise, skills or knowledge and the personal qualities of the leader, or through a combination of both. The latter combination is usually associated with influence and 'power with' where there is no recourse to sanctions linked to authority (Wallace, 1998) and resonates with Mintzberg's (1983) view that leadership is earned by gaining the respect of others whereas the former has the ability to apply sanctions if necessary and thus allowing 'power over' subordinates.

Much of the literature which discusses leadership in higher education (Middlehurst, 1993; Jackson, 1999; Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007) laments the lack of positional power afforded to the middle-level leader-academic. For example, Middlehurst (1993) discusses how heads of faculties feel ill-equipped for their role and express their concern about "the power and authority at their disposal and the difficulties of managing academics" (p. 138), in other words, the degree of positional power that their position affords. She illustrates this well by quoting one interviewee:

> "Heads of departments in universities have no effective managerial power and operate by inspiring or engineering consent" (p. 138).

Although this lack of positional power is limited, Middlehurst (1993) goes on to argue that middle-level leader-academics do have personal power, although this may not be limited within the university context. She believes that "influence, authority (and even power)" (p. 139) for the middle-level leader-academic:

> "comes from several sources: their formal position and statutory obligations; their professional expertise; and their personal style and characteristics" (p. 139).

However, Jackson (1999) disputes this, by suggesting that although leader-academics have "new levers" to allow influence over such areas as reward and promotion, they still have very little power to determine the end result. The majority of Jackson's (1999) discussion proceeds to illustrate how little positional power middle-level leader-academics actually have, in all areas of their role, but particularly in managing performance. He discusses how leader-academics allocate workloads according to faculty needs and individual ability but declares it is a "blunt instrument when it comes to taking action against under performance" (p. 145). Likewise, leader-academics have considerable powers in recruitment and appointment of new appointees and are expected to monitor and report on performance of staff in the probationary period. However, they have no authority to take the final decision.

Similarly, in Smith's (2002, 2005, 2007) research he found that leader-academics have great difficulty in dealing with underperformance and 'problem' staff and this was largely due to the "perception that they had insufficient authority or support from above in attempting to deal with these issues" (2002, p. 305). This is echoed in Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) study where the leader-academics that they interviewed felt that they had very few sanctions of any kind to deal with staff under their control. This lack of positional power gives rise to the perception of the "followers", in this case the lecturers do not believe leader-academics have legitimacy or access to the necessary resources to enable performance to be dealt with satisfactorily. Bolton (2000) suggests this is partly due to "the vagueness of the academic contract" (p. 62). However, Jackson (1999) suggests that the extent of power to deal with such matters does, to some extent, depend on the method of appointment of the leader-academic. Where leaders are appointed, rather than elected, he believes they may be more effective as a result of the clear statement that they have a managerial role and are

managerial appointees and thus have more explicit powers and responsibilities than if appointed by election. In this way they reflect Dowding's (1996) "power over" the "powerless" by nature of their appointment.

Despite this, Jackson's (1999) research indicates that there is a belief that leader-academics have "insufficient power to exercise the pressure required to bring the desired reward" (p. 144). However, it would also appear that it is not just the absence of levers, but that a view exists within 'the system' that "professionalism and collegiality challenges the right of the head of department to judge" (p. 146). Jackson concludes that the head of department has a limited role to play and that little thought is given to the "levers they need to be able to use to do their jobs" (p. 148). This is a very bleak view of their role and not one to which all subscribe. Indeed, this notion of collegiality is one way of overcoming some of this lack of positional power.

Collegiality as defined by Bush (1995) is:

> "power shared among some or all members of the organisation who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution" (p. 52).

The extent to which collegiality still exists at middle-level leader-academic level is the main issue explored in the study by Hellawell and Hancock (2001). In their interviews with middle-level leader-academics, none considered an autocratic style of management as productive or possibly functional at middle leadership level. Collegiality was considered by nearly all their interviewees as the most effective form of decision making for leader-academics in higher education. In a more recent study (Rhodes et al., 2007) seven facets were identified which broadly represented 'collegial' and were deemed the most satisfying. Consequently, commitment and engagement to proposed changes and decisions could only

be achievable if the 'hearts and minds' of staff were won over. This 'organisation of consent' (Handy, 1977), therefore, could give the leader very little effective power, as it is only won by the consent of those you seek to manage and is transient depending on the circumstances. However, there is one particular advantage of collegiality that Hellawell and Hancock (2001) found. This was that collegiality could be used as an agency of control by putting pressure on individual members of staff who dissented from the decisions collectively made. However, it was recognised by the respondents in Hellawell and Hancock's study (2001) that, despite collegiality being the preferred decision-making method, some decisions had to be taken where no consensus had been possible. Positional power gave leader-academics the authority to do this, but the decisions could only be effective after a lengthy process of consultation and discussion had taken place.

This is similar to Knight and Trowler's (2001) suggestion that the power of the middle-level leader-academic is more subtle and any action needed should occur in a "web of localised meaning" (p. 59). They believe leader-academics need to enact their role as being a member of a community and be more aware of the consequences of action upon their faculty's. Power, will therefore, be developed and is more akin to Foucault's (1979) version of power where "micro techniques" create the web of power and they and the lecturers with them become prisoners within it.

It would, therefore, seem a combination of strategies is necessary for leaders to enact leadership successfully. Blase and Anderson (1995) suggest leaders in schools use power in a variety of ways to shape the work of colleagues and students. The sources of power on which leaders draw are multi-faceted and only partially relate to the authority that is associated with

the post (Busher, 2001). Empowering employees is increasingly seen in the literature as the most likely way to promote social cohesion and collegiality that can lead to improved practice (MacBeath and MacDonald, 2000). However, Busher (2005) is doubtful of the extent genuine collegiality can be achieved, when leaders are operating in hierarchical organisations. This is due to the fact that some people have greater access to power than others.

Despite this, Muijs and Harris (2003) point to recent studies of effective leadership which claim that authority to lead need not be located in the person of the leader but can be dispersed between and among people in an education institution. They go on to identify the advantages of dispersed leadership as providing meaningful development for the staff involved, that it nurtures a real sense of ownership and draws upon sources of expertise and information. They also found in their research that it enhances self-esteem and work satisfaction as well as the possibility of higher levels of retention. In this way, a professional learning community is created, where those involved have a shared sense of purpose, engage in collaborative works, and accept joint responsibility of the outcomes of their work. Positional power becomes unnecessary, as personal power and the empowerment of the individual becomes the preferred leadership model. For leaders of academics, who are notoriously difficult to manage, it would seem that empowerment and dispersed leadership, described as 'servant leadership' by Greenleaf (1997), is a way to compensate for the lack of positional power as highlighted in the research.

Summary

It is clear that leader-academics are increasingly expected to carry out a role which holds a complex array of responsibilities both operational and strategic in nature. The increase in managerialism has compounded this and has left many leader-academics being accountable to a number of stakeholders with differing priorities. Despite this, the degree of positional power has not increased to enable them to enact such a complex role. As a result, most leader-academics continue to embrace collegiality and their own personal power as a means of engaging their staff to assist in meeting the objectives of the faculty and stakeholder expectations. This is not without problems, not least in dealing with difficult staff who do not share the same vision and are disengaged from the whole process. Nevertheless, combining distributed and post-transformational leadership is, generally, accepted in the literature as a means to enact the role successfully.

In order to research and address the second research question it is necessary to firstly: investigate the relevance of life history as an approach in being able to identify how much of what leaders do is learnt, taught and acquired; and secondly, it is necessary to review some of the key issues involved in leaders being able to recount their life history. This shall be discussed in the next chapter, chapter three.

Chapter Three

Life History

Life History and its Significance for Leadership Development

Parker (2002) argues that life history plays a "crucial part in developing moral values and attributes" (p. 10) of a leader and it is this, he suggests, which may determine why they aspire to, and become, leaders. Similarly, Taffinder (1995) argues that leadership is "about experience, about failure and knowing yourself" (p. 36). Life history, therefore, provides a means of exploring these aspects as Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) affirm:

> "Imperative that a leader's knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as the significant and relevant events in their life histories and past experiences, be acknowledged as key filters through which meanings of best practice are distilled" (p. 168).

Similarly, Parker (2002) concludes that if capable leaders are to be created, then the person cannot be ignored: "together with his or her life history, in both recognising and nurturing the special qualities they bring to this pivotal role" (p. 13).

Life history studies indicate that people develop their views and values over long periods of time and that these experiences continue to influence and affect the way leaders lead. Butt et al. (1988) argue that leadership: "is grounded as much, if not more so, in life history than just current contexts and actions: it is autobiographic in character" (p. 68).

Busher (2003) lends further support to this position, by arguing that life histories are useful to leaders to help them understand themselves better and reflect on how they work with other people. Usher (1995), however, argues that suggestions that knowledge emerges from the

experiences of self are "powerful assumptions" (p. 179) and that such an approach is much more "complex in its message and equivocal in its efforts than conventional educational thinking assumes" (p. 179). Whilst this is true, and relies on a high degree of self-knowledge, the purpose of life history is not to seek generalisations but to seek enlightenment for both individual and reader for consideration and possible application when developing themselves and others.

Olesen (2001) agrees with this line of argument, by suggesting the life history approach questions learning processes and how this helps to form professional identity. He argues that the subjective relationship to a profession and, more specifically, to a job, are grounded in a life history context and, therefore, are very individual. He suggests a life history approach enables exploration of the "subjective contribution of the learning process to the profession and its development" (p. 4). He further argues that:

> "the relation of the individual to developments in work, to learning and to continuing education is deeply interwoven in the meaning universes of life history" (p. 4).

and thus leadership development and learning is a combination of historical and subjective processes.

Kelchterman's (1993) work uses the life history approach to focus on the personal perception and subjective meaning of experiences of the teacher. The self and subjective education theory, he argues, are valid indicators of professional development. He bases his research and the question of understanding teacher's professional development by reconstructing their career stories.

What all these researchers have in common is that they see life history as a means of helping our understanding of leadership.

Professional Identity and the Knowledge of 'Self'

The pursuit of professional identity and enactment of 'self' is a central aspect of life history. The following discussion identifies how and why this is the case and the relevance it has to this study.

Despite the emergence of professional identity as a separate research area in the last decade, there is no single definition to explain exactly what the concept means (Beijaard et al., 2004). There is common agreement, however, that identity is not a fixed attribute of a person, but is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences within a given context. The post-modernist view of self, to which I subscribe, is that self is strongly related to how people organise their experiences in their life history, which could, therefore, differ in time and context, but allows individuals to understand who they are and what they would like to become. As a result, influences of historical, sociological, psychological and cultural factors may all impact on a leader's sense of self as a leader. If this line of argument is followed through, it would, therefore, seem that 'self' is inseparable from a person's life history and, so, it is impossible to speak about 'self' when there is no reflection. Taking a life history approach to research allows individuals to reflect and to gain a greater understanding of how leaders have learnt to lead both for the respondent and the researcher. This can be seen in Busher's (2005) research of middle leaders, in which he highlights how childhood experiences, parents and colleagues shaped his subjects' views and values on teaching,

learning and leading. He also found that promotion shaped their sense of work-related identity, their views of themselves being bound up with the formal positions they held within the school hierarchy. In this way, professional identities were developed through a combination of historical biography and professional experience.

However, it is also important to recognise that, when relating this to a life history approach, the narrative of events comes to represent a period of individual's lives, compressed into "one moment of self-narration" (Kehily, 1995, p. 24). Equally, as Kehily (1995) argues, how we see ourselves, our identity, is subject to reformulation in a variety of ways according to the audience and, therefore, we may have a different version of identity according to where, when and how we articulate it. Part of our life history can be omitted, embellished or reframed according to the impression that we want to portray of ourselves. In other words, identity is expressed as outward articulations as a product of the social interaction, rather than an individual's inner thoughts. As a result, a reconstruction of past events is likely to be placed within the 'framework of present concerns' (Kehily, 1995, p. 26). Malus and Wuf (1987, in Kehily, 1995) use the term "self concept of the moment" understood as a "continually active, shifting array of accessible self knowledge" (p. 306).

Similarly, individual memory plays a large part in shaping and telling their 'story'. Memory can be selective, leaving huge gaps and giving moments of extreme clarity. Identity construction is, therefore, an interrelationship between past and present. Olesen (2001), in his study of professional identity as learning processes in life history, also sees identity as being a "field for an ongoing subjectivity" (p. 3). However, rather than it being subjective, according to the audience as a likely interpretation, it is more as a result of the individual's

ability to reproduce experience in relation to actual reality. It is this reality which is subject to individual perception, subjective orientations and meanings. He argues that perception of identity is also interrelated to learning processes of individuals within their profession and general development. In this way, 'professional' identity can guide and develop the individual but could also restrict the learning potential.

Usher (1995) believes:

> "changing and shifting identity is 'fixed' and anchored by the act of writing" and that "life itself is conceived as social text, a fictional narrative production where difference is repressed and time suppressed in a demand for certainty" (p. 2).

This view assumes that individuals are almost incapable of resolving the tension between seeing ourselves as the object and how other people influence and present it. Giddens (1991) argues that how the tensions between external and internal views of self are resolved depends on individual "histories and experience and social and psychological needs" (p. 3). My position in this is that although individuals may not be able to resolve the tensions between external and internal views, they may move to a state of cognitive dissonance where they come to accept and recognise the difference without the need for resolving them.

Busher (2003) takes a similar view arguing that:

> "leaders and managers awareness of self is constructed through their interactions with other people, developing a changing awareness of other people's needs and also of themselves as other people perceive them" (p. 3).

This requires conscious reflection and has been encouraged through the centuries to promote a greater understanding of the individual's sense of self, the interdependence of people and with their environment (Busher, 2003; Beijaard et al., 2004). I would also argue that it also depends to what extent individuals are not only consciously aware of the impact of these interactions, but also how much they are able to learn from this and, by doing so, develop

their own understanding of people's personal and social needs, views and expectations, in other words, what Goleman (1995) terms as 'emotional intelligence'. For any 'people workers', understanding people's actions in terms of how they construct their self-identity in particular contexts is critical to being able to work with them successfully. For leaders at any level, a sound understanding of other people is central to success in their role (Busher, 2005).

These social interactions, as Busher (2003), argues also serve to develop notions of power and that in developing identities, particularly in the work context, people have to "contend with the power relationships that operate" (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 149). Central to self-identity is also their notion of power and how it affects their sense of agency. The degree of empowerment and control all builds upon the person's sense of self and is directly related to the position within which they operate and how much power they are able to enact. Usher (1995) suggests that, maybe, this fragmentation of identity is something we just need to accept and that it is inevitable "that the self will be invented and reinvented" (p. 186).

As can be seen from this discussion, professional identity and knowledge of 'self' is complex. It is made up of a variety of elements, grounded in people's individual life histories, personalities and work-related experiences. The ability to reflect on their experiences and understand their own professional identities allows them to effectively don the mantle of their respective ascribed role and to have a better understanding of themselves and of those they lead.

The Journey to Leadership

When studying life history, education researchers have tended to bring together shared features and anchored them around core themes (Gronn, 1999). Both Kelchtermans (1993) and Parker (2002) use critical incidents, significant people and phases as "heuristic tools in analysing the career stories" (Kelchtermans, 1993, p. 447), whilst others (Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Gronn, 1999; Coleman, 2002; Ribbins, 2003) have used stages and phases of leadership to develop a conceptual model of leaders within a "longitudinal framework" (Gronn, 1999, p. 22).

Stages of Leadership

Gronn (1999) termed the first stages of influence on a leader as the "Formation" stage and this encompasses the period from "infancy to adulthood", identifying family, schooling and peer reference groups as important in providing the "scaffolding of a character structure" (p. 32).

The second stage, "Accession" (Gronn, 1999, p. 34), is the time of "grooming" where individuals experience a range of roles, equipping themselves with a variety of skills and begin to assemble and rehearse a "role repertoire" (p. 36) which will provide a firm foundation upon which to draw for higher roles. It is in this stage, where an individual's strong motivation to achieve may first be realised, which Gronn (1999) suggests, to be effective, needs to be accompanied by a strong sense of individual self belief and the associated feelings of one's "worth and value" (p. 36) which are developed in the Formation stage.

The third stage, that of "Incumbency", is about the period of headship. Gronn (1999) suggests that if, at this stage, the roles that leaders take are "congruent with personal needs" then they will "be able to go some way to meet their need to self actualise" (p. 38).

The fourth and final stage is that of "Divestiture" where leaders may well lose their "psychological grip" (p. 39), whether this be due to circumstances impacting on them and therefore involuntary or unplanned, or it may be more a voluntary, planned stage of the leader's career as retirement approaches.

Day and Bakioglu (1996), in their study of head teachers' lives and careers, identify a series of developmental phases and sub phases undergone by heads which are compatible with Gronn's (1999) framework. Their starting point, however, is at the "Initiation" stage where heads are already in role and, therefore, could be considered as sub phases or steps within Gronn's Incumbency stage. Like Gronn (1999), Day and Bakioglu (1996) suggest that there are "multiple pathways and trajectories through different phases of head teachers' lives" (p. 206).

There are four stages of Day and Bakioglu's (1996) model: Initiation, Development, Autonomy and Disenchantment. The Initiation stage is characterised by two key processes: learning on the job and working within the existing institution's framework. They suggest that idealism, uncertainty and adjustment are three sub phases within this stage. The Initiation stage is followed by a Development phase where consolidation and extension takes place. Day and Bakioglu (1996) describe this as the "most active, most satisfactory, most

rewarding phase" (p. 212) of the leader's career and can be compared to the feeling of "self actualisation" which Gronn (1999, p. 38) describes as a possible outcome of the Incumbency stage. The third phase that Day and Bakioglu (1996) depict is that of Autonomy, which can be seen as having both positive and negative effects upon individual development and leadership effectiveness. In this phase, heads still have self-confidence, but their control can be under threat, due to the restrictions placed upon them through government initiatives and institution requirements, so directly affecting their ability to control their own sense of agency. If this lack of control persists so much so that they begin to lose a sense of vision, heads may then enter the fourth phase, that of Disenchantment. Characteristics of this stage include: "lack of confidence, enthusiasm and increasing personal fatigue" (Day & Bakioglu, 1996, p. 224).

Ribbins' (2003) more recent study confirmed this broad pattern of career stages, incorporating both Day and Bakioglu's (1996) four phases and Gronn's (1999) four stages to propose a modified framework which suggests "two ideal typical pathways or routes to and through headship" (Ribbins, 2003, p. 63).

Like Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003) suggests a formation stage where key agencies impact and shape the kind of people "that prospective head teachers become" (p. 64). Similarly, Ribbins (2003) describes the second stage of "Accession" as that time when individuals seek experience and leadership roles in preparation for future headship positions. Ribbins (2003) notes that, in hindsight, few leaders actually see this stage as one of deliberate planning in order to pursue a course leading to headship. This can be compared to McCall's (2000) "serving time" (p. 23) in order to achieve their final destination. Coleman (2002), in her

study of women as head teachers, suggests that there is a "lack of planning and even an element of surprise in finding themselves a head teacher" (p. 33) and, thus, the 'grooming' stage may go unnoticed by the participant at the time.

It is in the third stage, that of Incumbency, where Ribbins (2003) suggests an alternative to Gronn's (1999) model and builds on Day and Bakioglu's (1996) four phases. Ribbins (2003) suggests that leaders can take one of two main routes at this stage, each of which consists of four sub phases. The first three sub phases are the same as Day and Bakioglu (1996) suggest: Initiation, Development and Autonomy, but with a fourth sub phase of Disenchantment or Enchantment. This is dependent on whether the leader has negative feelings (disillusion and loss of commitment) or positive feelings (confidence and competence) at this stage. Whereas Day and Bakioglu (1996) depict a downwardly spiralling process leading to disillusionment, or in Gronn's (1999) term 'Divestiture', Ribbins (2003) suggests that although this disenchantment indeed may happen, there is also an alternative, that of enchantment. If this latter phase occurs, the leader will remain enchanted with headship and will continue to be motivated by professional satisfaction, relationships with colleagues and maintain a balance between home and school life. The final phase, that of 'Moving on' focuses on leaving headship. It deals with the direction that head teachers take once they divest themselves from office. If the head teacher is able to remain motivated and 'enchanted' then they can look forward to reinvention and pursue a different interest or occupation. However, if the head teacher becomes 'Disenchanted' they face the prospect of Divestiture and, to some, welcome retirement. Figure 1 summarises these three models discussed.

Stages	Gronn (1999)	Day and Bakioglu (1996)	Ribbins (2003)
Phases			
1	Formation		Formation
	↓		↓
2	Accession		Accession
	↓		↓
3	Incumbency		Incumbency
1		Initiation	Initiation
		↓	↓
2		Development	Development
		↓	↓
3		Autonomy	Autonomy
		↓	↓
4	Divestiture	Disenchantment	Disenchantment/ Enchantment
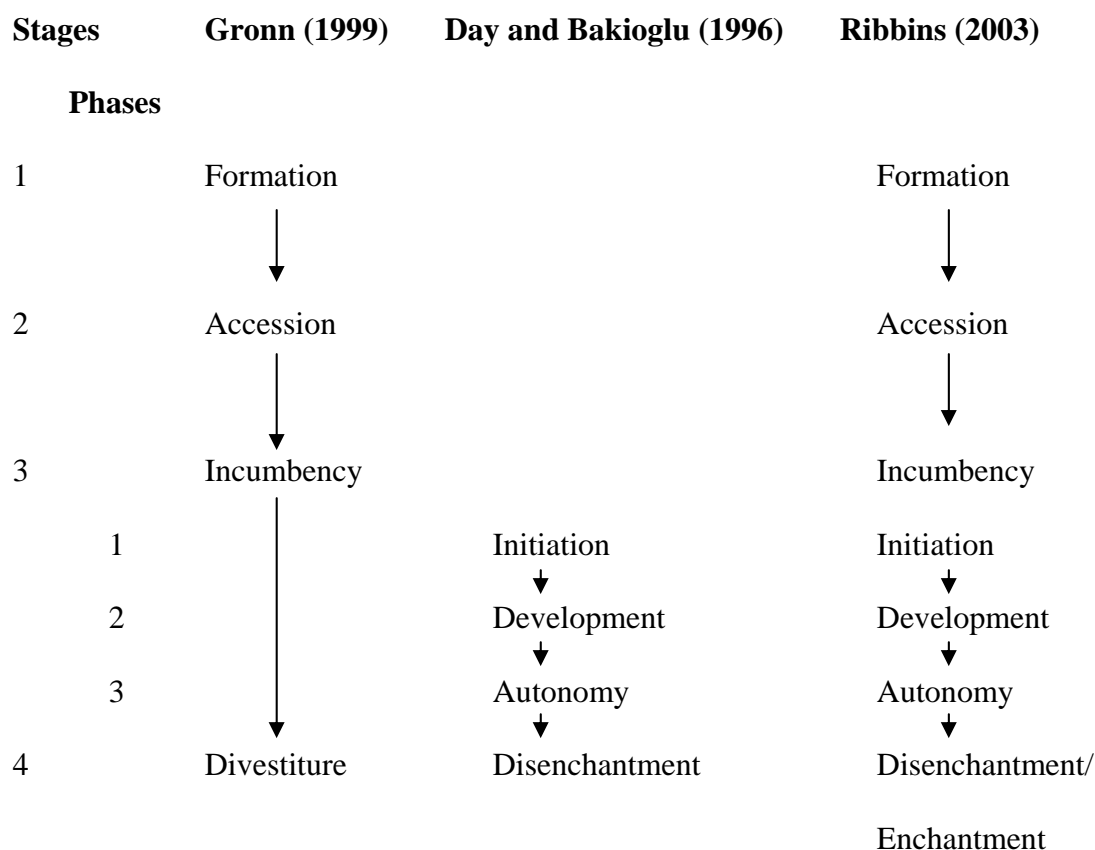
Figure 1. A summary of the stages and phases of leadership

Coleman (2002) merges her earlier model of career stages (Hall, 1996) with the Van Eck (1996) model, to produce her version of distinct career stages of head teachers. She suggests a preparation stage where initial qualifications may be obtained, an establishment stage of entering teaching and the lower levels of management, an advancement or development career stage involving gaining new experiences, further qualifications and a final acquisition stage when headship is achieved.

Taysum (2004), on the other hand, proposes a framework to identify the formation of the leaders self. She argues that there are four dimensions which are "vital to understand how leaders learn" (p. 10) and that it is necessary to move beyond a linear analysis to one which

explores the interplay between " the exercise of agency and the structure that shape and control that agency" (p. 10). In this way, she argues that leadership is deconstructed to give a greater insight as "to how leaders learn to become leaders" (p. 11). Similarly, Johnson (2002) in her study of higher education leaders, did not refer to stages in leadership development but to incremental stages where, over time, leadership becomes more appealing as experience and an increased academic profile rendered them eligible for more senior positions.

This approach I would argue, is more akin to Parker's (2002) and Kelchterman's (1993) approach of not only considering life phases but also other aspects such as critical incidents and people. Although Taysum (2004) affirms this, she also goes beyond this approach and explores it within an intellectual, emotional and spiritual context.

Critical Incidents

According to Tripp (1993), critical incidents in educational research are created and are not something existing independently of an observer awaiting discovery. Critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation, an interpretation of the significance of an event or incident. What makes an incident 'critical' is that it is memorable and interpreted as significant by what it means.

Much of the research on life history, which incorporates critical incidents, reaches a similar conclusion. Gronn (1999) discusses "critical turning points" (p. 28) in his phases of leadership development. He suggests that they can be in the form of temporary set backs which is part of the course within career progression.

Likewise, Parker (2002) in his study of the impact of life history on leadership, termed critical incidents as "defining moments" (p. 25). The importance of these are illustrated in his concluding remarks about the head teachers in his study, where he suggests that such experience "helped them define their educational philosophies and hone their skills" (p. 25) and so believed much of their life history influenced their leadership style. These defining moments were seen as "motivational drivers" (p. 33) which: "created the deep-seated sense of vocation that these heads have carried with them throughout their careers" (p. 34).

Goodson and Walker (1991) reached a similar conclusion when studying the life history of teachers arguing, that critical incidents in: "teachers' lives and specifically in their work which may crucially affect perception and practice" (p. 24).

Knight and Trowler's (2001) review of the roles of leader-academics in higher education argue that they need seven types of knowledge and suggest some ways in which leaders might develop them. Reviewing critical incidents and significant friends are some of the ways they suggest to develop and sustain the first form of knowledge in their list, that of 'control knowledge' (p. 168).

Reflection on incidents is, therefore, required if some experiences are to become 'critical incidents'. The study of life history allows this reflection to take place and the construction of their own perceptions of personal experience and thus the meaning these experiences have on the respondent. According to Angelides (2001), it is also an efficient technique of gathering qualitative data because a large amount of qualitative data can be collected covering a wide time span.

Significant People

There is general agreement within the literature that critical people are "strategically located personnel" who "contribute to the mode and speed of career advancement" (Gronn, 1999, p. 28).

Dhunpath (2000) discusses how the "interpersonal context" describing critical people as "significant others" such as parents, mentors, colleagues and peers as: "both powerful positive and negative influences that shape an educator's practice" (p. 546).

Similarly, Parker (2002) also discusses the importance of mentors who were responsible for shaping the thinking of those leaders that he studied "at intensely formative moments of their lives" and goes on to say they "were crucial to preparing these heads for leadership roles" (p. 35). Ribbins (2003) reiterates this importance at the formative stage and believes that they are partly responsible for influencing and shaping "the kinds of people that prospective head teachers become" (p. 63). Coleman (2002) suggests that the significance of critical people is particularly important for female leaders, as they also provide role models for them. One of her respondents illustrates this by saying that the critical person for her was a head that: "encouraged me to go for headship and probably more than any other person in my career" (p. 26).

Kelchterman (1993) finds the use of critical people as well as incidents and phases as "very useful heuristic tools in exploring the career stories" (p. 446) but also as theoretical concepts. He uses both concepts to illustrate the influence they have on the professional commitment

and job satisfaction of the teachers in his study, both in a positive and negative way. It also proves useful in "reconstructing the (development of) the professional self from the career stories" (p. 448).

In the latter stages of their career and, particularly, for more senior leadership roles, Johnson (2002) found that leader-academics' contact with experts in their field was of great help in learning how to lead. These people became significant in shaping and developing their leadership capability, particularly in the absence of any formal training or development.

Summary

It would seem that researchers are in broad agreement that leaders, certainly within the compulsory education sector, do go through distinct life stages and that critical incidents and significant people do have an impact on how leaders learn to lead. The research in this study seeks to establish if this is also the case for leaders in higher education.

<center>**Chapter Four**</center>

<center>**Professional Development and Training**</center>

Professional Development and Training for Leadership

The increasing emphasis on 'managerialism' in which education institutions are given greater autonomy, are exposed to market pressures and are expected to manage continuous improvement in their performance, places an emphasis on the importance of leadership and the management of education change. Equally, the range of responsibilities attributed to the leader-academic role demonstrates how much leaders need to learn in order to lead. The volatility of the higher education climate also adds a further layer to the need for learning, development and support for the leader-academic. Despite this, there is a surprising shortage of research or books on professional development for middle-level leader-academics. Those which do cover different leadership activities (for example: Bolton, 2000; Smith, 2002, 2005; Prichard, 2000) tend to treat leadership as a generic activity, with details of what leaders do rather than how they should develop in order to learn to lead, although Smith (2007) does begin to address this in his most recent work. Perhaps it is even more surprising that many universities provide little or no formal training (Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2005). A common difficulty identified by many new leader-academics in Smith's (2007) research is that the majority lacked preparedness for the role and had received no leadership or management training before and following their appointment. The training that did exist tended to be on issues related to health and safety, equality and administration systems rather than specifically leadership development. This finding may explain why few in the study by Rhodes et al. (2007) held notions of professional development as an agency of motivation or

satisfaction. Similarly, Aziz et al. (2005) lament the lack of training "despite it being an issue that has been discussed by researchers for over thirty years" (p. 573).

This is in stark contrast to the increasing national emphasis placed on leadership development at school and further education level (James and Vince, 2001). For example, leadership features prominently in school inspections (Office for Standards in Education: OFSTED), it has an important focus in the scrutiny of local education authority (LEA) monitoring and review (Teacher Training Agency, 1998) (TTA); a leadership college for schools has been established and a national professional qualification for head teachers (NPQH) has been developed. Further to these initiatives, programmes have also been designed to support and develop head teachers who are both new to the post and for longer serving head teachers. Similarly, in further education, 'The Centre for Excellence in Leadership' (CEL) has been established since 2003 to "ensure world-class leadership within the learning and skills sector" (www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/leadership/cel). Whilst it is recognised that the 'Leadership Foundation for Higher Education' has been established more recently to highlight the importance of leadership development within higher education, nationally the focus appears to be much lower key than in the school and FE sectors.

Arguably, leaders in higher education are subject to equal change as that in the school and further educational sectors and so the importance of effective leadership is as important. However, due to the complexities of leadership at department and faculty level which have developed since the 1992 Education Reform Act, it would seem that learning to lead needs to be far more bespoke and contextualised for each leader and within individual faculties and universities. Blackmore and Blackwell (2006) concur with this view, arguing that a generic

approach which assumes that leaders all have the same concerns and motivations and that these are unchanging, is unlikely to be successful.

It is likely that leader's time will be dominated by tasks that are quite different from the interest in research or teaching that vivified their careers to date (Knight and Trowler, 2001). As a consequence, Knight and Trowler (2001) argue that learning to lead should include recognition that the leadership role has the potential to: "erode the self identity that has brought career success" (p. 166).

They also suggest that part of learning to lead will involve being more isolated, to put the interests of the institution as high or higher than their faculty or team. As a consequence, it may also involve being criticised for the decisions that they will have to make. Keeping up with the needs and wants of the university's customers and managing the relationships with the external world is ever more demanding for the leader-academic. As collegiality still operates to some extent, gaining general consent for the way forward is more difficult even though it is still seen as a: "vital part of the middle manager's job in higher education to gain the co-operation of staff" (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001, p. 195).

Aziz et al. (2005) note that, although studies allow some sense of the responsibilities of the leader-academic, there appears to be no consensus existing as to which dimensions are most important or around which dimension training programmes should be designed. To go part way in rectifying this, their study details the design, implementation and findings from a formal process of assessing the training needs of the leader-academic within one American

university. Although they do this for only one university, the model is useful in that it could be built upon and tailored to other universities.

Nevertheless, whichever model to which one subscribes, it is apparent that contextual learning is going to be important for leaders. It would be logical to assume that this "contextual learning" (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001) can only be achieved by being exposed to leadership duties earlier on in their career; thus they have a better understanding of the role of leadership before they are appointed (in the case of the statutory university) or have it imposed on them (in the case of the chartered university). Whilst it is relatively straightforward to teach process and knowledge of leadership, as evidenced by the number of generic courses (e.g. www. Leadership-he.com/programmes) and texts (e.g. Bolton, 2000) available in these areas, it would appear that situational knowledge is as important but more difficult to teach.

Knight and Trowler (2001) list the seven types of leadership and management knowledge that they believe leader-academics should gain. These include the following:

1. Control knowledge

2. Knowledge of people

3. Knowledge of educational practice

4. Conceptual knowledge (knowing about management and leadership concepts and research)

5. Process knowledge (processes of leadership and management)

6. Situational knowledge (understanding contingencies that have made the faculty what it is and affect what it might be)

7. Tacit knowledge that integrates the other six forms in expert practice

Adapted from Knight and Trowler (2001, p. 168).

This provides a useful framework from which leaders can begin to establish what they need to learn in order to lead effectively.

Gaining the Knowledge

First, gaining control knowledge is what Knight and Trowler (2001) identify as self-knowledge. They believe this can be gained by reflection either individually by keeping journals or with the help of others. In the latter case, critical incidents and critical people are important as they may influence the individual to do or think about things differently. It is these experiences which can then help the leader learn to lead more effectively. Networking can aid this process before and within the leadership role.

Second, gaining knowledge of people or "people wisdom" (Knight and Trowler, 2001) requires interpersonal intelligence. This is particularly necessary if collegiality is the accepted process of decision making. Leaders need the abilities to listen, cajole, persuade and act with considerable patience, particularly when decisions may be thwarted by individuals making quite unreasonable objections. Knight and Trowler (2001) suggest workshops, reading and skilled mentoring to be good ways of: "disconfirming our working assumptions (prejudices) and extending our understandings" (p. 168).

Third, having knowledge of educational practice is likely to be easier by those who have gained a leadership role through internal appointment. However, it may be one dimensional, depending on their career history and focus. As a result, some may need courses, reading and

continual advice from colleagues to "gain, maintain and use educational knowledge appropriately" (Knight and Trowler, 2001, p. 168).

The fourth and fifth types of knowledge; conceptual and process knowledge, as already discussed, can be gained by general management and leadership courses and specific texts. However, as Knight and Trowler (2001) point out, it is necessary to first decide what it is the leaders specifically need. A best fit then needs to be achieved between what is on offer and the situation in which the leading is to be done. Some stances of leadership programmes may be incompatible with the context of the role of leading the faculty in a particular higher education institution.

These five forms of knowledge of leadership to some degree can, therefore, be acquired 'off the job'. However, it is important to note they will only make practical sense if they can be applied to the context within which the leader is to lead. Where learning is not based on self-generated inquiry and engagement with the process, it is insufficiently owned and inflexible (Johnson, 2002). This is particularly the case in formalised development, where development is structured, reviewed but likely to be 'off the job' and, therefore, learning may be detached from everyday needs. Johnson (2002) is particularly critical of formal learning methods for leader-academics, suggesting that it is a rather "patronising approach to learning and is not necessary" (p. 43). This is because, she argues, leader-academics are developed thinkers, creative researchers and independent problem solvers and so formal classroom-based training is not compatible with their interests, values or relevant to their wider experiences. She further declares 'off the peg' training concerning idealised notions of what constitutes management is "fatally flawed" (p. 49). However, she does concede that formal training

could be valued if it involved activities that articulated formal knowledge through engagement with practical tasks, that it involved peers and colleagues to allow the exchange of experiences and the course was integrated into a coherent programme tailored to the institution.

The debate concerning the merits of 'off the job' and 'on the job' learning is irrelevant to the sixth and seventh forms of Knight and Trowler's (2001) knowledge model. It is without question that situational (sixth) and tacit (seventh) knowledge can only be learnt 'on the job'. As a result, those who work in a school or faculty which they then move on to lead are perhaps the best placed to learn what is involved in leading them. This is succinctly described by Knight and Trowler (2001):

> "Membership of a leadership team can be an introduction to leading, while participating in a well-led department implies: engagement with the range of teaching, development, service and research issues because these are all issues that are brought before all members of the community; the development of habit of reflecting and of discussing the thoughts that are constructed with others; and the practice of continuous learning, and not just learning more about one's specialist area of study" (p. 173).

However, whilst experience is a widely regarded method of learning and development, Johnson (2002) points out that individuals must be mindful that existing knowledge, skills and practices are quickly outdated and as new problems and constraints emerge, new forms of expertise are needed.

This type of informal learning is likely to be unstructured, unclear, unplanned and it is, therefore, doubtful how much development actually takes place. Such experiential learning cannot be just an aggregate of time spent but knowledge needs to be gained through the active interpretation of experience by the learner (Burgoyne and Stuart, 1991). What Johnson

(2002) found particularly worrying in her study of leader-academics was their inability to articulate what they had learnt and how it had come about. Lessons learnt remained tacit knowledge which could be especially problematic if there was the need to rethink their approaches and practices.

I would suggest more beneficial to development is 'Integrated managerial' learning (Mumford, 2004) which still occurs within managerial activities but there are clear development objectives identified and the development is planned and reviewed. This is because research indicates effective learning is embodied in the 'doing' (Sugrue, 2002). Critical reflection is an important component of this process if the experience is to take on particular significance. In this way, learning is real, direct, conscious and probably more substantial than by the accidental method of informal, unplanned learning. However, the challenge here is to bring informal processes of learning in to the development of leaders in keeping with leaders preferred ways of learning. Blackmore and Blackwell (2006) take a similar view suggesting leader-academics need support to learn on the job through mentoring, reflective evaluative review and planning which allows learning and tacit knowledge to be identified, shared and extended. Indeed, Muijs et al. (2006), when looking at leadership development in highly effective further education providers, discuss the perceived effectiveness of experiential forms of professional development which build on the leader's background and needs. They particularly advocate embracing technological developments which allow cost effectiveness and consideration of development opportunities for the individual.

These views are in line with earlier well-known work on learning theories by Kolb (1974) and later developed by Honey and Mumford (1982). They agree that learning from experience can be powerful but also inefficient, unless it is followed up by formal, systematic opportunities to conceptualise the effect of this experience. Kolb's cycle of learning as shown below (Figure 2) depicts this sequence, which he considers is essential if learning is to be sufficient.

Concrete experience

Active experimentation

Reflective observation

Abstract conceptualisation
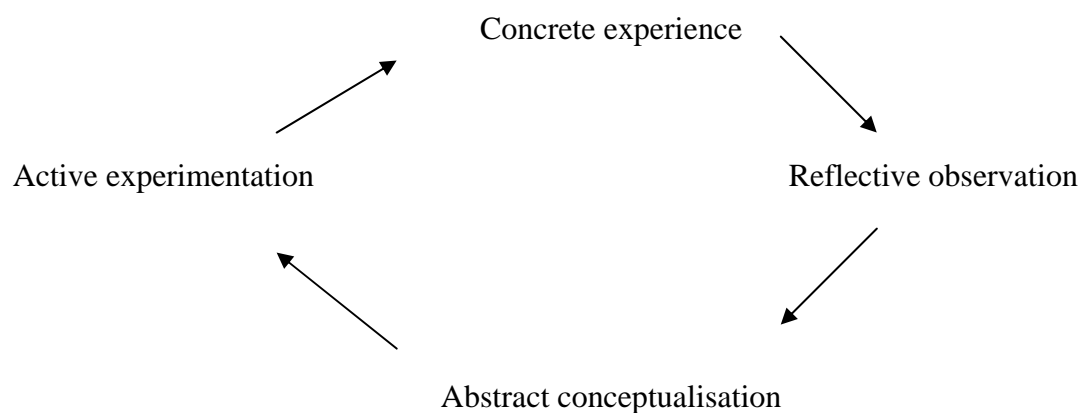
Figure 2. Kolb's (1974) Learning Cycle

 Mumford and Honey (1992) suggest that some are better at learning within some stages than others. It is probably for this reason that O'Mahony and Matthews (2003) suggest that leaders have an obligation and responsibility to become involved in peer assistance, mentoring and coaching to assist in the development of new leaders. They particularly advocate the use of shadowing as a means of increasing understanding and awareness of the depth and breadth of leaders' professional practices and interactions. This is because they firmly believe learning to lead is gradual and that opportunities for reflection are invaluable in developing leaders' skills and own philosophy. Similarly, Smith (2007) recommends opportunities for mentoring and internal networks to discuss 'real life' issues for new leader-academics to gain from the experience of long serving leaders.

Ideally, therefore, it would seem that learning to lead comes from participating and being involved in the faculty before taking on the leadership appointment. As the research has shown (Smith, 2002, 2005), this is the usual case for chartered universities, but for those leaders at statutory universities who are often appointed from outside the institution, it would appear that they may be at a disadvantage.

However, there are other valuable sources of situated learning such as from deans and other members of a faculty's management team and colleagues. In particular, Knight and Trowler (2001) point out that:

> "leaders who have experience of good leaders and who have prepared by thinking systematically about transfer of ideas from the literature to practice are better placed than others" (p. 174).

A drawback of Knight & Trowler's (2001) framework is the apparent equal weighting given to all seven types of knowledge needed. Prioritising training efforts is clearly necessary given the busy schedules, limited university resources and varying degrees of experience of the leaders. Identifying training needs with the highest potential impact on leadership success should be a priority. Aziz et al. (2005) do this by creating a composite priority rating to the training need priorities of the leaders in their study. They found that the training most wanted and perceived to have the most impact was surrounding issues concerning personnel management and budgeting concerns. Similarly, Johnson (2002) found that leader-academics in her study were wanting in areas surrounding financial planning, Human Resources (HR), performance management, procedural, technical and legal issues, whilst Smith (2007) identifies a desire for training which addresses less tangible issues such as 'vision', strategic planning and dealing with staff at a personal level.

The dichotomy of leadership learning in situ is that, although it becomes a product of practice and is gradual over time to allow in-depth understanding of academic culture and work, there remains the potential that when leader-academics take on leadership roles there is still a steep initial learning curve (Johnson 2002). It would, therefore, seem that learning to lead comes from a range of sources. Given the current volatility and change in higher education, training and support should be made available in the form of advice, opportunities for structured individual reflection and regular formal and informal interaction with their peer group. Those who are not as successful at learning to lead may cope and rely on their positional authority to achieve compliance. Those who can learn from the wide spectrum of sources should do more than cope and, instead, be leaders of successful faculties.

Leadership Succession

Leadership succession, or 'following in order', as defined in English dictionaries is a neglected phenomenon in the majority of books concerned with leadership and management in education (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006). However, this apparent lack of planning as to who will fill key posts does not seem to be unique to education.

A recent survey carried out by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2006) compare UK leaders with the rest of the world. It found that leaders in the UK often lacked dedicated attention from their superiors to help them develop in a planned fashion through continuous learning and tend to arrive in leadership positions less well prepared than their counterparts elsewhere. It also found that fewer leadership posts are filled by internal candidates, which also suggests a problem with leadership development and succession. This

is of a particular concern if the best businesses, as argued by Mintzberg (2004), develop their own leaders.

Despite this overall apparent lack of focus on leadership succession, it is clear that many commercial organisations are now embracing the concept. The non-educational leadership literature offers a helpful road map into understanding how commercial organisations have become proactive in the development of leadership successors. Typically, succession plans normally cover short and longer term successors for key posts. There is a strong emphasis on proactively developing 'talent' and planning for 'pools' of jobs, not just individual posts due to the need to consider future skill needs. Many organisations have developed frameworks for technical and generic competencies, which relate to a broad range of desired skills and behaviours. Although this can be seen as too rigid for some, what is common to most organisations is the identification and nurturing of talent through a combination of mentoring, monitoring, training and job rotation (CIPD, 2006).

In the public sector and particularly education, leadership succession appears to be more left to chance (Fink and Brayman, 2006). Thoughtful succession planning, argue Fink and Brayman (2006), can help sustain improvement and provide considerable lead time to develop a shared understanding and commitment among faculty through meaningful communication. However, they contend that most succession events are unplanned, arbitrary and ethically questionable. Gronn and Lacey (2004) suggest that even where formal career pathways are established, the 'making' of leaders becomes more akin to a conveyor belt route to leadership succession.

One of the outcomes of this neglect to give serious consideration to succession planning is that poorly developed talent pools at times of leadership succession may mitigate against choice. Rhodes (2006) advocates a more proactive stance towards leadership talent identification, development, succession and retention. Lacey (2001) emphasises the point:

> "Succession planning for leadership is the deliberate and systematic effort made by organisations to recruit, develop and retain high potential employees. The effort should take place within the context of the defined and agreed competencies that support the implementation of current and future goals. Succession planning should not be just job or leadership replacement. Succession planning includes activities to attract and keep the best staff at all levels" (p. 2).

To this end, Quinn et al. (2006) suggest that preparation programmes, for teachers in particular, must include leadership models and that serving educationalists must be educated and socialised to assume leadership roles. By implementing a four-phase model, Quinn et al. (2006) argue, leadership talent will emerge more readily than if left to chance. Conversely, the authors suggest, by not embracing leadership issues at an early stage of a teacher's career, some may opt out of education altogether, due to the lack of career ladder and opportunities to develop their leadership talents. Similarly, Campbell (2003) found that few leader-academics in universities had started their career with strong aspirations for promotion, which has implications for the way in which development is presented to beginning lecturers. He emphasises the role of middle and senior leaders in taking responsibility for the development of younger and less experienced staff. Gronn and Lacey (2004), on the other hand, suggest that future leaders should and do play a more influential part in the construction of their own careers, influenced at significant time points by "key socialising agencies" (p. 409).

Evidence of this lack of planning in higher education is highlighted in Johnson's (2002) study of leader-academics in universities in the UK. She found that none of the leaders in post had arrived there through succession planning but due to a variety of rather uninspiring and worrying reasons such as "reluctant obligation"; "degree of curiosity"; "believed others less able to run the department" (p. 36) and not through the recognition of potential leadership talent.

In comparison to commercial organisations, only limited information concerning leadership succession practices within educational organisations is available in the literature (Rhodes, 2006). As has been seen, this is probably because few education institutions have thorough succession plans in place. This has serious implications on an organisation's ability to provide fully prepared, skilled and knowledgeable leaders. O'Mahony and Matthews (2003) agree with this sentiment declaring that:

> "the profession has an obligation and responsibility to become involved in peer assistance, mentoring and coaching to assist the development of new leaders" (p. 54).

It is apparent, therefore, that succession planning should be part of the development of leaders and that a better conceptual and practical understanding of succession planning is needed as a basis for leadership learning within higher education.

Summary

As can be seen from this discussion, whilst leadership and development has become one of the main themes of national education management at school level, little has been done to support the development of leaders within higher education. There are a number of ways in which development can be implemented, both formally and informally, to assist leaders in

their role. However, it has also been seen that the skills and knowledge for effective leadership develop over time and through experiencing a variety of roles on the route up to a leadership position. Given the importance attached to leadership within education, ensuring a supply of able middle and senior leaders is vital to individual educational institutional success. As a result, such organisations need to embark on systematic succession planning to ensure there is a supply of able leaders not only to fulfil those departing but also to develop leadership at all levels throughout the organisation, not necessarily just for filling specific posts.

Conclusion to Chapters Two, Three and Four

It is clear that there is a corpora of writing on leadership studies. In identifying the key issues and leading edge ideas within the literature, it can be noted that there has been a trend towards a greater diversity of research and interpretations of 'leadership'. However, one of the perspectives of this is that it has not "added up to a greater accumulation of knowledge" (Heck and Hallinger, 2005, p. 232). Whilst this appears to be the case within higher education, where empirical research at this level appears to have received "only passing attention from scholars" (Robertson, 1998, p. 222), there are indications of an increasing body of leadership research at school level. It has, therefore, been necessary to use this research to increase the understanding of leadership within higher education. This has been particularly helpful in contextualising leadership and in developing a conceptual framework for the study of leadership in higher education.

Similarly, by exploring the nature of leadership at middle-level in higher education, it has enabled a greater understanding of the responsibilities and tasks attributed to the role and how these are enacted within the parameters that the position affords. It is clear that the tension of being situated in the 'middle' of the organisation and the increasing accountability placed on the role, leaders are required to draw upon a range of experience, knowledge and attributes in order to manage operational aspects of the faculty whilst at the same time provide strategic leadership. It is also apparent that this needs to be done not only by retaining processes determined by collegiality but also by balancing the pressures imposed from the various stakeholders, internal and external to the faculty. This review has shaped

my thesis by providing an end point from which I could work backwards to understand how leaders come to this position and how and what they have learnt on this journey to enable them to enact such a seemingly complex, demanding and critical role. It also raised the question of any differences between the experiences of those in chartered universities to those in statutory universities. The following initial research questions were developed on the basis of this part of the literature review, so the rest of the study and research could be put into context.

1. What is the nature of leadership for middle-level leader-academics in higher education and is there a difference between the nature of leadership at middle-level for those in chartered and statutory universities?

The main way of exploring this journey was through reviewing research on life history. The literature appears united in concluding that the life history approach is a valid method of revealing how leaders learn to lead. These studies based on the compulsory education sector demonstrate the advantages of deconstructing leadership to give a greater insight as "to how leaders learn to become leaders" (Taysum, 2004, p. 11). The literature suggests that there are identifiable 'stages' which leaders progress through and a number of influences within these stages that appear crucial in establishing leaders' professional identity, such as the influence of significant people and critical incidents. By doing this, a more informed understanding has been gained of the various contextual factors which structured leaders development and agency. Thus, if applied to leaders in higher education, it should equally reveal how leaders have learnt to lead. In recognition of this, a framework of leadership stages and phases for those in higher education would be useful in increasing our

understanding of how leaders learn to lead within a higher education context. One of the outcomes of this thesis is to propose a tentative model to do this. The following research questions were formulated with this in mind:

2. How much of what leaders do is learnt, taught and acquired and is, therefore, a product of their life histories; that is, how much of being a leader is learnt from experience and the knowledge of 'self'? What particular experiences, such as personal, social, educational and career – prepare them for the role of leader?

3. Do leaders in higher education go through distinct life phases in the same way that research suggests for school head teachers? To what extent does the influence of critical incidents and significant people impact on how leader-academics learn to lead?

Whilst the study of life history provides a useful conceptual framework upon how leaders have learnt to lead can be studied, by also reviewing the literature on more formal methods of training development, a further dimension on learning to lead can be explored. The overriding theme which emerges from the literature on the professional development of leaders is not only that there is a general lack of any form of development but, specifically, the lack of bespoke development for aspiring and incumbent leaders. Gaining contextual knowledge appears critical to effective leadership. This, the literature concludes, contextual knowledge can be obtained through a combination of planned learning away from the job and whilst doing the job. Mentoring, coaching, networking and experience are the four key elements which repeatedly emerge from the literature as the most useful forms of such

learning. A closer attention to succession planning would provide the opportunity to target such learning and would seem critical for the creation of the next generation of leaders. The literature review on this area resulted in research question four.

4. What kind of formal leadership development do middle-level leader-academics experience before and after appointment? In what ways do they learn and does this differ between chartered and statutory universities?

The exploration of the research literature has given evidence that leaders (primarily in compulsory education) during their life history go through recognisable 'stages' and 'phases' where they are influenced to varying extents by significant people, critical incidents and professional development. The culmination of these has provided conceptual frameworks to inform and underpin the basis on which leaders have learnt to lead. These have provided valid indicators upon which a study of how leaders have learnt to lead can be based for the reconstruction of the life history for leaders within a higher education context.

PART THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter Five

Research Design

In this chapter, I seek to explain, critically evaluate and justify the research methodology which will underpin my research. To do this I will firstly locate and justify my research within a wider framework and then clarify my philosophical approach to knowledge by placing it within an ontological and epistemological context. This will then enable me to justify my underlying conceptualisation of the research strategy chosen for this research. Finally, I will clarify my research methodology, research method and give details of how I managed the project taking in to account issues such as access, ethics, validity and reliability.

Wider Framework

In order to clarify what my research is about, I shall first place it within a wider framework. The "five knowledge domains" conceptualised by Ribbins and Gunter (2002) is a useful way of doing this. This is summarised in the table below:

Knowledge domain	Meaning
Conceptual	Concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology, conceptual clarification.
Critical	Concerned to reveal and emancipate leaders and followers from social injustice.
Humanistic	Gathers and theorises from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and managers.
Evaluative	Abstracts and measures the impact of leadership effectiveness on organisational outcomes.
Instrumental	Provides leaders with effective leadership strategies to deliver organisational outcomes.

Table 1. The Five Knowledge Domains (adapted from Ribbins and Gunter, 2002, p. 378)

This research can be located in the third 'knowledge domain' of Table 1; that is, the humanistic domain because the research draws on stories of people's lives and experiences and so explores "how knowledge is produced" (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002, p. 375). The research is, therefore, directed "towards developing knowledge-for-understanding" (Wallace 2003, p. 18) and could, as a result of this, be used as a basis to enable "knowledge-for-action" (p. 18). Overall, the research should provide greater understanding of how leaders learnt to lead within the institutions studied.

Philosophical Approach

Research, according to Cohen et al. (2000), is:

> "concerned with understanding the world and that this is informed by how we view our worlds, how we take understanding to be and what we see as the purpose of understanding" (p. 3).

Philosophical issues are integral to the research process because they constitute what researchers 'silently think' about research (Scott and Usher, 1999). In order to clarify my philosophical approach, it is necessary to identify my ontological and epistemological position and consequently my methodological premise from which I shall be working.

Ontological assumptions are concerned with the essence of realities, either those which are external to individuals or the realities produced by individual consciousness (Cohen et al., 2000). According to Mason (1996), a researcher needs to establish and understand their own ontological position in order to recognise the different perspectives of realities. The two extremes of this 'reality' form the nominalist – reality debate. The realist position is that

reality is external to the individual and is imposed on them whereas the nominalist views reality as being of the individual's own making (Cohen et al., 2000). Within these two extreme points on a continuum, many researchers may position themselves somewhere in the middle of this subjective/objective divide. I recognise that reality in some situations may not be of the individual's making and thus imposed upon them, for example, the policies and practices that university middle leader-academics abide by. However, I also believe that the 'reality' as the individual perceives it (and interprets it) is also a product of their social, cultural and educational experiences. This is particularly the case when individuals are asked to explore their life histories. My research, therefore, subscribes to the subjectivist approach and my ontology is nominalist in nature.

Epistemology, the nature and grounds of knowledge, depends on our ontological view. Epistemological questions are important because it helps the researcher to generate knowledge and explanations about the ontological components of the social world (Mason, 1996). Offering some clarification, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that epistemology is the word that historically defines the standard of evaluating and conceptualising our reality and our image of the world. At one extreme, researchers may argue that knowledge is hard, real and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form (Trochim, 2002), whereas at the other extreme it can be argued that knowledge is subjective and is based on experience and insight (Denscombe, 2003).

Although research has an underlying epistemology, it is often not made explicit. According to Scott and Usher (1999): "most of the time the epistemology is either unrecognised or taken for granted" (p. 11).

a fact that they argue, is no longer considered adequate. The epistemology of the research

needs to be made explicit because it:

> "holds up the methods and procedures of the natural sciences for producing valid
> knowledge claims" (p. 12).

Positivism is an epistemological position which sees the world as objective, measurable,

value free, generalisable, replicable and there is a logical set of rules and explanations for

phenomena researched under this paradigm. I would critique this, as have others (for

example, Scott and Usher, 1999) on the grounds that positivism in the use of educational

research does not allow for the understanding of the multiplicity and complexity of the 'life

world' of individuals. Wellington (2000) argues it is doubtful if clear cause-effect

relationships which are totally objective and value free, can ever be determined, by the fact

that researchers are people who carry with them their own values and choose what and how

to research.

I subscribe to the interpretive view which accepts that the observer makes a difference to the

observed and that reality is a human construct. As an interpretative researcher, I would

disagree with such an emphasis on objectivity and replace it with the belief that there is a

place for the 'subjective'. Interpretism is concerned with how meaning is constructed within

the complex social world. Instead of generalising cause-effect relationships as with

positivism, the aim of working within the interpretism paradigm is that of:

> "providing interpretation of human action and social practice within the context of
> meaningful, culturally specific arrangements" (Scott and Usher, 1999, p. 26).

I shall therefore focus on the belief that knowledge is subjective and influenced by individual

experience and insight. By doing this, I will be aligning my research with the interpretive

theoretical commitments of post-positivism which gives meaning and value to the

observations about people (Schwandt, 1993). Thus the data gathered in this research will be

highly individualistic and subjective as it is the 'lived reality' of each individual.

Research Strategy

This section discusses the justification for my overarching approach to the research

methodology chosen. The research strategy chosen can be subjective, objective or mixed in

nature. The research strategy adopted will depend on the researcher's ontological and

epistemological views. If the importance of the subjective experience of individuals is

favoured by the researcher, as is mine in this research, then the concern lies not with creating

universal laws, but more to one of understanding the

> "way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world he or she
> finds himself or herself" (Cohen et al., 2000 p. 7).

This approach is furthered in the present research project. The interpretative approach

adopted to understand individual behaviour can be referred to as idiographic. Within the

interpretivist paradigm there are a number of different methodological approaches that can

be adopted. As the aim of this research is to describe leaders' experiences directly and to

provide illumination as to how they have learnt to lead, the research approach can be said to

be broadly phenomological in nature. Such an approach emphasises subjectivity, description,

interpretation and agency. It deals with people's perceptions or meanings, attitudes and

beliefs, feelings and emotions.

For this research I do not subscribe to the objectivist approach, as this research favours a

scientific strategy characterised by procedures and methods designed to produce universal

laws to explain the reality being researched. This approach can be referred to as nomothetic (Cohen et al., 2000).

I do not subscribe to the nomothetic approach because it favours the notion that human behaviour is rule-bound and that it should be investigated by the methods of natural science (Cohen et al., 2000). This leads to research that emphasises determinacy (a truth that can be known), impersonality (objective, with little room for subjectivity), rationality (no contradictory explanation) and prediction (knowledge claims can be made for generalisation purposes) (Scott and Usher, 1996). The methodological approach adopted, therefore, tends to be quantitative in nature, observing measurable phenomena by collecting data to validate a hypothesis or create and test theory.

My main criticism of this approach is elicited by focusing exclusively on methods and outcomes, resulting in failure to ask any questions about the research process (Scott and Usher, 1996). This assumption, that determinism eradicates the notion that there may be multiple realities, is not tenable in research which seeks to explore how leaders learn to lead.

Other criticisms of the scientific, quantitative approach concern its mechanistic reductionist view of nature which excludes individuality and choice and, therefore, has a dehumanising effect as "it reduces behaviour to techniques" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 19). I, therefore, subscribe to Heck and Hallinger's (2005) argument that theories can become problematic when seeking to investigate the "actual detail and richness of leadership and management in organisations" (p. 233). Social science is seen as a subjective rather than an objective exercise and is a means of dealing with the direct experience of people within specific

contexts. As a result, the methodology adopted enables the studying of the individual in preference to the group and, therefore, is not quantifiable.

Wellington (2000) criticises this "false polarization" (p. 17) of the two approaches (quantitative and qualitative). He argues that quantitative methods are not always theory-laden or hypothesis driven. Similarly, qualitative research does not depend on inter-subjective reality. He argues that the two approaches can complement each other and, indeed, recent educational research often advocates the use of mixed approaches using background statistics to set the scene for more in-depth qualitative study. For example, Smith's (2002, 2005, 2007) research on the role of heads of departments in higher education.

It is not the topic of investigation nor the actual data but the approach adopted for the collection and analysis of data which is, according to Denscombe (2003), what distinguishes the difference between quantitative and qualitative data.

Qualitative data becomes such by the process of interpretation. The data is not 'out there' waiting to be discovered, as would be the case if a positivistic approach were to be adopted (Denscombe, 2003). Qualitative studies, therefore, allow for the richness and insight of human interaction within educational settings (Foskett et al., 2005). Implicit in qualitative research then, is the significant role of the researcher in the production and interpretation of qualitative data. Being involved in higher education and in the area of leadership education, I am, as the researcher, inevitably embedded in the situation and, therefore, part of the analysis. Despite being implicitly linked with the analysis, this research will attempt to let those researched speak for themselves by illustrating their views with quotations. However,

it is also recognised that this selection of quotations is filtered by the researcher and, it could be argued that in so doing, the meaning given to the quotations could be manipulated if taken out of context. As Court (2004) indicates, the stories the respondents reveal are constructions told by the participants in response to the research and the research questions that I pursue. Pagano (1991) succinctly illustrates this: "there is more than one way of telling or asking, and more than one way to be told" (p. 197).

Fundamentally, research is about increasing the universal sum of knowledge, furthering understanding and by doing so making better sense of whatever it is being studied. Researchers therefore are seeking:

> "to interpret and then re-interpret an aspect of the world, whether that be physical, objective works or of subjective lived experience" (Goodson & Sykes, 2001, p. 48).

This research seeks to accord with such interpretation and reinterpretation of the subjective lived experience of the leaders in the study.

Research Methodology

As discussed above, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate for this study because it can enable greater understanding of how leaders learn to lead and can provide insight and possible answers to questions such as What?, Where?, When? and Why? (Wellington, 2000). The intention of this research is to survey individuals to obtain and analyse their individual life histories. Although the use of survey has often been categorised as a quantitative methodological strategy, survey work based on qualitative interviews is widely used (for example, in the work by Kelchtermans, 1993; Parker, 2001; Johnson, 2002). By doing so, as Gunter (2001) argues:

"we can concentrate far less on the characteristic of leadership and far more on the characters of leaders" (p. 56).

One argument for using a survey methodology as a quantitative strategy is its potential ability to generate extensive numerical data at a particular point in time, which can then be correlated to determine the relationships that exist between specific events. For example, Smith (2005) applied this methodology to investigate the role of the head of department in two British universities and correlated the results between the two types of university and a previous study. Although this methodology produced interesting results in Smith's (2002, 2005) study, I also believe the survey approach, through the medium of interviews, can be equally applied to small-scale qualitative research, as it is ideally suited to revealing experienced-based learning. Evidence of research, using this methodology for similar purposes can be seen in many of the existing works in the education literature such as Gronn (1999), Johnson (2002), Parker (2002) and Ribbins (2003). As Parker (2002) argues, the conclusions reached in the absence of quantifiable data, although subjective in nature, will be based on clear evidence emerging from the interviews.

It must be recognised, though, that a limitation of this approach, whether for quantitative or qualitative purposes, is that it can only be a snapshot which is dependent on the local and temporal context of when it is carried out (Denscombe, 2003). As a result, its applicability to wider contexts may be undermined. This is discussed further under the validity and reliability section (see page 94).

Research Method

This research employs semi-structured biographical interviews with eighteen individuals who are identified as middle-level leader-academics of "excellent" schools/faculties as rated by the QAA, within higher education institutions and, therefore, likely to be indicative of good leadership. Due to the different way that the universities in this study are structured, the term middle-level leader-academic has been selected to cover the various titles given to those individuals who head up either a department, faculty or school within their university. I have also used the word 'faculty' as generic for the area that they lead so as to avoid confusion when discussing schools within the compulsory education sector. The higher education institutions chosen for this study were located along the M4 corridor, mostly in south Wales (Cardiff University, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, University of Wales Swansea, University of Glamorgan, Swansea Institute of Higher Education) and Bristol (University of the West of England). The reason for selecting these institutions was for feasibility as they were in a relatively small geographical area. They also all had departments/schools/faculties which were rated as 'excellent' (or equivalent) by the QAA, either for research, teaching or a combination of both. It was important to interview leaders of highly rated sections to enhance the credibility of the research because it should mean that by implication these leaders are effective. Ten interviewees were from chartered universities and eight were from statutory universities (Appendix 3). As the aim of the research is to identify leadership formation and, thereby, how the leaders in this sample learnt to lead, with the intention of making recommendations for leadership development, it is appropriate to interview leaders deemed as successful. Similarly, the inclusion of both statutory and chartered universities was considered essential. This is because previous work suggests that they have very

different cultures, structures and approaches to leadership and management (Smith 2002, 2005, 2007) and so potentially differences may emerge in how leaders have learnt to lead depending on either being located in a statutory or chartered university. This may also have implications when reaching conclusions regarding suggested development for leaders within the two types of university.

Interview Instrument

There are a number of advantages of using the interview method as summarised in Table 2, but, in particular, the emphasis on collecting detailed responses and being better placed to revisit questions to seek clarification regarding the basis for their answers, was a particular attraction of the method and which could not confidently be achieved through alternative methods, such as a questionnaire. Interviews also allowed participants to discuss their own interpretations of the phenomena under study and make sense of their social world and of each other. In this sense

> "the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddness is inescapable" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 267).

In summary, interviews have a number of advantages and disadvantages for their use. Table 2 below is a summary of these as applied to my own research.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Enable depth and detail of information collection	Time consuming: transcribing and coding of interview data is expected to be lengthy
Valuable insights gained from depth of information gained	Data analysis from non-standards responses will make it harder to compare data
Informants have the opportunity to expand their ideas and views and identify what they consider as crucial factors (rather than the researcher)	Interviewer effect: responses are based on what interviewees say rather than what they do or did
Flexibility allowing for adjustments to the order and can further develop lines of enquiry	Invasion of privacy, particularly with life history as they could be seen as very personal
Can be a rewarding experience for the informant, especially spending time reflecting about their life stories	Reliability: the impact of myself as the interviewer and the context means that consistency and objectivity may be hard to achieve

Table 2. Advantages and Disadvantages of the use of Interviews (adapted from Denscombe, 2003)

For this research, interviews were semi-structured. The justification for this approach is that it allowed for some structure in that the topics and issues to be covered can be specified in advance, in outline form, but the sequence and working of the questions can be decided in

the course of the interviews. It also allowed some comparison and identification of themes between respondents, whilst still maintaining a fairly conversational and open interview. As this research is concerned with portraying and capturing the uniqueness of how each leader learnt to lead in their own words and on their own terms, questions were generally open-ended so as to acquire unique, personalised information in order to see how individuals view the world. However, for ease of analysis purposes the questions followed the "interview guide approach" (Patton, 1980 in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 271). In this way, interviewees could develop ideas and "speak more widely on issues raised by the interviewer" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 167). This can also be considered a weakness of the interview guide approach, because this very flexibility can result in substantially different responses, and different emphasis placed on topics discussed, thus making the analysis more challenging if comparability of responses is required.

The interview questions were based on issues identified from the literature review and from my own observation in higher education and were based around the following:

- What is involved in being a leader of a department/school/faculty?

- What particular experiences – personal, social, educational and career – prepared them for the role of leader?

- How much of these experiences do they draw upon to inform their leadership work?

- What kind of leadership development had they experienced (pre- and post-appointment)?

- Was becoming a leader part of an overall planned developmental process?

- What were their aspirations for the future?

A copy of the full interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2.

Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis at the informant's place of work. This was partly because of the logistics of arranging interviews with more than one leader in different universities, but it was mainly because of the nature of the issues to be discussed. One-to-one interviews create an environment conducive to self disclosure more than in a group situation because recalling one's life history is a very personal and sometimes sensitive exercise which interviewees are not likely to want to share with a range of strangers in a face-to-face situation. Another advantage was that for the researcher, it was easier to grasp one person's ideas and interrogate through an interview agenda than trying to balance and question a range of ideas coming from different sources at one time. Being at their own place of work it provided a 'safe' environment for the respondents and enabled an understanding of their 'professional world'. This privilege also allowed me to get a feel and a picture of the surroundings in which the informants worked day-to-day. For example, I was able to observe whether their working environment was formal or informal; chaotic or calm; organised or disorganised. These observations, however, were more for the benefit of putting into context their current role and to satisfying my inquisitive mind, rather than to draw conclusions or assumptions from them in relation to the research questions.

Data was collected by semi-structured interviews which sought to answer the questions as already discussed and linked directly to the research questions. The interviews were tape-recorded and backed up by field notes. This is because memory alone is unreliable, prone to partial recall, bias and error (Denscombe, 2003). Audio tape recording offers a permanent record, but as it only captures speech and not non-verbal communication, field notes were

also used to note contextual factors, which may be important. The tape recorder was not, however, a substitute for my own concentration and did not diminish the need to listen attentively to the informants' responses throughout their interviews.

Depending on the respondent, interviews lasted between one and two hours. Whilst at first it appeared daunting to convince leaders to consent to such a period of time out of their busy schedules, all once underway, progressed smoothly and without interruptions. From their feedback most respondents felt as if they were partaking in an interesting and engaging exercise. For many, it was seen as an opportunity to take stock of their career; a typical response being: "well I never thought of that before" (Interviewee 1, chartered university). The quality of the responses varied between interviewees depending on the lucidity of the individual and their ability to elucidate their own personal history. However, the majority of accounts collected yielded rich, thoughtful and interesting reflections with only one being rather banal and unreflective.

Characteristics of the Sample

A purposive sample of leaders were selected which targeted a specific group of individuals, namely leaders of faculties in higher education institutions. Although the sample does not represent the wider population and is, therefore, "selective and biased" (Cohen et al., 2000 p. 164) it is still acceptable because the aim is not to generalise findings to the wider population but to offer an insight into how selected individuals learnt to lead, which could then be related to others.

The method of selection, as discussed, was through reviewing QAA ratings for each department/school/faculty in the six higher education institutions located along the western half of the M4 corridor. Those faculties which had an "excellent" rating were singled out. However, as one higher education institution in this geographical area had no "excellent" rating, it was excluded. I then wrote to the heads of these departments/ schools/faculties seeking consent for me to interview them about their life history (Appendix 1). Thirty-four heads were written to and eighteen positive responses were received. These were the eighteen who eventually took part in the research and were self-selected. Saunders et al., (1997) states:

> "Self-selection sampling occurs when you allow a case, usually an individual, to identify their desire to take part in the research. You therefore: 1) publicise your need for cases, either by advertising through appropriate media or asking them to take part. 2) Collect data from those who respond. Cases that self-select often do so because of their feelings or opinions about the research question(s) or stated objectives" (p. 147).

As it is likely that those who responded had an interest in the issue, an unrepresentative sample is a likely outcome. Being unable to claim representativeness, however, should not be thought of as a weakness in this study because, as Kervin (1992) claims:

> "it may be just what the researcher wants! For example, self-selection samples are good at getting responses from people who are excited about an issue, have a related problem, or who, in general, find the topic to be salient or important. Information from these kinds of people is often used to formulate productive ideas or workplace improvements" (p. 218-219).

Undeniably, I did not seek to research a typical leader-academic in order to generalise to a larger population, rather my intention was to gain a deeper understanding of individual leadership formation through their own insights, anomalies and paradoxes.

The sample consisted of sixteen males and two females, which is indicative of the gender distribution of leaders in higher education. Fifteen of the sample had been in their current

post for more than five years, with five of these being in post for ten years. Fourteen of the sample were over the age of fifty (Appendix 3).

An interview schedule with these eighteen was then arranged by contacting them by telephone to agree mutually suitable dates and times. A covering letter was sent to those who had agreed to participate, detailing the purpose of the research. An outline of the interview schedule was also included to give participants an idea of the type of themes which would be covered and to allow themselves to prepare mentally for the interview (Appendix 2). The interviews took place over a six-month period from November 2005-April 2006.

Access

Access was an issue considered for a range of reasons. For example, leader-academics may feel that they do not have time to spend being interviewed or may not wish to disclose their 'life history' to a researcher. Some may wish to guard 'the secret of their success' and view the researcher as 'competition' from another higher education institution within the vicinity. If access is gained there may then be the issue of the interviewee wishing to restrict the release of some of the data collected, particularly if it is of a sensitive nature or could be seen as critical of people in authority. However, in this research, none of these potential problems were encountered, although it is difficult to judge if some held back information for any of the above reasons.

Ethics

The confidential and anonymous treatment of participant's data should be considered the norm when conducting research (BERA, 2004). Participants have an entitlement to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity unless they have specifically wavered this right.

Although the nature of the research (learning to lead), the context of the research (universities) and the method of data collection (interview) should not have been problematic in ethical terms, the type of data collected (personal information of a sensitive kind) and what is to be done with the data (thesis for public consumption) may contain ethical issues.

In order for research to be ethical, at the outset it is necessary to obtain informed consent from its participants and offer the right to withdraw. For this reason an outline of the interview schedule was sent to participants together with details of the purpose of the research. Given the use of open questions and the explorative nature of inquiry, it was impossible to fully inform the participants as I did not wish to pre-empt responses. As the analysis was based on the nature of the responses, 'reasonable' informed consent was achieved. An instruction that the person is free to withdraw consent to overcome the lack of the researcher's ability to provide total information and to preserve the interviewee's dignity should this be the issue. In this way, I hold a relativist position to my research as I believe ethical consideration may arise from the research which is unique to each individual and in different contexts.

The fundamental considerations for this type of research lie with privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. As some of the information collected was of a sensitive nature, it was

necessary to protect the privacy of the research participant. Although privacy must not be violated, a subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview cannot expect anonymity but should expect confidentiality.

Bailey (1996) writes that:

> "Ethical researchers need to inform those in the study whether the research is anonymous, confidential or neither. Research is anonymous when the researcher is not able to identify the participants in the study. In a confidential study the researcher knows or could know the identity of the participants but does not reveal who they are" (p. 11).

This means that although I knew who had provided the information (therefore not anonymous), I did not make the connection public within my thesis. Contextual details such as type of faculty, age and gender of each leader-academic interviewed have been kept to a minimum to maintain the required confidentiality of the respondent. For this reason I have only identified the type of university (chartered or statutory) and the length of service of each interviewee (Appendix 3). I believed offering confidentiality was essential to encourage informants to participate in the study. This is of course easier to do in a quantitative study when often a larger sample is used and data is collected in numerical form to be analysed. Using a small sample of qualitative responses, confidentiality was more difficult as those with knowledge may be able to locate where the source of comments may have come from. As only two of the interviewees were female, to protect the anonymity of these two females, all the respondents are referred to in the singular by the male gender.

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (1998) points out that, in a qualitative study, the role and close distance between the researcher and the participants have implications for bias within a study. The use of semi-

structured interviews inevitably will create a closer relationship than the methods employed by a quantitative study. Denscombe (2003) agrees that the data collected is "affected by the personal identity of the researcher" and what this means "as far as the person being interviewed is concerned" (p. 169). It is therefore necessary to declare this relationship and for the researcher and reader to acknowledge this when analysing and making conclusions from the data.

Although I have no personal involvement with any of the leaders that I interviewed, I do work in higher education and therefore could be considered as an 'insider'. As Gadamer (1973) in Scott & Usher (1999) argues, it is impossible to separate oneself from the historical and cultural context because the 'subject' and 'object' of research are located in pre-understood worlds. This could have affected the interviewer/interviewee relationship in that interviewees may have assumed prior knowledge in some areas or be less likely to divulge some incidents for politically sensitive reasons. Firstly, there was an age gap between myself and the interviewees, which may result in a lot of 'filling in' the gaps to put their story in its historical context. Secondly, as the majority of senior leaders were male, in the main, I was interviewing someone from the opposite sex. This may have impacted on their willingness to respond or reveal some areas of their life history. Thirdly, the professional expertise of the leader-academic was superior to my own which may have impacted on how and why they responded to certain questions.

Validity and Reliability

External validity refers to the degree to which the research can be generalised to the wider population. As the sample size is small in this research study, the external validity is

problematic if applied to the whole UK population of middle-level leader-academics. This is because the study is based on six universities out of a total population of nine in Wales and approximately one hundred in the UK. The sample is also taken from a geographically close cluster. Local political, social, cultural and economic factors may have an impact on the way these institutions are led, which could differ from institutions located in a different geographical area.

Maxwell (1992), in Cohen et al. (2000), argues that authenticity replaces validity in qualitative research. Cohen et al. (2000), building on Maxwell's argument, believes that it is the meaning that the subjects give the data and the inferences drawn from the data that are of importance. In this way, accounts can only be representations of individual's reality rather than exact reproductions of reality. This is because issues of external validity could be problematic if it is judged solely on the degree to which the results can be generalised to the wider population. Similarly, Goodson and Sikes (2001) argue that researchers using life history approach should not attempt to make unrealistic claims for representing 'reality', but should acknowledge what the researcher is able to do with the stories, namely:

> "offer an interpretation through their writing and spell out the influences that may have coloured both the teller's story and their interpretation of it" (p. 48).

Indeed, Cohen et al. (2000) suggest "understanding" is a more suitable term than validity in qualitative research. So, although the research is not generalisable, trends and issues will emerge to inform and answer my research questions and contribute to the ongoing research agenda. Indeed, as other life history research has found (Huberman, 1993; Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003), common themes frequently surfaced which leant some validity to their use in order to answer the research questions.

I would, therefore, argue that relatability of the research is more important as outcomes of this research potentially could be related to other, similar organisations. The context of the discussions need to be viewed within the unique composition of the individuals which make up the group and the dynamics of the group as a whole. Confidence in the data, authenticity, soundness of the research design and conformability of the data will instead determine the validity of such a qualitative research design (Maxwell, 1992 in Cohen, 2000). Munro (1998) in Goodson & Sikes (2001) concurs with this, arguing that:

> "what were previously criticisms of life history, its lack of representativeness and its subjective nature, are now its greatest strength" (p. 8).

Indeed, Dhunpath (2000) pleads for research to aim at understanding particular situations and problems rather than aiming at generalising so that the human condition can be "brought forward" (p. 84). No claim is, therefore, made that these interviewees are representative of all the other leader-academics who work in higher education and that what has been found in this research will be replicated in other organisations. However, the issues surrounding leadership formation and development are worthy of note and consideration and are at least useful for any organisation committed to advancing and developing their leadership capability to hear and learn about.

Similarly, some argue (Marshall and Rossman, 1989) that concern for reliability only arises within quantitative research because it is concerned with producing reliable measures of social life. Conversely, if, as in qualitative research, we treat social reality as constantly changing "it makes no sense to worry about whether our research instruments measure accurately" (Silverman, 1993, p. 146). It is also questionable as to whether reliability is

essential as the very nature of qualitative interviews provides a unique insight into each leader's life at a particular point in time.

> "This is important to note so that any similarities and generalisations in relation to characteristics that might be found would have genuine validity and not be based on any predetermined idea …which the researcher may already have" (Parker, 2002, p. 8).

The data collected is unique owing to the specific context and the individual involved, which inevitably may have an adverse effect on reliability (Denscombe, 2003).

However, I would argue that it is doubtful how seriously qualitative research would be taken if issues of reliability were to be ignored. Reliability can be addressed by using standardised methods to write field notes and prepare transcripts. In this research, audio recordings were made to provide a complete record of 'naturally occurring' data. This is advantageous in that it is corrective to the limitations of intuitions and recollection, it extends the range and precision of the observations which can be made and the data in this 'raw' form can be reused in a variety of investigations and re-examined in the context of new findings (Silverman, 1993). This can be seen as a well established way of research, particularly with regards to life history, if reference is made to work carried out by Huberman, 1993; Kelchermans, 1993; Gronn, 1999; Johnson, 2002 and Ribbins, 2003. With these considerations in mind, the research was made more valid and reliable by following the protocols as referred to on pages 88 and 89 and by piloting the interview to two leaders in my own university. The interview schedule was piloted to two leaders to assess the:

- Appropriateness of the questions and meanings attributed to them by respondents
- Feelings of interviewees about answering the questions
- Amount of time to allocate for each interview
- My own interview skills

Both leaders were constructive in their comments on each of the above points. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed which proved invaluable for self-assessment purposes. Five major lessons learnt from this exercise were:

1. Not to talk over informants as this caused difficulties during transcribing when my voice blotted out that of the informant

2. Be aware of any background noise which could inhibit the clarity of the recording

3. Re-assess questions that needed to be clarified to improve informant's understanding

4. Indulge in listening to responses of questions without considering the next question

5. Take handwritten notes to signpost the recording, particularly if parts weren't clear on the tape.

Following the pilot interviews, amendments were made to the original interview schedule and my preparedness to undertake interviews with informants had greatly improved.

Analysing the Responses

Once the interview responses had been collected, they were then transcribed. This enabled me to be closer to the data and therefore easier to analyse. Included in the transcriptions were informal notes, taken from the field notes, which served to annotate the transcriptions in order to give a richer meaning to the spoken words.

Consideration was given on whether each informant should receive a copy of their typed transcription to vet before analysis. This idea was rejected, not just because of cost and time but more because I believed the informants had been given fair warning of the questions; were promised confidentiality; and had enough time to consider their responses before interview.

Analysing the data involved giving meaning to the words and what implications the words had in relation to the research topic. A straightforward and methodological approach was adopted to analyse the data. The main advantage of taking a logical approach was that the data was systematically analysed, question by question, and this allowed all responses to be considered equally and treated fairly. A unique reference was given to each part of the material to aid the analysis. Recurring patterns emerged from the interview data enabling themes to be identified. In order to pull together the many separate pieces of data from all the interviews, I created a matrix which placed interviews at the top and themes/issues down the left hand side. When going through the transcripts, a tick was placed in the appropriate box when a particular theme cropped up and a code given to the data for reference. This matrix method enabled patterns to emerge and to record evidence of these patterns through selecting appropriate quotations to illustrate these. It also enabled me to see if there was consensus over certain areas explored whilst remaining open to disconfirming evidence when it appeared. If this had not been done, commonality could have taken precedence over differences and would not have given justice to the eighteen different conversations (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In order to indicate strength of feeling and suggest the degree of commonality or difference, I have used the words 'most' (to represent 75 per cent plus),

'majority' (60 –74 percent), 'some' (40 - 59 per cent) and a 'few' (less than 39 per cent) of the eighteen respondents, in the analysis.

A key characteristic of the phenomenological approach is to place emphasis on describing authentic experiences. Rather than trying to explain the phenomena which emerge from the data, my task was to depict the relevant experience "in a way that is faithful to the original as possible" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 101). The analysis, therefore, did not aim to edit or give order to interviewee's thoughts. Through the process of reflection and by identifying themes, relationships in the data emerged. Conclusions were drawn from these and theory developed and modified.

Below, Table 3 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of such qualitative analysis.

Advantages	Disadvantages
The descriptions and theories are 'grounded' in reality, i.e. the analysis has its roots in the conditions of social existence	Difficult to generalise from the data and therefore may be less representative than quantitative research
There is a richness and detail to the data which enable a sound analysis of the subtleties of each individual's life story	Interpretation is intertwined with the 'self' of the researcher. The findings are a creation of the researcher rather than a discovery of fact
There is a tolerance of ambiguity and contradictions which reflects the social reality of what is being investigated	There is the possibility of decontextualising the meaning. Providing quotations in the analysis may well take the spoken word out of context and the meaning becomes lost
There is the possibility of alternative explanations because it draws on the interpretative skills of the researcher rather than the presumption that there is one correct explanation	There is a danger of over simplifying the explanation if anomalies are identified and do not 'fit' with the themes constructed.

Table 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Analysis. (adapted from Denscombe (2003, pp. 280-281)

Limitations of the Research

Whilst I am confident with the 'richness' of the data collected, second face-to-face interviews with key informants would have provided the opportunity to discuss the analyses of the first interviews and to seek informants' opinions about the themes that I perceived to have emerged.

A potential flaw must be recognised in that just one principal method of data collection was used; semi-structured interviews. Whilst this is not untypical for this kind of research, as evidenced by research already done in this area (see Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003), methodological triangulation may have given additional confirmation as to how leaders learn to lead. Methods such as questionnaires (as in work by Huberman, 1993 and Smith, 2002, 2005) or focus groups as used by Johnson (2002) were considered but time, financial and logistical constraints caused me to reject these ideas. However, whilst the sample cannot be deemed representative of other leaders employed in higher education, the data collected should not be regarded as insignificant. Notice of the findings should be taken as they represent the life history of a not insignificant number of leaders in higher education who, in the main, are long serving employees whose stories are often similar to those detailed in the literature.

Summary

In this chapter I have sought to provide an overview of the research approach adopted in order to put into context the ontological, epistemological and methodological position of this research. I have also explained the research strategy and method used and outlined some of the issues which surrounded such an approach. In particular I have tried to justify the extent of reliability and validity of this research, the ethical dilemmas inherent in this qualitative study and challenge traditional ways of thinking about these issues, given the uniqueness of each individual leader's account. In explaining how the sample was selected, how the data was analysed and acknowledging the study's limitations, this chapter has aimed to show the potential of the chosen methodology for research into the formation of leader-academics.

PART FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction to Chapters Six and Seven

Part Four presents the findings from the eighteen interviews undertaken with leaders of faculties in higher education institutions. The findings are broken down into themes relating to the research questions and are supported by tables and quotations from informants. The themes that shall be explored are:

- The nature of leadership for middle-level leader-academics: Commentators agree that leading at middle-level in higher education is both complex and dynamic and requires a combination of management and leadership skills. This theme explores why respondents believe their faculty is successful in order to put the study into context and then examines the roles and responsibilities involved in their positions and how they enact them. In particular, their role is explored for characteristics of leadership and whether this differs between leading in a chartered or statutory university.

- Life history - the journey to leadership: Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003) believe school leaders go through stages and phases on their journey to leadership. The informant's life history is thus explored from their early years through to their current post in order to identify if leaders in higher education also go through identifiable stages in their journey to leadership. The influencing factors of critical incidents and significant people are also explored, to illuminate the impact they have had on how the leaders have learnt to lead.

- Learning to lead: Explores how much of what leaders do has been acquired and learnt as a product of their life experiences.

- Professional development and training: Seeks to identify the extent of formal training and development that leaders have experienced pre- and post-appointment and the perceived effectiveness of this.

Whilst each theme is briefly summarised, the section concludes with a summary of the key findings and identification of the emerging issues which will be taken up in chapter seven, Discussion of the Findings.

Chapter Six

Presentation of the Findings

The 'Nature' of Leadership

Leading in a Highly Rated Faculty

When asked about the high status given to their faculty, many acknowledged it as a reflection of their high research assessment exercise (RAE) and teaching ratings. They all referred to the high quality of the staff employed and the resulting high quality of research being produced. Many spoke of the financial gains that this brought to the faculty and to the institution in the form of grants and fees. This is clearly illustrated in the response by one leader of a very successful faculty:

> "The level of ambition and excellence has been reflected in our standard in league tables. We have always achieved the very highest level in RAE ratings. We are one of the few departments who can boast a sustained level of excellence. What has spun out from that is high quality also in teaching. I suppose what I am describing is that over many years we have developed a culture of excellence" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

Most spoke of the underlying philosophy of the school and the years of hard work enabling them to achieve high status.

> "We have built up a reputation in certain areas which are quite unique and based it around comprehensive teaching programmes" (Interviewee 15, statutory university).

Common to all was the unity of the faculty and the collaboration between each other, the enthusiasm of the staff and the positive "can do" culture that "just works" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

"People want to come to work in the morning and the strength of the school derives I think from that. We are all pointing in the same direction. The keeping of a strong unit with a strong sense of purpose is the key to it really" (Interviewee 6, chartered university).

Roles and Responsibilities

When asked the question "What is involved in leading your school?", all respondents referred to the "considerable autonomy" (Interviewee 10, statutory university) that they have in leading their areas. As a result they have "responsibility for all aspects of the school" (Interviewee 8, statutory university). Responses suggest that the range of responsibilities of the role fell into two categories. Those which reflected operational, more 'management' type aspects of the role and those which reflect strategic, more 'leadership' aspects of the role. Using well established divisions between leadership and management responsibilities (Zalenik, 1977; Kotter, 1990), the diagrammatic representation below (Table 4) indicates some of these responsibilities as described by the interviewees:

Management responsibilities	Leadership responsibilities
Troubleshooting	Improve quality
Financial welfare	Setting the agenda
Health and safety	Leading by example
Staff development	Put in place the correct culture to achieve aims
Monitoring performance	Managing change and transition
Post boy	Moving things forward
Administrative competence	Thinking strategically
Generate additional income	Listening to staff
Recruiting to targets	Connect broader university strategies to school strategies
Retention targets	Seek to influence broader strategies
Ensure high standards	Improve effectiveness
	Create sense that there is some orderly progress being made

Table 4. Role and Responsibilities of Middle-Level Leader-Academics

As can be seen from Table 4, the responsibilities are wide and varied. Those responsibilities which could be classified as 'management' type tasks range from troubleshooting, monitoring performance to meeting targets whereas those more characteristic of leadership responsibilities ranged from improving quality, influencing and strategising.

However, there was an overwhelming feeling that, whilst they believed their role should be one of contributing to faculty and organisation strategy, the management of the day-to-day running of the faculty "threatens to overwhelm the strategising" (Interviewee 12, statutory university). All respondents declared that "space" and "time" were the major barriers to achieving their aspirations for their faculties. The reason for this, generally, seemed to focus on bureaucracy such as the "deluge of small tasks" (Interviewee 6, chartered university), "sluggish administration and obsession with protocol" (Interviewee 15, statutory university), "unnecessary form filling" (Interviewee 1, chartered university) and "the amount of paperwork" (Interviewee 2, chartered university).

> "We're having more and more rather tiresome rules to obey, new laws being passed, lots of paperwork and so on, which is deflecting us from teaching and research which is of course what we're all about" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

> "There is so much day to day management jobs which means time spent thinking about that is time not spent thinking about strategy, not spent thinking about the academic strategic progress of the department so there is tension between management and leadership. It is a continual battle. When I switched on the computer today I had 104 e-mails. It is just getting through it and keeping it going. I hadn't realised before I took this role the amount of day to day stuff which takes your time" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

Although there was a general agreement about what was involved in their role and responsibilities as leader of a faculty, the focus of the strategy differed slightly between whether they were a leader in a chartered or statutory university. The leaders of faculties in

statutory universities tended to focus on the external environment in influencing their agenda. They emphasised the need to "be ahead of the game" (Interviewee 8, statutory university), "commercialisation of activities" (Interviewee 9, statutory university) and the need "to seek to influence broader strategies within the university and beyond" (Interviewee 7, statutory university). In contrast, those at chartered universities tended to focus on the internal environment to influence their leadership direction. They emphasised such tasks as "setting the agenda" (Interviewee 4, chartered university), and providing leadership for "research, management and teaching" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

The responses suggested that each had a broad spectrum of staff and had assistant leaders to aid them in their role. Many mentioned the importance of these staff and the desire for them to be given the power to contribute. The majority used words such as "empowerment" and "distributed leadership" to describe how they led their staff. For example:

> "What I really want is for each of the heads of centres to take a leadership role in taking their areas forward. I can't do the lot, I want to ensure distributed leadership can take place" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

> "I am certainly somebody that operates on what I call a distributive leadership basis. I'm very, very keen for colleagues to be empowered and give them the support and accountability for what they do" (Interviewee 12, statutory university).

These responses indicate possible differences in leadership between chartered and statutory universities, although this is presently a tentative outcome of the study. These are illustrated in Table 5 (page 137) and discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Aspirations for the Faculty

When probed further as to their responsibilities, the leaders began to discuss their aspirations for their faculty. It is not surprising there was a common agreement that, irrespective of being a leader in a chartered or statutory university, their ambition was "to be as successful as possible" (Interviewee 1, chartered university). However, 'success' appeared to mean different things to leaders in statutory universities to those in chartered universities. Those leaders in chartered universities tended to focus on wider recognition for their faculty through "high RAE ratings" (Interviewee 17, chartered university) and that the "university is recognised as one of the top international universities" (Interviewee 2, chartered university) whereas those leading in statutory universities tended to focus more heavily on student and staff experiences. This can be seen in the following examples:

"Successful school in that students are satisfied" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

"Student employability is high" (Interviewee 12, statutory university).

and that

"Students recommend the institution" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

There was a consensus between both types of higher education institution that they felt they needed to collaborate more both within their own faculty and with outside organisations, particularly in relation to "third mission" activities in order to continue to "move forward" and to compete.

Summary

From these responses it was clear to see how leaders envisaged their role and responsibilities. Whilst there is evidence of a breadth of duties as Table 4 illustrates, respondents generally agreed that there was a symbiotic relationship between management and leadership and that both were necessary if their aspirations for their faculty were to be realised.

The enquiry then focused on discovering how and why they came to reach this level of responsibility. Questions were then focused on the formative years of the leaders, reviewing aspects of family background, social class and education.

<u>Life History: The Journey to Leadership</u>

Formative Years

Of the leaders interviewed, it was interesting to note that the majority came from poor, working class backgrounds, many being brought up on council estates, described by one "as very primitive home conditions" (Interviewee 10, statutory university). Five were from coal mining backgrounds, others described their background as just "very working class" (Interviewee 11, statutory university) and "impoverished" (Interviewee 16, chartered university). Many mentioned the fact that their parents left school at 14 and "were not academic" (Interviewee 4, chartered university). One provided qualification by saying "my parents couldn't help me with my school work by the age of 10" (Interviewee 6, chartered university). However, with the exception of one, all portrayed a very stable family background using endearing terms such as "very loving" and "a very happy home" to describe it. This can be illustrated by the comments of one interviewee:

> "I was from a working class background. My home conditions were extremely primitive. We lived in a very small cottage with just cold running water, no bathroom. So it was quite humble in that respect. But I had very loving parents. I felt exceedingly well supported through my childhood" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

The only exception to this was a leader who had parents who were divorced and as a result he lived with his mother. In contrast, only two leaders came from more comfortable backgrounds. Whilst not directly acknowledging a more middle class background, one leader described his parents as "teachers", the other describing them as "entrepreneurs".

Education

Despite these working class roots, in all but one case, when asked about the value attributed to education, the leaders described how much education was valued by their parents as a means of getting on in life. For example:

> "Both parents were deeply committed to education; partly because they hadn't had the opportunities" (Interviewee 7, statutory university).

> "Education was very highly valued. It was seen as a way of getting on and moving out" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

Although in most cases, their parents were "not academic", many described their parents as "intelligent" mentioning the presence of lots of books at home.

Specific memories of primary school were quite vague amongst the respondents. However, most went to small, local and often quite rural primary schools. They described their primary education in positive terms, giving a general impression of receiving a good, solid education.

> "I went to the local primary school. I was in the Welsh 'stream' and very, very well educated. They were passionate about it. I think I could have done GCSE Welsh at the age of 11" (Interviewee 5, chartered university).

Common to the majority of leaders was their uniqueness at primary school at being far more intelligent than the majority of pupils. It appears they stood out in their academic ability. This is clearly illustrated by one leader:

> "Without trying to sound big-headed, I was the most intelligent kid in the school" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

> "She realised straightaway there was no point in teaching me with the rest of the class because I was so far ahead so she just gave me books to work through and I worked on my own." (Interviewee 6, chartered university).

They were given "a lot of encouragement and expected to stay on at school" (Interviewee 6, chartered university) both from teachers and at home.

All passed their 11+ but this was generally seen as the exception rather than the norm for the school that they were in.

> "I think I was the only child who had ever passed the 11+" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

Going to grammar school was commonly seen by the respondents' parents as "presenting opportunities" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

> "I think everybody expected me to stay on. It's like everybody said "he's going to go to university, he's going to be the first boy in the family, everybody's waiting for this big event" (Interviewee 6, chartered university)

However, because of the difference in social background from the other pupils, many described going to grammar school as " a huge culture shock". The result of this is expressed clearly in the following extract:

> "I was really alienated in all sorts of ways, because the majority of people at that school came from very different backgrounds and had a very different life experience and a different language code in all sorts of ways. I felt quite alienated, but then I learned to play the game, learned to change my accent" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

The rather disturbing result of this was that he began "to deny my parents because there was such a difference between home and friends."

He is not alone in this. Many spoke of the differences between their family and friends and of their "two lives". Despite this, just like their parents, there was an overwhelming impression that the interviewees, too, were grateful for the chance to get a very good education. They all recognised that it did allow them the opportunities that may well have been denied them had they not have passed the 11+.

> "I went to grammar school and I wouldn't have had the opportunity in similar circumstances now. Although people knock the 11+, if you're reasonably bright, it does give an opportunity to people who come from poor backgrounds to really get a good start in education" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

The grammar schools that they went to also had high expectations of their pupils. University was a natural progression once they were at grammar school.

> "It was the school's expectation that the majority of students would go to university and this is in the days when only 5% went" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

Not surprisingly then for all but one respondent, they were the first to go to university in their family. A typical comment was:

> "I was the only person on both sides of my extended family who went to university" (Interviewee 13, statutory university).

Leadership Roles

Only two leaders from chartered universities held any significant leadership positions as head boy. Again they acknowledged the experience that they gained from this.

> "At junior school, I was head boy and then I went to grammar school and I was head boy there. I suppose in a sublimal way, it didn't seem like it at the time, you were put in positions which I'm sure must have influenced what I did in the future" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

Others had minor leadership roles, such as form captain and team captain but the majority "just cruised along" as one put it. Surprisingly, none expressed any particular desire to be a leader while at school and indeed one said he consciously "held back from a leadership role" (Interviewee 10, statutory university), another said how he preferred "to be just to one side of the mainstream of people" (Interviewee 12, statutory university). In fact, one said that in hindsight, he was glad that he had not had any leadership role:

> "I think in many ways that is a good thing. I think people who form the idea of what a leader is in contexts which are inappropriate to what you find yourself often find themselves in trouble" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

With the exception of one, all then went on to a chartered university away from home, to study for a degree in their chosen field. The exception went to a technical college and only later went back to university to upgrade to a degree.

At university most seemed to broaden their experiences by getting involved in a range of extra-curricular activities whilst remaining dedicated to their degree subject. It is interesting to note that many went to small departments within large universities. This seemed to allow them to be nurtured in their subject area and to contribute to a very positive experience while at university.

> "I went to a very good small department at Birmingham University and the lecturers were really inspirational. I mean there were only twelve students on the course each year. So you all got to know each other" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

At university, more spoke of taking on leadership roles such as the running of university societies and getting more involved in extra-curricular activities.

The enquiry then moved on to the next stage of the leaders' lives post-education. Questions were then asked to establish the career paths of the leaders.

Career Paths

Upon graduating, the initial career paths of the respondents diverge between those leaders working in statutory universities and those working in chartered universities. With only one exception, those who now lead in a statutory university, all started their working lives outside of higher education. First jobs for those now in statutory universities involved working in areas for which their degrees had equipped them. For example, one interviewee

who had read Design at university, went on to work for a design company. Likewise, two who had studied teacher training went on to work in schools.

For those in statutory universities, this period seems to have been one of establishing themselves in their profession by gaining a range of knowledge and experience through a variety of roles and jobs. Few stayed in any post for any significant length of time. For example, one respondent spent one year in his first job, nine months in the second, ten months in the third and two years in the fourth. Another was employed in two different organisations over a period of eight years but had eight different roles over this time. Despite this rapid movement between roles, the overwhelming feeling was that this was not part of an overall plan but as one put it; "right place, right time" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

This is in contrast to those leaders in chartered universities. The majority of those now in chartered university went straight back into academia by beginning a fairly traditional linear academic career path, initially becoming research assistants. They appeared to be more focused on their career path from a much earlier stage. So, for example, one respondent said he always knew:

> "I wanted to go into academia rather than industry because it allowed the freedom to pursue one's own interests" (Interview 4, chartered university).

> Another said "I had always wanted an academic career" (Interviewee 5, chartered university).

As a consequence, the majority of these respondents began to progress up the academic career ladder from research assistant and Ph.D. to lecturer, senior lecturer, Reader, Chair, head of department and then head of faculty. Of those leaders interviewed, only two moved to higher education establishments to progress in this way. All the other leaders in chartered

universities after their initial Ph.D. have remained in the same institution throughout their career, although three have taken secondments to work in universities abroad for a short time. However, two did initially work in the private sector, which was directly linked to their degree subject. Both, after a short while (maximum 2 years), returned to education and have remained there ever since. Only one admitted that he "went into academia because he couldn't get another job at the time" (Interviewee 14, chartered university). For him, becoming an academic was not a conscious decision as he says:

"I never at any point in my time ever said I wanted to be an academic." (Interviewee 14, chartered university).

This, however, appears to be the exception rather than the norm.

Those leaders in statutory universities appeared to gravitate to higher education after a gradual discovery that they enjoyed educating others.

"I enjoyed mentoring and coaching of individuals, enabling them to make the most of themselves" (Interviewee 12, statutory university).

" I got a buzz out of seeing the way you could influence colleagues and others. I was interested in research and the bigger questions about knowledge and I felt I could make a bigger influence in higher education" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

This enjoyment in educating also seemed to be accompanied by a 'social awakening'. One respondent expressed this succinctly by saying:

"I had a late 20s' crisis; it felt like a soulless existence. I could engage with education and I felt I wanted to educate people about my subject" (Interviewee 9, statutory university).

Without exception all spoke of the desire to "make a difference" and education seemed to be the appropriate medium in which to do this.

Once in higher education, the paths of both sets of leaders seem once again to converge. Upward movements by all did not appear to be part of an overall plan. Progression seemed to be for three main reasons.

Firstly, the constant desire to learn seemed to be a key driver to move on up. Respondents were not happy staying still when there were new challenges around the corner. Typical comments were:

> " I was motivated by the challenges of more senior posts" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

> "I took opportunities that came along because they were exciting and interesting" (Interviewee 7, statutory university).

Secondly, there appeared an impatience to achieve where they felt they could make a difference and contribute to driving the faculty forward.

> "I can't sit back if something needs doing, I would offer to do it" (Interviewee 9, statutory university).

> "I get impatient if I don't get outcomes" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

Thirdly, serendipity seemed to play a significant role, although it is clear that their competence ensured that this actually happened:

> "I didn't look for promotion, circumstances arose and then I discovered I had to do it and I could do it" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

> "There was no one else to do it. I had to have a reason for not doing it. It was almost like a conveyor belt. I moved to the end, was doing the job very well, an opportunity came along and I took it. It's just been a natural step" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

As a result, movement up the career ladder appears to have been fairly rapid for most leaders. At a relatively young age, they were appointed into positions of considerable prestige and responsibility. For example, two leaders became Readers by the age of 34 and a Chair by the age of 38.

The final move to their current leadership positions seemed to be either because they were asked to, because it was felt that they were the best person for the job, or their desire to do the best for their school motivated them to apply.

> "They interviewed five external candidates then they decided to appoint internally and the finger was pointed at me" (Interviewee 5, chartered university).

> "The head of school stood down, I was approached by colleagues and they asked me to apply 'for the good of the school'" (Interviewee 2, chartered university).

It is clear that for whichever reason, they did not become leaders for the desire to be a leader per se.

> "I wasn't driven by salary or status. I thought the school could work better" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

> "I wanted to do the best for the school, I never had ambitions to be a leader" (Interview 5, chartered university).

Many expressed the desire to be the leader rather than be led by someone who did not have the same beliefs as themselves or similar ambitions for the faculty.

> "I didn't want to take the risk of ending up with someone I didn't want to work with" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

> "I felt I could do the job better than the people in the frame to do it, so I thought I'd better do it" (Interviewee 14, chartered university).

It is interesting that, once in academia, none have left. Many disclosed that they had had offers from outside, but none had been tempted enough to take them. The overriding reason appears to be the enjoyment of their subject area and their quest for greater understanding of it. Being employed within the academic environment allowed them to pursue this interest. One interviewee clearly expresses his motivation for staying:

> "What will drive me to come in on my last day of work will be the same thing that drove me through the front gate of the university all those years ago; trying to

understand things and produce something significant. I will put up with all the other things I have to do" (Interviewee 6, chartered university).

Future Aspirations

Although 'making a difference' is a recurring theme for all the interviewees, the "excitement of the research and what it is hoping to achieve" (Interviewee 1, chartered university) appears to be the overriding theme, irrespective of being a leader of a faculty. It is probably for this reason that when asked what their future aspirations were, none expressed the desire to move further up the academic career ladder. They all said they wanted to do more of what they enjoy, i.e. research. It appears that the general impression is that the further up you go in academia the more removed from their subject area and the more lonely it becomes. These respondents clearly did not want that.

> "I don't want to be solely responsible. I like to make decisions along with other people" (Interviewee 9, statutory university).

> "Vice-Chancellors are too divorced from things. I like to keep my hands dirty" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

Others, who were approaching retirement, did not have the ambition.

> " I don't have the inclination to move up. I don't have the level of commitment required to do it. It takes over your life. I have other things to do in life" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

Instead some respondents seemed to want to have more time to pursue their own interests. "Writing a book" (Interviewee 10, statutory university) was a common response, or "concentrating on their research" (Interviewee 6, chartered university) was another. Others were beginning to think of 'downsizing', either in the form of retirement or to just have more time to pursue interests outside of work.

> "I don't want to carry on as Head of School for very much longer. Somebody else needs to come in and take us further. There is a point when I don't want to work so hard" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

"I don't think I really want the challenge that would involve. I can cope with this job as long as the stress levels don't get too high. Sometimes I have these thoughts, do I just want to downsize and relax; get a small holding or something?" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

Summary

By asking questions about their upbringing, education and career in each leader's life history an insight has been given of the experiences, knowledge and attitudes acquired on their journey to leadership. Whilst the majority were from working class backgrounds, education was highly valued and it is this attitude which appears to have permeated and influenced their journey pre- and post-compulsory education. Those now leading in statutory universities seem to have taken a more diverse route to their current destination than those leading in chartered university, whose career has been more linear and focused.

Critical incidents

    a)   **Formative years**

In response to the question about what they felt could be classed as 'critical incidents' in their formative years, there was a consensus that passing the 11+ was the singly most significant critical incident for them. This allowed them to progress onto grammar school which gave rise to opportunities which, for most, had not previously existed, in particular going on to university. There were other, more personal, critical incidents mentioned such as the divorce of parents and moving house which had varying impact on the individuals concerned, but few could recall any other particular incident from their formative years which influenced where they are today.

b) Professional lives

Critical incidents became more significant in their professional lives. As the overriding theme here seems to be of serendipity, critical incidents were particularly important in helping to direct where the leaders are today. In the early stages of their careers, 'recommendations' determined the first post, particularly for leaders in statutory universities.

> "A friend of my father sent an advert on to me in the post" (Interviewee 9, statutory university).

or chance meetings:

> "I met a friend who was working in a college. He said, 'why don't I apply?' " (Interviewee 7, statutory university).

> "I met up with some other guys on the course, they told me about the job and said, 'why didn't I apply?' " (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

Progression and movement to their next job was often the result of the retirement or promotion of a predecessor. For those in chartered universities, none seemed to actively seek promotion, whereas for those in statutory university, initial movement to another job appeared to be due to their natural curiosity, need for excitement, challenge and desire to constantly learn. A typical comment was:

> "I took opportunities that came along because they were exciting and interesting" (Interviewee 7, statutory university).

When the job stopped providing interest or challenge, as one put it "I wouldn't stick around" (Interviewee 9, statutory university). One admitted that it was also the "need for recognition" (Interviewee 13, statutory university) that spurred a move. There were also other more specific critical incidents which influenced their career path. Three said it was because a partner had got a job elsewhere and so they had followed. Two admitted to domestic

problems which had led them to change jobs. A number, both in chartered and statutory universities also mentioned the birth of a child as an influencing factor in them taking specific trajectories. For some, this meant a change in direction or for those in chartered universities, returning home from working abroad.

> "My wife is a medic and when she was expecting our daughter, for her to practise in the US, she would have had to retrain, so we came back here and I saw the post advertised" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

> " I was married with a child on the way, so I thought this was a good chance for me to come back into academia" (Interviewee 5, chartered university).

For a minority, personal tragedy influenced their career path. For one, a move abroad was aborted due to the diagnosis of his wife with cancer, for another a heart attack influenced a change in job role.

Critical incidents in terms of gaining their current role seem to have been either because of the restructuring of the university, which created a new post or due to the retirement of the incumbent. In most cases, it was the fact that they were considered the most suitable for the post.

Significant People

   a) Formative Years

When asked to recall significant people who they felt particularly influenced them, it is not surprising that in their formative years, certain teachers and parents were considered as 'significant people' in the lives of the leaders. Parents were significant in that they taught "the concept of hard work" and were "encouraging" and "supported me in whatever I did" (Interviewee 6, chartered university). Mothers were often recognised as the most consistent

influence in the shaping of the leader's characters. This is succinctly acknowledged by one interviewee:

> "My mother tried to bring me up to be independent and always encouraged me to do anything that was on my own. She was always very encouraging and this gave me a lot of confidence. She wanted me to have a decent job and do well" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

The influence of the extended family, such as grandparents and aunts and uncles was also acknowledged by some. Grandfathers, in particular, were mentioned by four interviewees saying that they had a "big influence" on them in terms of getting them interested in various aspects of work. Likewise, aunts and uncles opened their eyes to alternative careers and aspirations outside of their immediate family. Surprisingly, only one respondent said anything about the influence of friends in their formative years. This respondent had a friend whom he competed with and "motivated me to try and do better" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

Teachers seemed to have a greater influence in career direction. The majority of respondents mentioned a teacher who was responsible for developing an enthusiasm for the subject area that they went on to pursue as a career.

> "Maths teacher helped me in my enthusiasm for Maths" (Interviewee 3, chartered university)

> "Science teacher fostered my early interests in science. She also believed in the potential of young people to do things" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

Many spoke of "inspirational" teachers in the latter years of primary school, particularly in their role in preparing for the 11+. However, more were remembered as inspirational at grammar school.

"I had a Maths teacher who was really a good old type. He taught us every morning and there was only three of us. He had an enormous influence on us because we spent so much time there. He really trained us incredibly well and he was very supportive" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

"The teacher we had at 'A' level was absolutely brilliant. He changed the way you approached your work in just a very simple and subtle way. For some people it might have been the worst nightmare, but for me it was brilliant because it made me start to think more about what I was doing and that is something I still do now" (Interviewee 18, chartered university).

b) **Professional Lives**

In their professional lives, significant people became a very important influencing force in their lives as they developed their careers. Some people were significant because of their ability to inspire and motivate. For example:

"He taught me the sky is the limit as long as you have got the drive, energy, commitment and maybe a little bit of ability" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

Others were significant because they were very influential in developing and helping the leaders to progress.

"I worked with an influential leader who became a critical friend. She would take you out of your comfort zone and make everyday a learning experience" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

"I respond very much to people who I get a sort of buzz out of, people who are really enjoyable to work with" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

Many mentioned the role of their head of department in developing their potential to progress. Typical comments were:

"My head of department was very good. He showed me how to write papers and guided me through" (Interviewee 2, chartered university).

"My previous head of school groomed me to succeed him" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

"The head of school enabled me to make a mark. I was given opportunities and allowed to run with them" (Interviewee 7, statutory university).

Conversely, some people were significant in that they had a negative influence. This enabled the leaders to witness how things should not be done. They mentioned such issues as "promising things that weren't deliverable" (Interviewee 9, statutory university), "bullying leader", "saw leaders who I wouldn't want to emulate" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

It is also interesting to note that the leaders suggested that it was not necessarily just one person who influenced them, but many. Some spoke of people collectively being significant to their professional development. This was either through networking; "the power of the network rather than anyone in the network" (Interviewee 11, statutory university), or the influence of people around them:

> "I was networking and I was finding role models. I was looking at others, thinking that's interesting. I'll learn from that" (Interviewee 15, statutory university).

> "The importance of having the right set of people around me. I need people I can rely on, who will support me and have some vision" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

Interestingly, only three interviewees stressed the importance of spouse in their careers and professional development. They were able to reflect on the positive impact their relationships had, acknowledging the opportunities, support and encouragement they provided.

> "I think my wife is significant. I can bring up an issue with her and quite quickly she will see straight to the heart of it, which has been quite useful" (Interviewee 15, statutory university).

> "The other person who has played a major role beyond my academic background has been my partner. She has been immensely supportive and talking to her has developed my ideas. Having somebody like that to talk to is incredibly useful and she would be the singly most influential person" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

In terms of significant people in their current role, many discussed the importance of the team of senior managers who supported their leadership role and to whom they could delegate with confidence.

"What I've managed to build up in the last couple of years is people around me who can turn some of my dreams into reality. They are really important people; people who can make it happen" (Interviewee 13, statutory university).

Many spoke of significant people in broader terms, expressing the significance of the committed, good quality staff who work in the school and enable their leadership role to be successful.

"If I'm looking at the 30-odd years that I've been here, I would say there's probably ten or half a dozen people who are absolutely gold nuggets in terms of running the school and working with me. I won't name names, but that was an important part in having the right sort of people around me that I could rely on and will support me and who tend to have the same vision" (Interviewee 3, chartered university).

Others spoke of the importance of having someone with whom to discuss things. Significant people acted as mentors and were, usually, in the form of line managers:

"One of the pro-vice-chancellors here is my line manager and I can talk to him. It is very useful because he brings experience and knowledge, which I haven't got. You need someone who has some kind of institutional memory" (Interviewee 14, chartered university).

"I have had sort of in-depth interviews with one or two very senior people in the university who advise me of things. One or two of them have been significant because they have been very thought-provoking" (Interviewee 18, chartered university).

Others spoke of significant people who they had met throughout their career and with whom they are still in contact. These people have provided a sounding board and a source of ideas.

"You are then part of a CPD network which doesn't just live in Wales but goes to the UK and beyond" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

Summary

Passing the 11+ examination, career recommendations and serendipity were common themes amongst the respondents classed as critical incidents in shaping their career paths. Teachers and parents were significant in shaping their attitudes in their formative years, but

the range of people who were considered significant diversified as their careers developed. Mentors, senior staff, colleagues and networks were all seen as significant in influencing their journey to leadership and how they have learnt to lead.

Learning to Lead from Life History

Although conclusions could have been drawn to answer research question two by what leaders had implied in their responses to previous questions, I wanted to explore what they felt they had learnt in their life history that they apply today.

When this question was posed to them, many answers were similar. Early on in their careers it seems that most had a 'reality check' where they learned that competence in their discipline was not enough to ensure effectiveness. They had soon learnt to transfer their skills and to use them in different ways. This is something that appears to have been reinforced in their leadership today.

> " I went into my first job and suddenly realised that the rest of the world was not interested in clever mathematics. The rest of the world was actually interested in me solving problems and that I think has carried forward with me. It taught me that people pay you to solve problems and you use your skills in the appropriate way to solve these problems. I think it's still true today. I mean most of the time I actually spend solving problems. In terms of leadership, solving problems is essential and to use your skills whether technical, numerate or whatever to solve those problems. So I learnt a lot" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

> "My background as an engineer and using technology has been significant in valuing process over concept. The design process of identifying, planning, implementing and evaluation is a kind of process that I've applied in all sorts of ways in all aspects of my work and learning" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

> "I worked in an office which had people from different parts of the world so I had a cross-cultural experience of organisations which I think has served me very well in terms of being adaptable, flexible and willing to listen. I think in leadership, people are very good at telling people things but they're not really good at listening" (Interviewee 14, chartered university).

Overwhelmingly, all respondents spoke of the need to respect people at all levels. They all remembered in their early years in academia how impressed and grateful they were to leaders who took the time to be interested in their careers, despite their junior status. As a result many spoke of trying to emulate this now.

> "Having come up through the system so to speak, I try to treat others as I would have wanted to be treated when I was at their stage of my career. I think having come up through the system and knowing how academic staff particularly think and their aspirations and the way they'd like things to be done, very much informs the way that I try and do things" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

Astute awareness of people, how they work and how to get the best out of their staff, seems to be something that resonates with all the leaders interviewed. Typical phrases were "learnt to be sensitive to the fables of people" (Interviewee 7, statutory university), "listen to people" (Interviewee 9, statutory university), "high regard for people and outcomes" (Interviewee 11, statutory university), "to look after your staff, to get the best out of them" (Interviewee 5, chartered university), "making staff feel valued and be nice to people" (Interviewee 2, chartered university).

Not only had they learnt to value their staff in terms of dealing with people, but to continue to learn from each other and use their ideas to build effective leadership.

> "I learnt that the existing ideas and values that colleagues bring to their learning is something I've tried to use in the way I work with them. So it's about allowing people the space to think and share their ideas in a language that was theirs" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

The majority of leaders spoke of the network of people that they had built up around them, which enabled them to access opportunities and facilitate them being party to relevant information. Networks had been formed within their higher education institution by being on various committees and networks beyond their institution.

"What I've learnt is the value of the network, of collaboration, of people learning together" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

"You meet all these people and you find they have lots of qualities that you wouldn't necessary know if you're just a Brit. There are lots of lessons you can learn from them" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

"If I would encourage anyone to do anything, it would be to go to that meeting, go to that conference, talk to those people and link in with others. You are then part of a CPD network which doesn't just live in Wales but going to the UK and that has taken me to the US and Australia. It has given me an international dimension" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

Status and power were frequently discussed by respondents as something they have learned to use with respect. None talked about their role as enabling them to have more power. Indeed, a common theme was that, although positional power is implicit within the job, they could not use it.

"What you rapidly learn about power is that you can never use it. You might have it but the trick is never use it. As soon as you do, you alienate everybody. Every head of school I've talked to, there is no useable power in this position. If you use it, don't expect to stay around and lead for very long. You have to get people talking instead" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

Similarly, one spoke of the "need to be conscious of the limitations of your power…absolute power does corrupt" (Interviewee 7, statutory university). Many spoke how they had learned that being the 'leader' does not mean you have unlimited power to wield about. Positional power is not enough to get people to do what you want of them.

" I learned that you need to lead by example. I think it is important that a leader should be able to demonstrate whatever he/she is asking colleagues to do, that they can also perform at their level. I believe it is particularly important in academia which isn't hierarchical in the sense that business or commerce has hierarchies, i.e. your boss can tell you "you will do this". That doesn't happen in academia. You have to convince people of the argument" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

In this way, 'modesty' was something that the majority of leaders said they had learned by observing it in others.

"I'm always a great admirer of people who are modest. I've met some great people in my life who are extremely modest. Fred Senger, for example, is the only person to have two Nobel Peace prizes in his own right as a scientist and he is a very modest man" (Interviewee 1, chartered university).

" I was very much influenced by a superior by the way he interacted with me as a junior person which was very positive, very friendly, very encouraging, not sort of over-bearing and sort of 'I'm the boss, you will do as I say' sort of thing. That has very much influenced me, I think, in my future career in terms of not trying to sort of push my status, particularly with respect to more junior people to me" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

'Distributed leadership' was a way of practising this modesty, and was very important to enable "capacity to be built at all levels regardless of whether they had leadership titles or not" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

The mechanics of leadership was also an area which leaders had learnt through their life history. One talked about the need to ignore the detail "and look at the broader picture" (Interviewee 8, statutory university), another spoke of learning the "difference between leadership and management and the importance of both" (Interviewee 10, statutory university). Others spoke in a more general sense: "Lots of things rub off, like for instance development planning, strategic planning, looking at structures" (Interviewee 11, statutory university). Many spoke of how they had learnt the importance of effective communication:

"Communication is not what I say, it's what you hear and I've learned to try and pay attention to how my messages may be heard" (Interviewee 7, statutory university).

Summary

The responses to questions surrounding what the leaders have learnt in their life history centred around three core areas. The first was learning the importance of treating people with respect, emphasising and valuing them. The second was to be conscious of the effect and limitations of the power within their role as a leader. The third area of learning was the mechanics of leadership and how to be effective in this role. As all this learning had been unplanned, informal and, therefore, down to the individual to consciously acquire and apply, I also wanted to explore the extent of formal, planned learning in preparation for their current role. This led to the next set of questions regarding professional development and training.

Professional Development and Training

Formal Training and Development

When asked what training and development they had had for their current role, most did not have anything positive to say regarding training and development for their current role. The general consensus was that development had been informally gained 'on the job' and by attendance at conferences. One respondent suggested that there "was the assumption that when people become head of school, that they will know how to lead" (Interviewee 4, chartered university) and that you "evolve into it". Typical responses were that they were "self-taught" and that "you didn't get lessons in leadership from anybody. You just observe different people" (Interviewee 12, statutory university). Those who had had some formal training said they had been on various management courses, but there was a problem in that every faculty is different and generic courses were not particularly relevant. The minority had been on a senior management programme but it was either "poor", "too late", "superficial and not particularly helpful" (Interviewee 14, chartered university) or "interesting but didn't use on a day to day basis. I wouldn't take it again" (Interviewee 8, statutory university). This lack of formal preparation is captured clearly by one leader who stated:

> "There are no management training skills for academics. I became head of school and there was a day-long course. There is no way you can learn management skills in a formal sense. Some heads have to manage a budget of three or four million pounds without being able to read a balance sheet, without knowing how to manage people" (Interviewee 14, chartered university).

The irony of this is clearly expressed by another leader:

> " I think universities are a prodigy in that they offer almost no training whatsoever for any kind of leadership role and they almost tend to promote almost on entirely the wrong criteria. You tend to get promotion because of your research. You establish yourself as a prominent researcher and then you get a management job which makes

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it very difficult for you to develop your research and having to contend with lots of management and administrative positions which you have spent your career studiously avoiding, so it's a very curious system. That's not to say you don't develop views on how to do things as you go along but for your role there is no training. You just learn on the job" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

The only development which respondents had found useful was through links with outside agencies and the courses they had run because "it was context specific and you were able to mix with other people with similar aspirations" (Interviewee 12, statutory university). However, few had attended something like this. One respondent mentioned a mentoring system which allowed in-depth interviews with one or two senior people who could advise them. This they found very useful.

Training Needs

When asked what training and development they would have liked to have received, there was a general consensus that they would have liked some development at the beginning of their leadership role. As one interviewee expressed:

> "There is no formal training for leadership. This is a big gap as the…. school employs over 100 people. There is nothing which says how you should deal with things" (Interviewee 2, chartered university).

This was echoed by another leader who said:

> "When you look at management and leadership in the university, we are just not trained. I could have learnt a lot if there had been a good leadership programme" (Interviewee 4, chartered university).

Although there was not a consensus on having a general leadership programme as some felt "they couldn't see what difference training would have made", all felt they would have liked some training in specific issues, particularly human resource (HR) related areas.

> " I need to know how to avoid making mistakes. I need practical down to earth advice such as how to deal with HR issues" (Interviewee 5, chartered university).

Those coming new to the university to take up the leadership role felt they would have liked some sort of induction to understand where their role fitted into the overall university structure:

> "Formally, it would have been useful to have a briefing on how the whole university is structured which is complicated and only now am I being able to unravel" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

Irrespective of being new to the university, many said that it would have been useful to talk to someone who had done the job before for a number of reasons, not least " to learn how to time manage support staff" (Interviewee 16, chartered university).

There, therefore, appears to be a consensus over the lack of formal training and development given to equip leaders for their current roles and that their preparation for their leadership role has been through their life history. This is reflected well in the following extract:

> "Although I haven't had any formal training as such, everything that I've done to date has prepared me. If I haven't done things myself, I've been very close to someone who had, so I've seen what had been done and how it had been done and what had happened" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).

Summary

It appears from the responses that training and development is an emotive issue for the respondents. Few put it in a positive light and this was largely based on experiences of what little training they had received. Some induction into the role was identified as a training need, as was training in functional aspects of the job.

Concluding Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the eighteen interviews with leaders of faculties within higher education. It has focused on the context within which these leaders have learnt to lead by exploring their formative years, their career progression and their current role. It has also sought to establish the impact of significant people, critical incidents and training and development in preparation for their current role as leaders. Although common themes, similarities and differences have been highlighted throughout between those who lead in a chartered university and those who lead in a statutory university, Table 5 below is useful in that it summarises the findings more explicitly.

Themes	Chartered University	Statutory University
Nature of leadership		
Role and responsibilities:	Considerable autonomy Responsible for all aspects Management and leadership role Bureaucratic tasks Collegiality and empowerment Focus on setting the agenda and research	Considerable autonomy Responsible for all aspects Management and leadership role Bureaucratic tasks Collegiality and empowerment Focus on commercialisation of activities and seeking to broaden strategies
Aspirations:	To be successful in terms of wider recognition - High RAE rating - Top international university Third mission	To be successful in terms of student and staff experience - Empowerment of staff - Collaboration Distributed leadership
Life history: the journey to leadership		
Formative Years:	Poor, working class Loving, supportive parents First in family to go to university High value placed on education Excelled in primary school Passed 11+ Went to chartered university Some prefect/team captain	Poor, working class Loving, supportive parents First in family to go to university High value placed on education Excelled in primary school Passed 11+ Went to chartered university Few leadership roles
Career paths:	Within higher education Research assistant Few moves, some secondments in HE abroad, most stayed in same institution Moved up academic career ladder Rapid movement up	Outside higher education Variety of roles and jobs in private and public sector Moved geographical location frequently Moved in to higher education Rapid movement up
Future aspirations:	Revert to research Retire	Revert to research Outside consultancy, retire

Critical incidents		
Formative years: Professional lives:	11+ Retirement, moving on of post holder, personal circumstances	11+ Recommendations, chance meetings, movement due to desire to learn, excitement, challenge
Significant people Formative years: Professional lives:	Parents Teachers Friends, colleagues, Mentors	Parents Teachers Friends, colleagues, Mentors
Learning to lead from life history	Interviews Discussions Networks Astute awareness of people To value staff To encourage and support staff Not to abuse power To be modest Mechanics of leadership Importance of team work	Management development programmes Networks Astute awareness of people To value staff To encourage and support staff Not to abuse power To be modest Mechanics of leadership Importance of team work
Professional development and training Training need	Gained on the job Conferences Self-taught Mentors Induction HR issues, finance Structure of the role	Gained on the job Conferences Self-taught Mentors Induction HR issues, finance Structure of the role

Table 5. A Summary of Similarities and Differences Between Learning to Lead in a Statutory and Chartered University

Having summarised the findings and described the evidence in response to my research

questions, I am now able to relate these findings to the literature reviewed and to theorise the

impact of these findings to the contribution of knowledge in identifying how and why leaders

become leaders, by whom they are shaped and suggesting which experiences have most

significance for leaders in their journey of learning to lead. In doing so, I shall transcend

description and begin to consider the more fundamental questions of 'why?' and 'how?'

leaders have learnt to lead in their journey to leadership. This will enable me to develop a framework of the factors which influence a leaders formation. It will also allow modification of Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003) models for those in the compulsory education sector in order to create a revised one more applicable for those in higher education. Following on from these, tentative suggestions can be made for more suitable leadership development, all of which will be useful for aspiring leaders and those who are responsible for developing them.

<u>**Chapter Seven**</u>

<u>**Discussion of the Findings**</u>

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the findings identified in the preceding chapter. Each research question is addressed in turn with the intention of responding to the substantive, theoretical and methodological issues identified in the literature review and methodology chapters. By doing so, I hope to provide a framework to reflect the new knowledge gained in addressing the research questions and to outline how this research can contribute to the effective development of middle-level leader-academics.

<u>**The 'Nature' of Leadership**</u>

Research Question One:

What is the nature of leadership for middle-level leader-academics in higher education and is there a difference between the nature of leadership at middle-level for those in chartered and statutory universities?

It is clear from reviewing leaders' responses in this study that leadership priorities in the faculties in this research have moved from the pre-1992 model as described by Jackson (1999) and Smith (2002) to one typical of higher education institutions post Further and Higher Education Reform Act (1992). The acknowledgement by the leaders in this study for the need to be both good leaders and distinguished academics is indicative of this. Similarly, the concern for high RAE ratings, particularly for those in chartered universities, and concern for high teaching quality ratings in statutory universities is symptomatic of the post-1992 model.

As the literature indicates (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Prichard, 2000; Ketteridge et al., 2002; Gronn, 2003), one of the outcomes of this managerialist model is the need for leaders of faculties in higher education to balance the operational aspects of leading a faculty with the need to provide strategic leadership. The findings from this study support these views. As Bolton (2000), Jackson (1999), Smith (2002, 2005, 2007) and Knight and Trowler (2001) suggest, the range of formal responsibilities appears similar across all the leaders in this study. In chapter six, the responsibilities have been divided into management, operational type duties and leadership, strategic type duties. This extensive and diverse list of responsibilities not only concurs with these researchers but also demonstrates how the job is becoming more and more complex and multi-faceted as the literature suggests. However, as in previous studies (Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007; Rhodes, 2007) of leader-academics, this research also identifies that, whilst tasks and responsibilities were broadly similar across faculties, the relative importance of each task varied in respect of the institution and disciplinary contexts in which the leaders worked. Thus the focus of the head of faculty in an Art and Design faculty of a relatively small, vocationally orientated university was notably different to a head of an Engineering faculty in a large, research-led institution. Recruitment of students was a major concern for the former, whereas leading edge research was the focus for the latter.

All the leaders spoke of the need to set a strategy for the faculty and develop the faculty in-line with this vision. However, equally, they spoke of the difficulty of finding the time to do this when they were often overwhelmed with the many more operational tasks involved in the day-to-day running of the faculty. This was clearly seen to be frustrating for the leaders

as they found themselves occupied by bureaucratic and operational activities at the expense of focusing on leadership. Not only does this correlate with the findings of Bolton (2000) but also echoes the sentiments of those in Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) study who report on the many dilemmas facing leader-academics in higher education, but it also supports the findings of Prichard (2000) and Middlehurst (1993), who detail the tensions that result from such a diverse role.

Despite the general acceptance of having to deal with both management and leadership tasks, the aspects these leaders viewed as crucial were fostering the academic purpose adof the faculty through strategic leadership which invariably meant leading people towards and through change. This corresponds to Johnson's (2002) findings in which she terms this as 'intellectual leadership' (p. 39).

It would also appear that there is common ground with Deem's (2004) suggestion of the rise of entrepreneurialism in higher education and her subsequent analysis of the influence of internationalisation and globalisation for leaders. Those in statutory universities spoke of commercialisation of activities and the forming of partnerships with outside agencies to create new models of working and to ensure their sustainability. This is illustrated well by the following extract:

> "I've worked on strategic alliances with quite a few big cultural organisations in the city and also selected organisations in the UK and abroad. It is about co-badging and working with creative excellence in the city. It gives the students an experience of not just working in a university but in a halfway house which is out in an organisation" (Interviewee 15, statutory university).

In general, there was an acceptance by most of the leaders interviewed that relationships with the external world is another vital role these leaders have seen the necessity to adopt,

irrespective of operating in a chartered or statutory university. Consequently, whilst 'alliances' was a term often used by those in statutory universities, 'third mission' and 'collaboration' were terms frequently used by leaders in chartered universities as ways of furthering their place on the national and international scene, as well as securing extra funding.

However, due to the degree of responsibility given to the leaders in this study, it has allowed them sufficient power, in the main, to set their own strategy and priorities for their faculty. This is in contrast to Wright's (2001) assertion that leaders really operated to someone else's agenda and Middlehurst's (1993) argument that faculties are purely production units of universities. Whilst the leaders acknowledged that their faculty's strategy had to be in-line with the overall university's mission, they felt quite strongly that they were empowered to operate almost autonomously within their faculty. This concurs with Ketteridge et al. (2002) and Gleeson and Shain's (1999) research, that heads of faculties, although influenced by managerialism are not "determined by it" (p. 488). This was particularly noticeable when leaders spoke of their drivers and aspirations for their faculty. Those in chartered universities spoke of the desire to be part of a leading university on both the national and international front, driven by high quality research from within their own faculty. Although this was an overall aim of the university, the process of getting there seemed to be left almost entirely to each faculty.

What is abundantly clear is the all-consuming sense of purpose they feel. They all mentioned the desire for their faculty to be successful with a philosophy centred on shared ownership of common values and whatever it takes to ensure success. Although as Smith (2002, 2005)

noted, the focus is slightly different depending on being a chartered or statutory university. Leaders in chartered universities, who traditionally come from a research background, focused on high RAE ratings, whereas those in statutory universities, with a tradition in teaching, focused on teaching quality and student experience. However, unlike Smith's (2002) research, the difference between the two appears to be reducing. Those in chartered universities recognise the need for quality teaching and adapting programmes to suit student demand and those in statutory universities are recognising the need to underpin their teaching with good quality research.

The study does not wholly accord with Bolton's (2000) view that leadership is often seen as an "unwelcome interruption to research and teaching" (p. 57). It is true that, as in Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) study, many leaders were keen to maintain their subject credibility in the eyes of the members of that school in order to be able to offer academic leadership as well as exert managerial control. Although the majority of leaders did talk about reverting back to their research and complained of the lack of time left over to devote to their research, none appeared to view leadership as "unwelcome". Moreover, they viewed it as necessary if their vision for their research focus and the faculty, was to be realised.

The other dichotomy presented in the literature was that between manager/leader and academic colleague. Without exception, all the leaders in this study had progressed, certainly in their latter years, to their current position through the academic career ladder. For many, they had grown and developed with the department and faculty and becoming leader was a natural progression, endorsed by their colleagues and not as a result of formalised succession planning. As a consequence, the tensions between these colleagues and their leadership

position that Middlehurst (1993) and Deem (2003) describe, are not obvious in this study. Many of the leaders spoke of understanding their subordinates, (who they regarded as colleagues) and that they were united in the same strategic direction for their faculty. Indeed, this was the reason why some had taken on the leadership role in the first place, so as to avoid an 'outsider' leading the school to a different agenda. In this way, 'positional' power of the leaders had, to some extent, been legitimised by the support of their colleagues and superiors in gaining the leadership position. The leaders were acutely aware of this earned power, and therefore, the need to maintain this respect. So, while they believed the tasks and management aspects of their work are important, they agreed with the sentiments of those in Hellawell and Hancock's study (2001), that establishing good relationships with members of staff was seen as a priority. Without this, many accepted that they would be powerless. However, it was also clear that they had considerable 'personal' power at their disposal, attributable to their knowledge, skills and expertise in their academic field. This is in direct accordance with Middlehurst's (1993) view that the influence, authority and power of the head of faculty comes from a variety of sources.

There was a plurality of responses which reflected a similar polarisation in the literature (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Knight and Trowler, 2001; Muijs, et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2007) which suggests most leaders sought to win the hearts and minds of staff through collegiality. Many spoke of 'consensus decision-making', 'empowering' staff and operating through 'distributed' leadership. They were keenly aware that they had to involve staff in decision making if the faculty was to be effective. Many mentioned the best way of doing this was by empowering staff to make their own decisions and by doing so promoted social cohesion and collegiality (MacBeath and MacDonald, 2000). Thus, these leaders did not

practise autocratic style leadership but rather headed a faculty of 'consent' (Handy, 1977).

As a result, leaders spoke of their faculties as "happy" and "productive" with a shared sense

of purpose. According to Muijs and Harris (2003), this is a direct result of dispersed

leadership. A tentative conclusion could be that this is one of the contributory factors

enabling the faculties in this study to achieve 'excellent' status.

Despite this dispersed style of leadership, the interviewees did not see their faculties as cosy

clubs where nothing was achieved unless everyone consented, but one where democracy

prevailed within an agreed framework. To do this, the leaders did acknowledge that some

decisions had to be made which would be unpopular for a few, but they rationalised this as

being inevitable, if the faculty was to develop inline with their own and the university's

mission. There was very little evidence that the leaders felt their lack of 'levers' to enforce

decisions or deal with issues such as underperformance as Smith (2002) and Hellawell and

Hancock (2001) suggest. Dealing effectively with the latter, as shall be seen later in this

discussion, was more due to lack of training in this area, than 'power' to effectively manage

it.

What these interviews did not reveal, nor it seems does the literature, is any differentiation

between the role of a leader and that of an experienced leader. It seems that there is no gentle

introduction or reduced responsibilities for those new to the post. They all had the full gamut

of responsibilities almost thrust upon them right from the beginning and may explain in part,

why many felt at times "overwhelmed" with the work and, as Smith (2007) also found, put in

seventy-hour weeks on a regular basis. This, obviously, has training and development

implications as will be discussed in response to the fourth research question.

In order to illustrate and summarise the diverse dimensions and themes, which have emerged from the analysis regarding the nature of leadership at middle-level in higher education, I have devised the model below (Figure 3). The vertical axis expresses the tensions that exist between meeting the expectations of the faculty and those of the university and other stakeholders. The horizontal axis expresses the tensions of balancing the role and responsibilities involved in the day-to-day operational type activities that the leader-academic role demands with the need to provide, and focus on, strategic leadership. The detail in each quadrant identifies how these tensions are manifested within the role and responsibilities of the leader-academic.

Faculty

making day-to-day decisions within a culture of collegiality

direction setting promoting progress & status of faculty

Operational Management — Leader - academic — **Strategic Leadership**

meeting targets in-line with university and stake holder expectations

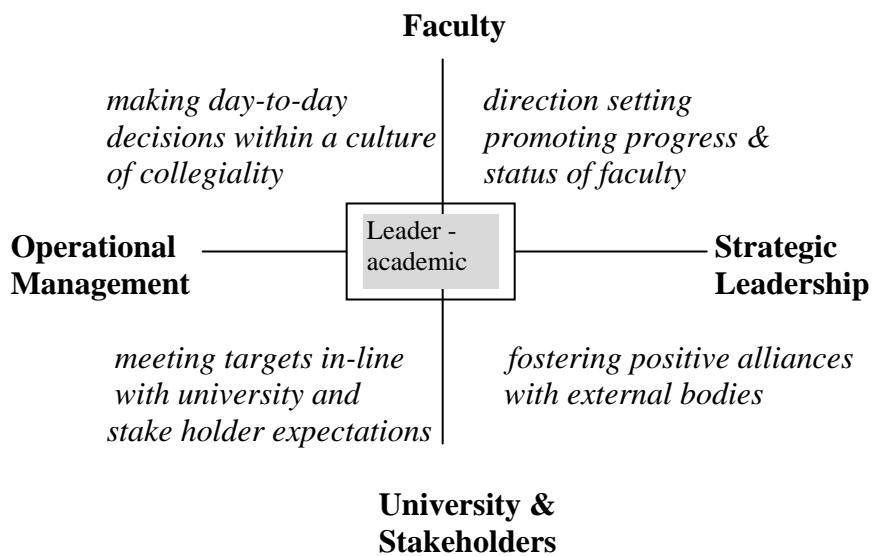*fostering positive alliances with external bodies*

University & Stakeholders

Figure 3. The Competing Tensions of the Role of the Middle-Level Leader-Academic

Faculty and Operational Management

The day-to-day management of the faculty exerts significant amount of time and pressure on the leader-academic. A large part of the operational leadership type responsibilities involves adopting a democratic process. Leaders were acutely aware that, without leading in a collegial manner, progress would be virtually impossible, rendering positional and even personal power useless. In this way leaders need to nurture the culture of collegiality in order to carry out the operational tasks of leadership.

Operational Management/ University & Stakeholders

Individual accountability for leaders meant they were personally responsible for the direction, efficiency and effectiveness of the faculty. Not only were they accountable to their colleagues within the faculty but also accountable to the university and other stakeholders both internal and external to the university such as senior management, students, governors and organisations that collaborate with the faculty and university.

Faculty/Strategic Leadership

Despite the collegiate culture within which the leader must operate, they were very aware that accountability of the faculty rested with them. The task of raising the status of the faculty within the individual institution, both on a national and international scale was largely down to the strategic direction and leadership that they gave.

Strategic Leadership / University & Stakeholders

Strategic leadership not only involves creating and following a strategic direction for the faculty but also enabling the faculty to meet stakeholder strategic expectations. This involves fostering positive alliances and collaboration with external bodies to generate income and

prestige for the faculty and university as well as working towards the university strategic plan.

In summary, as the literature suggests and as this study has confirmed, leader-academics are faced with dual roles of being a manager and a leader with responsibilities to the faculty, university and other stakeholders. This not only requires awareness of the internal environment but also sensitivity to the external environment, if they are to assist their faculty and university in achieving its aspirations. Although the context and focus of leadership varies slightly, depending on being a leader in a chartered or statutory university, the challenge and complexity of the role appears similar. Consequently, this needs to be acknowledged by aspiring leaders and those who are responsible for developing them. The four dimensions identified in the framework in Figure 3 help us to understand and recognise the diversity of the role and how each interrelate. This information is a vital perquisite for all aspiring leaders, if they are to be fully informed of the complexity of leading at middle-level. By doing so, it will allow them to take steps in equipping themselves with the attributes and experience needed for effective leadership in all four areas. It also provides a useful aid for those responsible for nurturing and developing leaders, to which they can match development opportunities with the requirements of the role. Generic approaches, which assume one form of leadership, are not likely to be successful.

Life History: The Journey to Leadership

Research Question Two:

How much of what leaders do is learnt, taught and acquired and is, therefore, a product of their life histories; that is, how much of being a leader is learnt from experience and the knowledge of 'self'? What particular experiences such as personal, social, educational and career – prepare them for the role of leader?

From this study it would appear that there is common ground in the concept that views and values (Taffinder, 1995; Parker, 2002; Busher, 2003) are developed over long periods of time and the influence this has on how leaders lead.

It is clear that from an early age, parents, in particular, had an influencing factor on developing their "moral values" that Parker (2002) discusses. Their parents commitment to the importance of education and hard work has manifested itself not only by the leaders' gravitation to education as a career and the long hours they put in to achieve their ambitions but also to their commitment to it. All the leaders echoed their parents' views, in that they, too, were passionate about the value of education. Similarly, the leaders could identify teachers and lecturers who were also critical in instilling this passion, particularly in specific subject areas.

The views of Olesen (2001) were also borne out, in that, by exploring life history, learning processes are questioned and the subjective relationship the leaders developed to their profession helped to form their own professional identity. Many leaders gave examples of how experiences early on in their careers led them to change practice and modify their

thinking, which has in part, they admitted, determined how they lead today. Equally, the effect of how they were treated by superiors in their career, clearly resonated with many leaders. The respect and encouragement experienced by these people has driven a commitment to do the same with their own staff now they are in these leadership positions. Their life history experiences have enabled, as Busher (2003) points out, increased self-understanding such as the value of respect for their staff, which in turn they have used to become more effective leaders. This concurs with Butt et al.'s (1988) argument that leadership is not just about current contexts but is grounded in life history.

Similarly, many examples are found in this research which illustrate close accordance with the work of Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997). It appears that certain events in the leader's life history were acknowledged, filtered and translated into what leaders have come to acknowledge as either poor or best practice. Many spoke of how these experiences and observations have been taken on board to ensure they would not emulate them in their own leadership roles. Experiences of bullying leaders, those who could not deliver on promises or communicate with staff were all areas that leaders articulated as quite powerful messages as how not to lead. Conversely, many also spoke of leaders and people that had attributes which they recognised as important to have. Although leaders said they did not want to emulate the person per se, they did take what was useful to become part of their repertoire of effective leadership. This is very well illustrated in an interview with one leader who spoke of a very influential leader whom he considered a role model and from whom he gained a lot from working with her. However, when asked if he tried to emulate her leadership style he emphatically replied, "No, I think I am a very different kind of leader" (Interviewee 10, statutory university).

However, I am not trying to use life history to make generalisations, as Olesen (2001) has argued, but it does provide enlightenment for possible application when developing others. It seems that the leaders in this study have taken this on board and, whilst appreciating the value of their experiences, have not tried to impose a 'formula' upon whom or how they lead. As in Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) study, it was evident that they were keen not to micromanage but instead spoke of the need to give colleagues and subordinates the space and responsibility to run with their ideas.

Whilst it is clear that the leaders' views may well have changed and have been modified throughout their career, as argued by Busher (2003), there is powerful evidence from this study that this is not a drawback of exploring life history but has been a way of learning about people and their needs. As a consequence, many leaders implied that this 'people wisdom' (Knight and Trowler, 2001) requiring interpersonal intelligence, was seen to be critical to enable them to lead successfully. This was poignantly revealed when some leaders spoke of the relationship between their positional power and how it affects their sense of agency. By and large, this astute awareness of the degree of power as both Busher (2003) and Usher (1995), observed is directly related to their sense of self. Many were keenly aware that they could not use their power if they were to remain successful leaders and to be perceived as credible by their colleagues. Instead, 'distributed leadership' was a way in which leaders could enact and balance their positional power with their self-identity. This has close accordance with Gunter's (2006) argument that educational leadership is not about "controlling relationships" (p. 263) but more about how they interact, in order to ensure they are leaders of their own and other's learning. Similarly, many explained that understanding

colleagues' needs was not something that could be taught. It was something they had learnt and understood by coming up through 'the system'. This is in close accordance with Busher's (2003) view that leaders' awareness is constructed through their interaction with other people and through conscious reflection they are able to develop a changing awareness of other people's needs.

The leaders in this study were very consciously aware of the impact of what they said and did and spoke of how they had learnt to modify their behaviour in order to create productive working relationships with their peers and subordinates. This view that in-depth understanding of academic cultures and work is incremental and based upon experiences accords with the work of O'Mahoney and Matthews (2003) and Johnson (2002) who suggest that a combination of experiences, practice, coaching, reflection and conversation informs one's knowledge of self.

There are many illustrations of this in my findings. For example, in their formative years, interviewees illustrated a keen awareness of the impact their intelligence had upon their peers. Their entrance into grammar school was a shift in their identity as they made determined efforts to blend in with peers, who, in the main, came from contrasting social backgrounds. As the leaders then moved on up through their careers, identities changed through learning and critical reflection. Finally, as leaders in their current posts, the degree of empowerment and control attributed to the role, further served to modify their sense of identity. This "shifting array of accessible self-knowledge" (Malus and Wuf, 1987) is perhaps at the heart of what these authors mean when they talk about "self concept of the moment" (in Kehily, 1995 p. 24).

It can therefore be clearly seen that the leader's knowledge of their own identity is closely bound up in their life history and how this has been developed through interdependence on the people and environment in which they have experienced.

The following diagram (Figure 4) illustrates a framework that includes all the main aspects that have served to create the life history and identity of the leaders in this study.

PEOPLE

learning   observation

Parents, spouse, dependents

Social class
Education
Wealth
Geographical location

Life history

Team captain
Prefect
Supervisor
Head of Dept
Dean

BACK-GROUND   **LEADERSHIP ROLES**

Vocational/voluntary work
Jobs outside of HE
Jobs within HE

reflexivity   experience

CAREER HISTORY
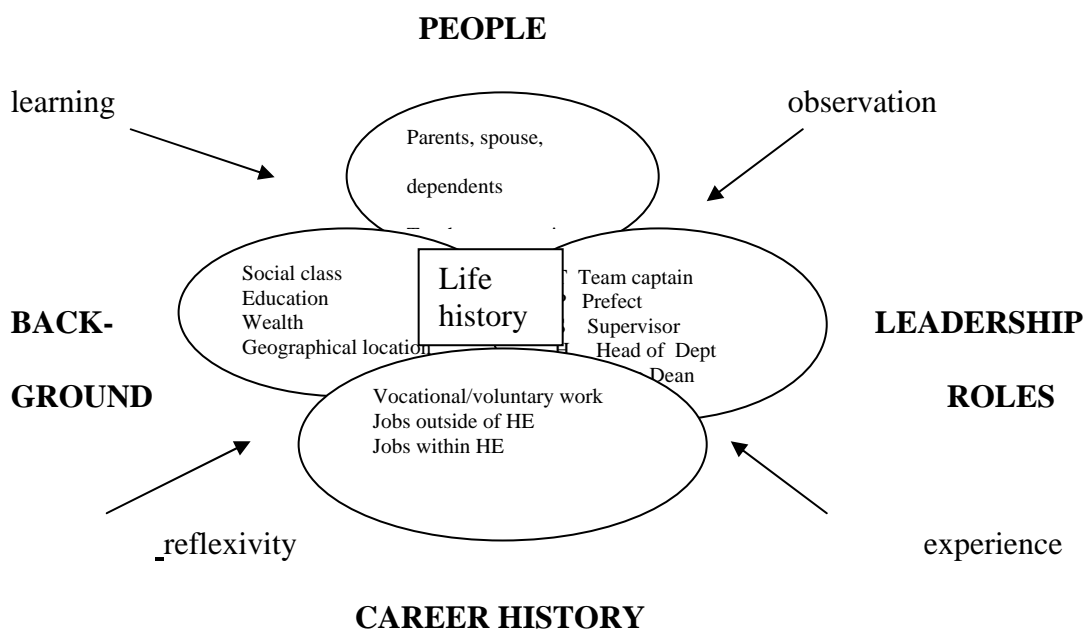
Figure 4. Factors Influencing Leaders' Life History and Identity

People

In their formative years, parents and teachers were significant in their encouragement for learning and in stimulating an interest in their chosen subject areas. In their later years, spouse and dependents influenced their direction and place of work and retention there. In their career, colleagues, supervisors and experts in their field all served to influence and inspire their work and career progression.

Background

A number of factors such as the social class the leaders came from, the degree of wealth or poverty in their upbringing, where they were brought up and the education they had, all served to have an impact on the course of their life history and their changing identities throughout their formative and latter years.

Leadership Roles

The roles they took on in their formative years developed their sense of self, but, more importantly, as they progressed through their career, leadership roles became more significant in developing their skills and philosophy as leaders.

Career History

As leadership learning is situated in context and is a product of practice, the variety of jobs that the leaders experienced enabled an incremental development of their leadership capabilities and, with this, a changing identity which all forms part of their life history.

Incumbent on their life history and identity is also the degree of learning and self-reflection gained through experience and observation. In summary, all these factors have impinged on the leaders' sense of self and have helped to create the life history of those in this study. The model developed from the research helps us to understand the formation of the leaders' self. This information is vital if we are to understand how leaders learn. The factors identified as having an impact on their life history will influence how they perceive others and carry this forward to their leadership style. Hence, a richer understanding of why leaders lead as they

do, is gained. However, attributing causality between a leader's life history, practice and outcomes is near impossible from the evidence of the comparatively small sample in the study reported in this research. What this model does offer is a tentative indication of the factors surrounding a leader's life history and their journey to leadership, which not only increases our understanding of how leaders become what they are, but also should be informative to those responsible for developing leaders.

Research Question Three:

Do leaders in higher education go through distinct life phases in the same way that research suggests for school head teachers? To what extent does the influence of critical incidents and significant people impact on how leader-academics learn to lead?

In order to address the third research question, this section will use the models of leadership formation based on school head teachers (Gronn, 1999; Day and Bakioglu, 1996 and Ribbins, 2003) as a useful framework to explore if leaders in this study have gone through identifiable stages in their life history and to what extent they have been influential in leadership formation. This section will provide comparisons between the experiences of the leaders established in chartered universities and those in statutory universities, to see if they have taken similar routes to get to where they are now. It will then look at the impact of critical incidents and significant people on how leader-academics have learnt to lead.

It is very clear that all the leaders are driven by a passion for education and learning. With only one exception, all the leaders were brought up in families who valued education and emphasised the importance of learning. Despite the fact that most were children of

uneducated parents and from working class backgrounds, education was seen as a means of providing opportunities. Thus, the value of education was impressed on the leaders from a very early stage in their lives and it is evident from the interviews, that the leaders have carried this inner drive throughout their lives. This illustrates Gronn's (1999) assertion that the formation stage is important in providing the "scaffolding of a character structure" (p. 32). If nobody had impressed on them the importance of education in their formative years, it is likely, given their background, that it would have been far more difficult to accept its value. This is reflected in Gardner's (1995) view that leadership is an essential way of thinking about how and why people feel and behave as they do. Similarly, Ribbins (2003) argues that key agencies in the formation stage impact and shape the kind of people leaders become. The importance of this stage in the leaders' lives is clear. For instance, a recurring theme in their formative years was that expectations both from parents and at school were always high. Both expected them to achieve and go on to university. They all met these expectations. Given the backgrounds from which the majority of the leaders originated, progress onto university was unusual, many being the first in their family (and school) to progress to this level of education. As Gronn (1999) points out, their "worth and value" (p. 36) is developed at this formation stage, as they realise the extent of their intelligence and abilities.

It could be said that both sets of leaders do progress onto the 'Accession' stage but the characteristic of the leaders in this stage differs. This research indicates that this broad 'Accession' stage can be subdivided into phases which differ between experiences of those in chartered university and those in statutory university. Those leaders in statutory universities do indeed, in the first half of this stage, as Ribbins (2003) suggests, seek

experiences and leadership roles in preparation for future positions. They frequently moved between roles gaining a range of experience on the way. However, they do not, as Ribbins (2003) also suggests, seek leadership roles in preparation for later life. The responses in this research provide almost no evidence that leadership roles were directly sought. Indeed, few articulated any form of ambition for leadership or carefully laid out career timetables.

The majority of leaders in chartered universities took a slightly different route. Over a similar time scale, they remain more stable, taking on different research projects and developing their subject expertise, but, as with those in statutory universities, not as it would seem explicitly in preparation for future leadership roles. It is only when the career paths of both sets of leaders converge, does the progression up the academic career ladder emerge.

Although the leaders reach this point through different routes, it is clear that they all have begun to equip themselves with a variety of skills, which Gronn (1999) terms a 'repertoire' (p. 36), in which they admit drawing upon when they reach higher roles. However, Gronn (1999) suggests this period of 'grooming' is partly driven by a strong motivation to achieve. For the academics, it appears that it is less achievement-driven but more one of the desire to continue to learn and be challenged. There is a distinct lack of planning at this stage and much of the movement appears to be down to serendipity and the desire to 'make a difference'. This concurs with Coleman's (2002) study of women into headship, where she describes this stage as going unnoticed by the participants and an element of surprise in finding themselves in higher roles.

Although leaders do move into a third stage of 'Incumbency', when the leaders are in their current role, it is doubtful that the characteristics of this stage are similar to Gronn's (1999) model. He believes that it is at this stage that the role becomes "congruent with personal needs" and goes some way to allowing the leaders to "self actualise". Although this is apparent in some leaders, the majority, particularly those in chartered universities, see the role as a hindrance to their first love, that of research. Most took the position due to circumstances prevailing at the time. It was not through an inner drive to be leader, as Gronn (1999) suggests. Certainly, as Johnson (2002) found, experience and confidence in leadership was not a central motivating factor. Substantial experience and profile in teaching and research rendered them eligible candidates for the position. The leadership position was an inevitable step which became more appealing over time as they began to see themselves as people with the capacity to succeed in senior roles. Indeed, those who had spent almost their entire careers in one university almost considered it their duty towards the end of their academic career to reinvest their experience to the benefit of their faculty. They describe the long hours and 'putting up' with the paperwork as long as the job still allows them to continue with the parts that they enjoy. Their passion, on the whole, is research, not leadership. However, they are prepared to be leaders, if it allows their faculty to be driven in the direction in which they want it to go.

It is probably for this reason, then, that leaders in higher education do not follow the phases closely within this stage, as suggested by Day and Bakioglu (1996). It is clear that the leaders do go through some sort of initiation and development phase, but, for many, these phases are informal in that they do not undergo any formal induction or development. In this phase in schools, the head begins to understand the nature of the post. In higher education, some

obviously felt their career trajectories were not a full preparation for the lived experience of being a leader, with the transition from academic to the role of leader being felt as a period of initial disorientation and surprise. Others, however, felt the initiation phase had already been carried out prior to the appointment due to previous 'grooming' in the latter half of the Accession stage. One leader succinctly expresses this:

> "When I got appointed here, I think the senior management experience which I had at x following my professional appointment, it just came together. And when I came here I saw a school which just was familiar to me. I know the system because I was coming from an ex Poly. It was all totally familiar and I had strategies to deal with things. This is where I've come from, this is where all my experience and career so far had led me" (Interviewee 8, statutory university).
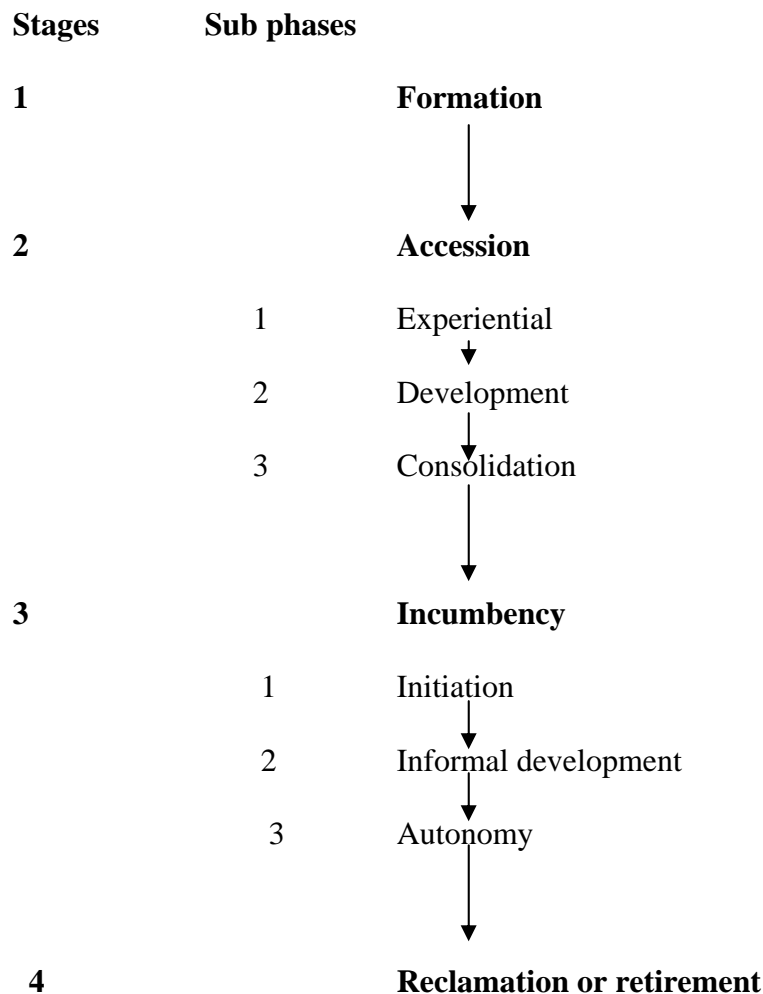
Although the three, fairly recently appointed leaders could be said to be at the phase of 'Development', most of the leaders appear to be in the phase of 'Autonomy' where they are established in the role, they have built up solid networks and they have created initiatives to drive the faculty forward. At this stage, it would appear that there is some common ground with Day and Bakioglu's (1996) assertion that government initiatives and institution requirements affect their ability to control their own sense of agency. Leaders did articulate their frustration with the degree of bureaucracy which often swamped their schedules, leaving little time to focus on strategic leadership. Similarly, government initiatives such as RAE ratings, targets on student recruitment and retention and the need to collaborate with other universities and the commercial world, also had some negative impact upon perceived leadership effectiveness. However, unlike Day and Bakioglu's (1996) research, there was no evidence that their control was under threat, probably because they had become leaders and developed their authority through their personal power, with the support from their education institution and colleagues.

The remaining third of the leaders, having been in the leadership role for some time are now moving into a fourth phase or stage of their career. However, this study does not wholly accord with Gronn's (1999) fourth stage of 'Divestiture' or Day and Bakioglu's (1996) phase of 'Disenchantment'. Although it is clear that a few are looking forward to retirement, this was only because of the desire "to do other things in life" (Interviewee 8, statutory university), not necessarily due to disillusionment with the job, as Day and Bakioglu (1996) and Gronn (1999) suggest.

Instead, this study supports Ribbins' (2003) view that there is an alternative to the fourth phase, although this study does not indicate it is one necessarily of 'Enchantment'. Although none expressed a desire to move up the career ladder further, this was not for reasons of disillusionment. It was for a more pragmatic reason than this. The leaders wanted to continue with what they enjoy doing and to move further up the higher education career ladder would take them away from their interests. Although this does not strictly concur with Ribbins' (2003) idea that 'Enchantment' could involve reinvention, many were looking forward to pursuing interests which had been put on hold whilst taking up the leadership appointment, such as writing a book or researching other areas. This concurs with those in Hellawell and Hancock's (2001) study, where standing down from the leadership role was not seen as a demotion because it would enable them to return to a more significant academic role. A more appropriate name for this stage that I propose could be one of 'reclamation' where leaders reclaim previous work and interests and re-focus their energy on this, outside of leadership.

In this research, the leaders do seem to go through distinct life phases. However, although there is some similarity to the first two stages as suggested in the literature, the latter stages

appear to be slightly different. This is likely to be because the literature on life stages has, on the whole, been based on leaders in schools rather than those leading in higher education. This study agrees with the general principle of Ribbins' (2003) model rather than previous work which suggests disenchantment as an inevitable final stage within teaching (Gronn, 1999; Day and Bakioglu, 1996). Similarly length of service does not seem to impact on job satisfaction (Rhodes, 2007). Consequently, I would suggest a 'Reclamation' phase, is more appropriate than one of disenchantment for those in higher education. I therefore propose the following model (Figure 5) as a modification to those based on school headship to one which is more closely aligned to those leading at middle-level in higher education.

Stages	Sub phases	
1		**Formation**
		↓
2		**Accession**
	1	Experiential
		↓
	2	Development
		↓
	3	Consolidation
		↓
3		**Incumbency**
	1	Initiation
		↓
	2	Informal development
		↓
	3	Autonomy
		↓
4		**Reclamation or retirement**

Figure 5. A summary of the Stages and Phases in Learning to Lead for Leader-Academics in Higher Education

The model above (Figure 5), developed through the research and theorising from previous

works based on the compulsory education sector, is useful for a number of reasons. Firstly, it

recognises that leaders in higher education, like their counterparts in schools, do go through

stages and phases on their journey to leadership. Although obviously people are different and

personal journeys diverse, it does help us to understand the formation of a leader. This is

important if we are to understand how leaders learn to lead and provide appropriate, timely

interventions to build on this learning. Secondly, although linear in appearance, it shifts our gaze from a purely sequential progression to the detail involved within each stage and the lived lives of the leaders which impact on how they learn to lead. Thirdly, it helps to plug the gap in the literature regarding the knowledge of the journey to leadership of leaders in higher education.

Critical Incidents

In looking back and reflecting on their lives, all the leaders remember defining moments in their life histories. As Parker (2002) found in his review of head teacher life histories, passing the 11+ was one of the first critical incidents which the leaders recalled. It appears from Parker's study (2002) and this study that passing the 11+ was the first step to a career in academia. Given the working class background from which most of the leaders originated, failure to pass the 11+ could have led to a dramatically different life history and thus could be deemed as one of Gronn's (1999) "critical turning points" (p. 28). This is echoed by a respondent in Parker's (2002) study:

> "If I hadn't gone to Alleyne's, I would not have done so well. I certainly would not have pursued an academic career" (p. 18).

Although none could recall any significant critical incidents while in full-time education, upon reflection as Angelides (2001) observes, by looking retrospectively at their careers, many commented on defining moments which enabled them to get their first job. Chance meetings and contacts directed most now in statutory universities to pursue their first job. As their life and career progressed, more personal critical incidents played a part in directing their career route. Domestic issues, childbirth, illness and a partner moving all contributed to

changing the career course that they were on. This resonates with Knight and Trowler's (2001) 'control knowledge'. How much these have affected "perception and practice", as Goodson and Walker (1991) argue is unclear. What is apparent is that being in the 'right place, right time' enabled them to pursue their career up the academic route. Observing and being part of 'critical incidents' along their way, is seen to have a significant influence on practice. So for one, observing how a leader abused his positional power, sensitised him to the fragile nature of the power of the leader and ensured he used any power he gained with promotion to use with care. Another found himself part of a massive downsizing exercise and this has influenced his need to demonstrate added value to everything he pursues. Thus, in accordance with Tripp's (1993) view, such events have become critical to those individuals because, not only are they memorable, but they are also significant by what they have meant. Whether these events were seen as 'critical' at the time or not, is really immaterial. What is significant is the power of such events to influence future actions and by doing so can now, upon reflection, be deemed 'critical'.

Significant People

Throughout their lives, all the leaders remember people who had a profound effect on them. In their formative years, parents were critical in providing the environment in which they could flourish. All parents were described as encouraging and supportive. The fact that most were extremely hard working instilled in the leaders the concept of hard work. In common with Ribbins' (2003) assertion that significant people in the formative stage are partly responsible for influencing the kind of people leaders become, it seems prudent to note that although most of the leaders work up to seventy hours a week, they still declare that they are not working hard in comparison to their parents. It seems that the concept of hard work had

indeed rubbed off on their offspring. However, this could be because most talk of the 'privilege' of the kind of work that they do and this is in contrast to the very often hard, physical work that their parents did.

> "My parents worked very hard and I think if there is one thing I kept was the concept of what hard work is. Sometimes I don't regard the job I'm doing as hard work. My mother gets angry with me and says you are working too hard, but it really isn't. Living where I do and working in higher education, quite frankly is not hard work. If I were down a colliery, then that would be hard work and it puts things in perspective. That's really what I got from my formative years" (Interviewee 11, statutory university).

Although it appears parents and family background helped to shape the leaders' values, this research concurs with Ribbins' (2003) study in that it is also evident from the interviews that schooling and certain teacher's influences were key agencies in generating interest in specific academic areas, in attitude and work style. Most interviewees mentioned at least one teacher who had a significant influence on them: firstly in preparing them adequately for the 11+, but secondly in how they approached their work and developed an enthusiasm and commitment to a specific subject area.

As the leaders developed their careers, in common with Coleman's (2002) study, mentors take on a more significant role in influencing and shaping the leaders. As mentors can take on various forms when leaders spoke of 'coaches', 'counselling' and 'critical friends', the implication was apparent that these significant people provided a positive role for them. The vast majority of the leaders had people in their career who were important for the encouragement that they gave them to take on higher roles and in their overall development of subject expertise and leadership development. However, as Coleman (2002) found in her study, in this research only a minority claimed to have someone they actively recognised formally as a mentor. In the early stages of their career, significant people were most likely

to be heads of departments, senior colleagues and well known figures in their subject areas. In the later stages of their career, leaders named more experienced colleagues operating at a similar level to them to be significant. This was because their shared experience was found to be invaluable in guiding the new leaders through the maze of their new level of responsibility. Specifically, those with longer "institutional memories" were found to be particularly helpful. In common with Johnson's (2002) findings, the importance of these 'mentors' was recognised and, indeed, one leader lamented the fact that he was expected to be a mentor for more recently appointed leaders, when he, himself, had only been in the post for two years and would have liked a mentor for himself. The fact that the majority had not had formal mentors does not necessarily mean that mentors are not valued by the leaders. Indeed, when asked what development they would have liked to have had, the majority thought that having an appointed mentor, would have been useful.

In contrast to Parker's (2002) study, only two leaders explicitly mentioned the importance of partners as significant people in their career development. On the contrary, many implied that being married with a family could have been an inhibiting factor to their career as they had turned down opportunities to move for career progression in order to maintain stability in their personal lives.

Other significant people to be mentioned were the team of colleagues around the leaders to whom they could delegate and with whom they could discuss issues. The majority felt that a strong management team on whom they could depend, was critical to enabling them to carry out their role as leader of the school successfully. This, obviously, has implications for creating effective leadership and would suggest that for these leaders, their success can be

attributed not just to their own leadership capabilities, but also to the capabilities of the support network around them.

Critical incidents and significant people do seem to have had a considerable impact on how leader-academics have learnt to lead. Equally much of what leaders do in this study has been grounded in their experiences and knowledge gained throughout their life phases.

Professional Development and Training

Research Question Four:

What kind of formal leadership development do middle-level leader-academics experience before and after appointment? In what ways do they learn and does this differ between chartered and statutory universities?

It is clear that the experiences of the leaders in this research verifies Knight and Trowler's (2001) framework of the seven types of leadership and management knowledge that successful leader-academics in higher education should gain.

Firstly, the findings from this investigation support the view that 'control knowledge' can be gained from reflecting on critical incidents, being influenced by significant people and using networks. A number of critical incidents as detailed in the research findings have quite clearly played a significant part in allowing leaders to gain control knowledge. A number of interviewees mentioned quite dramatic incidents, such as threat of department or university closure, as a means of teaching them the importance of environmental awareness and value-driven research and teaching. Likewise, all the leaders spoke of significant people who had

influenced them to do things differently, either because they witnessed poor practice or because their eyes were opened to new or alternative ways of doing things. Similarly, all mentioned the value of networking both within their own organisation and beyond. There was widespread acceptance, as both Johnson (2002) and Davies and Davies (2006) found, that by developing and being involved in networks, they were exposed to new ideas, 'learning together' and further opportunities.

Secondly, all the leaders conferred with the importance that Knight and Trowler (2001) placed on gaining 'people wisdom'. The majority of leaders articulated how critical this was if they were to be effective leaders. However, this research suggests that the way of doing this does not wholly accord with Knight and Trowler's (2001) suggestions. Many of the leaders spoke of gaining this knowledge through observation, getting involved in a variety of projects and by reflecting on their experiences, whereas Knight and Trowler (2001) suggest workshops and reading. Concurring with Johnson's (2002) research, such 'off the job' learning was not seen as favourable by any of my interviewees, unless it enabled interaction with colleagues and the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences. Similarly, although none directly mentioned 'reading' as a means of gaining this knowledge, there is an implication that those whose subject specialism touches on people issues, such as those researching in areas of sociology and psychology, could well have indirectly learnt some of this knowledge from study. In fact one leader expressed this by saying " I have read books on this stuff, in fact I have written books on the psychology of people" (Interviewee 18, chartered university).

However, it must be noted that one of the areas that leaders requested most development, was in dealing with people. This directly concurs with the studies by Aziz et al. (2005), Johnson (2002) and Smith (2007), who identified that personnel issues as well as aspects related to budgets and resources were given the highest priority for development by the leaders of faculties in higher education. The people aspect of their learning requirements is a concern and indeed contradictory if leaders are also saying learning by experience is their preferred method of gaining 'people wisdom' (Knight and Trowler, 2001). What they are learning through informal methods seems not to be adequate in this area. These findings are similar to Johnson's (2002) concerns where the leaders in her study also placed the most importance on experience, but found it very difficult to articulate what they had actually learnt. It would appear that learning from informal experience needs to be more conscious with time planned for critical reflection and discussion. Aziz et al. (2005) suggest a combination of 'nuts and bolts' training, for example, instruction on how to follow appropriate recruitment and selection procedures as well as more in-depth bespoke leadership programmes. Knight and Trowler (2001) also suggest mentoring as a means of gaining people knowledge. In this research, which again concurs with Johnson's (2002) findings, many spoke of the significance of people who acted as mentors due to their invaluable advice and sharing of experiences. It was also something that most leaders spoke of wanting more of and is consistent with Smith's (2007) findings.

Thirdly, this research concurs with Knight and Trowler (2001) in the means of gaining knowledge of educational practice, or, as Davies and Davies (2006) term it, "contextual wisdom" (p. 136). All the leaders spoke of the necessity of working within and understanding the higher education environment, to be able to lead effectively. They saw

learning to lead as incremental. Those leaders who felt the most prepared to lead had come up through the system, taking on various leadership roles and, by doing so, acquiring a repertoire of knowledge and skills that had equipped them to face the leadership challenges in their current position. They also acknowledged Knight and Trowler's (2001) suggestion of seeking advice from colleagues to gain and use education knowledge appropriately; this was particularly apparent from those who came from other institutions to take up the leadership appointment.

Probably the areas upon which most leaders felt they lacked experience and knowledge was Knight and Trowler's (2001) fourth, 'conceptual knowledge' and fifth 'process knowledge'. This is of no surprise if the way of gaining this, as Knight and Trowler (2001) suggest, is by course attendance. The apparent lack of formal training by course attendance in leadership, is something all leaders mentioned. Those which had been on some training felt the training was inappropriate and too generic to be applicable to their needs. This lack of flexibility of formal development methods quite clearly disengaged the leaders from the process and content of any such development. This echoes Knight and Trowler (2001), Aziz et al. (2005) and Johnson's (2002) view that the leader's specific needs should be taken into account for the training to be appropriate and acceptable to the leaders. As bespoke courses are not something the leaders experienced, the lack of confidence in this area must be symptomatic of this. Indeed, the nearest the leaders got to a consensus on development in this area was to agree that they needed variety in the approach to such development.

To gain the sixth and seventh forms of knowledge (situational and tacit), according to Knight and Trowler (2001), 'on the job' learning is essential. This clearly resonates with the

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responses from the leaders in this study. Those which felt best equipped to lead were indeed from those who had been introduced to leading earlier on in their career such as being head of research or head of department.

Many responses concerning the need to base professional development in a practical context were raised. Shadowing experienced and knowledgeable leaders coupled with opportunities for reflection as advocated by O'Mahony and Matthews (2003), seems one way of achieving this. Few leaders in this study had experienced a formal arrangement of shadowing but had, instead, observed at a distance. As the leaders mentioned the opportunity to discuss issues with senior colleagues was invaluable, a more formal approach to observation, with time to critically reflect and discuss with those being observed, would appear useful, as Smith (2007), also found. The findings from this investigation support the views, therefore, of Knight and Trowler (2001), Aziz et al. (2005) and Johnson (2002), who differentiate between the virtual nature of training and the leaders' real world. A contradiction is apparent. Formal methods of development can be seen as patronising and not compatible with the interests and values of potential leaders and, perhaps, is a reason for the lack of importance attributed to professional development by the respondents in Rhodes et al. (2007) study. However, it is clear that learning left totally to informal methods is not sufficient. More formalised 'on the job' learning seems to be the preferred method of those in this and other studies (Johnson, 2002; Aziz et al., 2005).

One of the reasons for the unsatisfactory nature of the reliance on purely informal methods of learning maybe that, when leaders first started their careers, they had no thoughts of a specific career path or any particular leadership aspirations. Consequently, there was no

conscious learning need to observe and be involved with experiences which would enable them to gain the knowledge and skills needed for their current leadership position. The fact that most of the literature and practice in higher education institutions has not embraced leadership succession goes part way in explaining this. Unlike commercial organisations, who have developed frameworks of competencies and put in place plans to proactively spot and develop talent, none of those interviewed in this study had been specifically targeted from an early stage to be developed as part of an overall plan of leadership succession. Some mentioned their seniors' 'grooming' them for leadership positions, but the recognition that this process was going on was only in hindsight and only in the latter stages of their career. This study appears to concur with Fink and Brayman's (2006) view that succession planning is largely unplanned and arbitrary. It was only those who were lucky enough to have a superior who invested time in them and recognised their talent, whose leadership potential was fostered.

Many of the leaders in this research suggested that they only got their current position because there was no one else suitable. This validates Rhodes' (2006) opinion that such lack of succession planning clearly mitigates against choice. It also reflects the findings of Johnson's (2002) study whose leaders, similarly, arrived at their current position through reasons other than a planned process of nurturing potential leadership talent.

It would, therefore, appear that whilst current leadership development is situated in context, and is a product of practice and gradual over time, there needs to be a more conscious effort to plan and prepare those who may aspire to leadership positions. Learning needs to be a product of active interaction with others and a critical reflection on experience as part of an

overall career plan. Proactivity in succession planning and consequently development is clearly preferable to the laissez-faire attitude as evidenced in the literature and from this study. Knight and Trowler (2001) suggest that those who are not successful at learning to lead, because they do not gain the seven knowledge areas that they espouse throughout their professional lives, may resort to positional power in their leadership role. None of the leaders in this study advocated the use of positional power and, indeed, most felt very strongly that this was not a way to lead successfully. As the leaders in this study are all leaders of successful faculties it would seem that learning from a wide spectrum of sources does, as in Knight and Trowler's (2001) view, enable them to be leaders of successful faculties.

The findings from this final research question allow tentative conclusions to be drawn regarding the kind of leadership development that is needed for leader-academics in higher education. I have done this by proposing a model which combines the work of Kolb (1974) and Honey and Mumford (1982) on how people learn, with the responses from the interviews in the study and information gained from reviewing previous research.
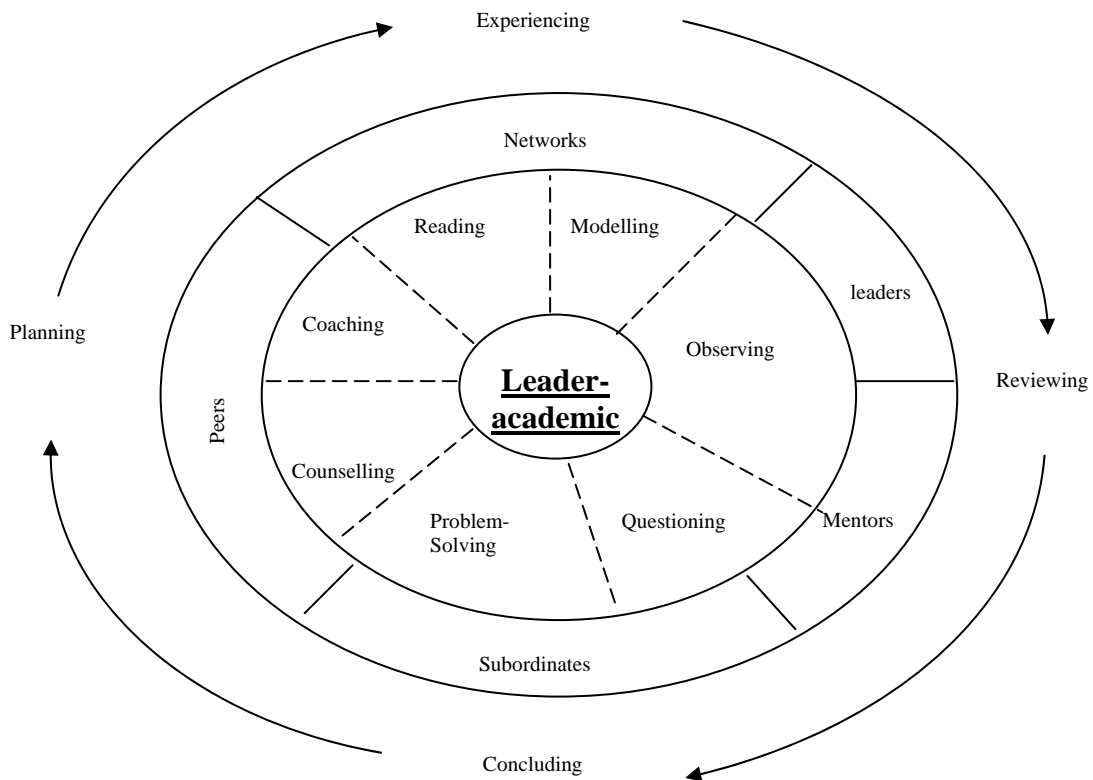
Figure 6. A summary of Effective Development Methods for Leader-Academics

The diagrammatic representation in Figure 6 reflects the polarisation in the literature and from this research, which suggests that the challenge is to develop the informal processes of learning in a more planned way, whilst ensuring leaders preferred way of learning is maintained. Thus the model builds on the perceived effectiveness of more experiential forms of professional development, which considers a leaders' background and needs rather than a generic formal training solution. Making full use of the people surrounding the leaders, as illustrated in the outer rim of the model, is suggested to enable individual, bespoke development approaches (inner rim) to be utilised to maximum effect. It also ensures

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attention to cost effectiveness and use of easily available resources. Although an array of methods are suggested to assist learning and development, Kolb's (1974) cycle of learning encompasses all of these, as it is important that for, whatever method is chosen, the four stages of Kolb's learning cycle are worked through to ensure effective learning takes place. The model is flexible, as no singular method is suggested, but a combination in-line with the leader-academic's preference. In this way, a bespoke programme could be developed for each individual leader.

Whilst this model is not intended as a panacea for all development, it is useful in focusing a leader and those responsible for development on the more experiential forms of professional development that build on the trainees' background and needs as a more effective alternative to the discredited generic training programme. In this way, it can be used as a basis for improving individual confidence and competence and ultimately institutional effectiveness.

PART FIVE: CONCLUSION

<u>Chapter Eight</u>

<u>Conclusion</u>

The overriding theme throughout this study has been how leaders have learnt to lead, by exploring the journey to leadership and the factors which have influenced the middle-level leader-academics along the way. This thesis argues that, how leaders have learnt to lead has been grounded in their life history and the extent to which they have been able to learn and develop from these experiences. However, this research also reveals that such experiential learning may not be fully adequate in providing leader-academics with the necessary repertoire of skills, knowledge and understanding that the growing complexity of the role now requires.

In this final chapter, I return to an examination of the four research questions that I set out in Chapter One. I then consider the contribution of the research and some of the areas touched upon in the thesis that would benefit from additional research before ending with a concluding summary to answer the central questions that this thesis posed.

My four research questions asked:

1. What is the nature of leadership for middle-level leader-academics in higher education and is there a difference between the nature of leadership at middle-level for those in chartered and statutory universities?

2. How much of what leaders do is learnt, taught and acquired and is, therefore, a product of their life histories; that is, how much of being a leader is learnt from experience and the knowledge of 'self'? What particular experiences such as personal, social, educational and career – prepare them for the role of leader?

3. Do leaders in higher education go through distinct life phases in the same way that research suggests for school head teachers? To what extent does the influence of critical incidents and significant people impact on how leader-academics learn to lead?

4. What kind of formal leadership development do middle-level leader-academics experience before and after appointment? In what ways do they learn and does this differ between chartered and statutory universities?

Question one is addressed under the subheading 'The Nature of Leadership'; question two under 'The Value of Life History as a Methodology in Understanding how Leaders Learn to Lead'; question three under 'The Relevance of Stages, Critical Incidents and Significant People in how Leaders Learn', and, finally, research question four is addressed under 'Leadership Development'.

The Nature of Leadership

Despite the extensive literature on the nature of leadership and the importance of differentiation between a 'leader' and a 'manager', what emerges from this small-scale study is how blurred the two are in practice. A number of researchers within education (Jackson, 1999; Gronn, 2001; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Deem, 2004; Hellawell and Hallinger, 2005) discuss how leadership has been increasingly associated with individuals at different levels within an organisation. It is clear from this study that heads of faculties, although not at the top of the organisation, are indeed leaders. However, they are also required to be managers. Consequently, the interviewees constantly mentioned issues of competing tensions of their role and the importance of being 'people-centred'. Many felt they had to adapt their leadership style to be contingent upon varying situations. Flexibility was, therefore, a key determinant of successful handling of competing tensions. This style of leadership adopted by those in this study can be closely aligned with the ideas of post-transformational leadership (Day et al., 2000). Equally, sharing leadership and empowering colleagues has, it appears, become indicative of institutionalised practices of distributed leaders, both in this study and within other research (Busher, 2005).

This research indicates that a pre-condition for distributed leadership is for all those in the faculty to be pulling together. Although the focus of the faculty may vary between statutory and chartered universities, the belief of those interviewed seemed to be firmly centred on shared ownership of common values. For this to occur, there is the implied prerequisite that the leader is able to communicate and engage every member of staff within their overall purpose of the faculty. However, it is also clear that this is not as easy as it once was, pre-Further and Higher Education Reform Act (1992). The impact of managerialism and, with it,

the increasing accountabilities to stakeholders outside of the faculty has increased the complexity of the role of the leader-academic. Table 5 listed the various roles and responsibilities of a leader-academic. Middlehurst (1993), Prichard (2000), Hellawell and Hancock (2001) and Smith (2002, 2005, 2007) all discuss the many dilemmas facing leader-academics in higher education. This study has confirmed that the tensions present in their studies remain, certainly in this sample of higher education institutions.

Figure 3 depicts the four dimensions of the role and provides a useful source of reference to illustrate the complexity and interdependence of each element to the nature of leadership at middle-leader level. This is not only useful for those trying to understand the nature of leadership at middle-level, but also it could be used to inform those responsible for planning and developing future leaders.

Consequently, this study, although it cannot generalise to other institutions, does serve to validate and add further weight to the evidence in the literature of the competing discourse of democratic and managerial professionalism. It also highlights how leaders are spending the majority of their time frantically addressing operational tasks, instead of being allowed the time and space to focus on growing, shaping and developing the faculty, that is strategic leadership. The danger of this is that faculties will become over-managed and under-led. It also places limits on the extent to which the leadership of these faculties will be able to be considered as 'distributed'. Genuine collegiality maybe bypassed due to the increasing requirements of leaders to micromanage in response to increasing external pressures and constant change. If external pressures continue apace, as implied by many of the leaders in this study, then the use of personal power manifested through collegiality of decision making

may diminish as a practice. There may no longer be the time or the will for leaders to engage in collegiality. This will have implications for recruitment of future leader-academics. None of the interviewees in this study actively sought their current leadership roles, but were relatively happy to take on the role if they could further the mission of their faculty. If faculties become increasingly less able to influence this mission, due to increased pressures from external sources, then higher education institutions may find a dearth of people willing to take on such leadership positions, certainly from within the faculty. This may be particularly the case in some chartered universities, where the greater research imperative is a significant factor in pulling leaders away from such roles.

It is also clear that in order for the leader-academic to have the power to enact this mission through academic leadership and managerial control, they still need to maintain subject credibility in the eyes of the members of their faculty. The literature highlights the lack of positional power (Middlehurst, 1993; Jackson, 1999; Smith, 2002, 2005, 2007) that leader-academics have to exert over their staff. Although this study does not refute this, what it has shown is support for the notion that the use of personal power is the predominant means of gaining consent, control, influence and authority over faculty members. The lack of 'levers' to manage and lead their staff almost, I would argue, becomes irrelevant as many in this study spoke of the impossibility of their role if they had to resort to such power 'over' methods. To them, using methods associated with personal power, was the only way they could foresee leading a successful faculty. Examples were frequently given of leaders whom they had experienced as 'weak', solely because they either abused or resorted to their positional power and, by doing so, were left with very little personal power to draw upon.

The Value of Life History as a Methodology in Understanding how Leaders Learn to Lead

The life history research in the school sector suggests that learning to lead is part of a lifelong process. This study, based on higher education, concurs with this. The research has found that it begins with developing moral values and attributes in the home, which are then reinforced and added to from varying influences at school and university. A range of professional opportunities appropriate to the career stage exposes potential leaders to a variety of experiences which serve further to add to the repertoire of knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individual. These experiences, both positive and negative, appear to be rationalised by the individual and, then, as Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) suggest, meanings of best practice are distilled. In higher education, where leaders are less constrained by government standards, for example, national standards for heads in schools, they are more able to practise their preferred leadership style.

Consequently, I would argue that leadership is autobiographic in character, grounded in life history and is, therefore, very individual. As a result, understanding leaders' life history is essential if one is to explore thier journey to leadership and how, along the way, they have learnt to lead. However, due to the personal nature of life history, generalisations about how leaders learn to lead cannot be made. What can be deduced are the influences that seem to be important and the effect certain experiences have had on the leaders and their subsequent manifestation in determining the way they lead. This can only add to our understanding of how leaders have learnt to lead.

In this study, all of the leaders spoke of the powerful influence of encouragement of parents and teachers in instilling in them the importance of education, when in the main, those around them had little experience of education. It could be argued that, as the leaders in this study were all from a similar social background, geographical locality and age, their experiences are unique to this study. Although this is partly true, I would argue that irrespective of this, it must be acknowledged that it serves to highlight the degree of influence of the formative years has on the formation of values, beliefs and identity in later years. Professional experiences and observation, particularly in relation to the nature of interactions with peers, experts in their field, and leaders, have heavily influenced their understanding of people and how best to deal with them in their current leadership roles. The majority in this study, try to emulate what they observed and perceived as 'best practice' and, consciously, avoid resorting to less favourable people management methods that they had either witnessed or experienced. 'People wisdom' (Knight and Trowler, 2001) it would seem, certainly for those in this study, is something that is gradually built up over the years. The implication of this is that those who have limited experiences and lack exposure to a range of people and personnel management practices may have little to draw upon, if and when they become leaders. Equally though, as Taffinder (1995) suggests, it requires the ability to filter those experiences into meaningful outcomes, which they can use and add to their own repertoire of learning and leading. In congruence with the post-modernist view of self, not only can leaders understand themselves better, but also, they can reflect on how they interrelate with, and lead other people.

Figure 4 provides a framework of the factors which have influenced the life history of the leaders in the study. Whilst this is not intended to be a panacea of factors affecting every

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leader, it does provide an indication of the importance and type of influences on how leaders have learnt to lead. It is important that this is recognised when recruiting, deploying and developing potential leaders to avoid assumptions based on unfounded, generic criteria which neither benefits nor advances the leader or university.

This study supports other studies (Johnson, 2002; Busher, 2005) in that a sound understanding of other people is central to success in a leadership role. The study of life history, in the context of leadership, provides a useful tool in identifying when, where and how leaders have learnt to lead. It also gives some answers to why leaders lead in the way they do.

The Relevance of Stages, Critical Incidents and Significant People in how Leaders Learn

Stages

Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003) discuss how and why school head teachers become leaders and provide a model of the process by which head teachers are shaped. Similarly, Day and Bakioglu (1996) offer an insight into the developmental phases of head teachers once in role. This study has confirmed the broad pattern of career progression encompassed in the first three stages of Gronn (1999) and Ribbins' (2003) models and the first three of Day and Bakioglu's (1996) developmental phases within a higher education context.

The principal socialising agencies, proposed by Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003), were active in the formation of the leader-academics in this study. For the most part, the eighteen

leader-academics were formed in a stable, cohesive and supportive family environment. The importance of education and hard work was instilled into them from an early age. The formative influence of parents, extended family members and teachers all provided a consistent message of the importance of education. Gronn (1999) proposed that such coherence offers a "tightly…coupled culture of values" (p. 34) which ensured that the acquisition of such values is established. It also allowed the leader-academics to thrive in environments conducive to learning and nurture a drive for educational success. So whilst none admitted to aspirations of leadership, this study implies that the foundations of high expectations were formed and developed in those early years and indeed as Ribbins (2003) ascertains, most likely impacted and shaped the kind of people the leaders became.

Also confirmed in this study based on higher education, was the broad pattern of career progression encompassed in the second 'Accession' stage of Gronn (1999) and Ribbins' (2003) models. Although this developmental period saw the aspirant leaders embark on their academic career, not all experienced academia at the outset. Those now in statutory universities did, as Ribbins (2003) suggested, develop and test their potential through seeking a range of experiences, albeit outside of education. In a higher education context, those now in chartered universities, also were exposed to different experiences and roles. It is in the latter third of this stage when the two converge and begin to consolidate their experience in preparation for leadership roles. I have, therefore, suggested three phases within the Accession stage to more closely align the model with the experiences with those in higher education within this study. The first is an 'experiential' phase, where the leader-academics try out new jobs and roles, the second 'developmental' phase where they seem to develop their expertise in these roles, and, thirdly, a phase of 'consolidation' emerges as they

begin to take on positions of responsibility and consolidate experience. The socialising agencies and early career experiences of the leader-academics as demonstrated in these phases, helped to fashion aspects of their leadership character. It could also be suggested that it is within these phases that the future leader-academic develops a preferred leadership style and set of leadership values.

Although this study does reveal a third stage of 'Incumbency', where the leaders are in their current role, it does not confirm the suggested characteristics of this stage as in Gronn's (1999) model. This stage is not one of 'self-actualisation' for the leaders in this study. It is more an inevitable consequence of their progression up the academic career ladder. Serendipity plays a large part in them gaining the leadership position and, as a consequence, whilst some felt prepared for the role, others felt a period of 'initial disorientation and surprise'. To some extent the leaders do go through the phases within this stage as suggested by Day and Bakioglu (1996) and, certainly, there is a sense of their inability to control their own sense of agency within the phase of 'Autonomy' due to external pressures.

Where this study does differ significantly from Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003) and Day and Bakioglu (1996) is in the final stage. None of the leaders expressed total 'Disenchantment' (Day and Bakioglu, 1996), 'Divestiture' (Gronn, 1999) or 'Enchantment' (Ribbins, 2003) at this point in their career. What the majority were looking forward to was reverting back to their former roles in research or teaching within the faculty that they are currently leading. I, therefore, have proposed a fourth stage, more compatible with the leaders in this study, that of 'Reclamation' where leaders in the fourth stage reclaim previous work. Figure 5 represents a restructuring of Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003) and Day and Bakioglu's (1996)

models to one more closely aligned to the experiences of leaders within the higher education context found in this study. By doing so, it appreciates that leaders do go through stages and phases in their journey to leadership. Recognition of this would allow timely and appropriate development interventions to be made. Similarly, recognising in which stage a person is, other important factors which influence career choices could be identified and appropriate methods deployed relating to such factors as reward, motivation and retention initiatives. Although the latter factors are beyond the scope of this study, they are important areas for an organisation to consider if they are to recruit, retain and develop the best leaders.

Critical Incidents

There are a number of critical incidents which the leaders mentioned that have taken on significance because of what they have meant in terms of their leadership career. Tripp (1993) suggests that although they may not have appeared critical at the time, it is the interpretation of the incident which makes it 'critical'. Although passing the 11+, going to grammar school and then university, could all be classed as critical incidents for these leaders, it is the outcome of these incidents that has helped shape the leader's ability to lead. Similarly, the way they got their first and subsequent posts was frequently down to a chance meeting or being in the right place at the right time. These incidents become significant because it is in these jobs where their expertise has developed, attitudes were formed and leadership skills acquired. The research concurs with Parker's (2002) study who suggests that such critical incidents were 'defining moments' and 'motivational drivers' (p. 33) in contributing to how leaders have learnt to lead.

Significant People

Ribbins (2003) ascertains that significant people in the formative stage are partly responsible for influencing the kind of people leaders become. Significant people for the leaders in this study were initially parents, extended family and teachers. They were considered significant because they developed their sense of hard work, instilled in them the value of education and promoted their interest in specific subject areas. Once in their career, significant people took the form of experts in their field who they could learn from, colleagues who they could emulate and superiors who could give advice. In common with Johnson (2002) and Coleman (2002), this study establishes that those who could be considered as mentors were particularly significant in influencing, shaping and developing the leaders. In their current position, leaders still had a number of people whom they deemed as significant. Those who continue to assist the leaders in learning to lead were other leaders within higher education who had more experience. Equally important was the team of peers who support the leaders in their everyday work. It is, therefore, apparent that, for leaders to learn to lead, significant people at all stages of their lives are necessary to help develop and nurture their capabilities. Crucially, what this study also identifies, is that learning to lead does not stop once in their leadership position. These leaders articulated the need to have people they could call upon as mentors to provide continued guidance once in their role and so concurs with Smith's (2007) suggestion of sharing experience of long-standing leaders with those newly appointed.

Leadership Development

In consolidating understandings of the impact professional training and development has on the leader-academics, Knight and Trowler's (2001) 'seven types of knowledge' has been a useful framework to contextualise the findings from this study. Whilst the findings in this study do not wholly accord with Knight and Trowler's (2001) view of how leaders should gain these seven types of knowledge, it would appear that there is common ground in a number of areas.

Reflecting on critical incidents, being influenced by significant people and developing learning networks has enabled the leaders in this study to gain the first of Knight and Trowler's (2001) knowledge, namely 'control knowledge'.

Similarly, the findings from this investigation support the view that gaining 'people wisdom', the second of Knight and Trowler's (2001) types of knowledge, is critical if leaders are to be effective. However, whilst Knight and Trowler (2001) suggest 'off the job' methods to do this, such as workshops and reading, the leaders in this study felt strongly that this type of knowledge could only be learnt 'on the job'. However, here lies a contradiction. Whilst it cannot be argued that experience of dealing with people assists in gaining this knowledge, the fact that the majority in this study, which is also verified in other studies (Johnson, 2002; Aziz et al., 2005; Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006; Smith, 2007), identify a learning need in dealing with personnel type issues, suggests experience alone is not sufficient in meeting this need. The lack of importance attributed to formal professional development methods to do this may be as a consequence of previous experiences of such methods which have been "stale and inappropriate" (Rhodes, 2007, p. 87). The challenge that this study has highlighted

is to bring informal process of learning into the development of leaders in keeping with their preferred ways of learning. This may not be in the form of formal professional courses, but bespoke programmes designed to combine experiential learning with the 'nuts and bolts' training that Aziz et al. (2005) suggest.

This study has indicated agreement with Knight and Trowler's (2001) means of gaining the third type of knowledge, namely 'contextual wisdom'. Being exposed to a variety of situations and roles within academia has given the leaders in this study such knowledge which has clearly been influential in them achieving personal power when they have taken up their current roles. This has implications for those who are drafted in to take leadership positions from very different institutions. It would appear that such knowledge is unique to the faculty and university resulting in those without this knowledge on appointment, would need in-depth induction and orientation programmes.

Gaining the fourth 'conceptual' knowledge appears more problematic. Although interviews revealed a training need in this area, few leader-academics in the study accepted that formal professional development was a useful means of gaining this. It appears that the challenge is to re-engage leaders with formal development by, perhaps, involving them in determining the content of the training and the methods that would be deemed acceptable and productive.

There was widespread agreement in this study that gaining the sixth (situational) and seventh (tacit) forms of knowledge should be by 'on the job' methods. As shadowing, mentoring and networking were seen as preferred methods, it would seem sensible for higher education institutions to embrace the enthusiasm for these and integrate them into an overall

development plan for academics at the start and throughout their careers. In this way there should be less "element of surprise" when they take up leadership positions and that they feel better equipped to deal with the complexities of the role. The implication for this is that professional development should be part of an overall succession plan so that leaders are not appointed on the basis of lack of choice, as apparent in this study, but because they have been developed and prepared for the role. I would argue that it is incumbent upon senior leaders in higher education to generate interest and commitment to professional development by developing programmes which are appropriate both to individual needs and institution requirements, by reflecting the growing complexity of middle-level leader-academic roles in the current and future higher education environment.

To this end, I have developed a framework (Figure 6) to be used as a starting point for such bespoke development. By making the most of the people surrounding leaders and the methods which suit their learning style, development can become more planned, meaningful, appropriate and, most importantly, more acceptable to those on their journey to, and in, leadership.

Implications of the Findings to the Overall Study

From the literature and this study, it is evident that learning about leadership is a gradual process. Whilst some facets of leadership can be taught, much of the knowledge has been acquired throughout the individuals' lives. It has been seen how individual's moral values are established in their formative years, which impacts on how they lead in later years. Similarly, learning gained from experiences in the 'Accession' (Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003) years has equipped leaders with a repertoire of knowledge and skills to assist them in their leadership roles. If one is to get to the root of how leaders have learnt to lead, it would, therefore, appear valid and necessary to investigate their life histories. However, it is also necessary for the leaders themselves to reflect, unpick, articulate and potentially reassess how they have learnt to lead. If this is not done, much of what they have learnt will remain implicit and tacit, which could become problematic when new challenges arise which require conscious changes to leadership styles. It could also be argued that the meaning leaders give to future development could reflect experiences in their life history. It may be necessary to understand their life history as a means of helping their leadership in the future.

The interpretative view of this research allows the lived reality of each leader to be explored and that how they have learnt to lead has been influenced by individual experience and insight. A richness of data is gained by taking this approach. By taking a qualitative approach, I have been able to establish answers to what leaders have learnt, where they gained this knowledge, when they gained it and, to some extent, why they have learnt it. As a result, an interpretation of how each leader has learnt to lead can tentatively be made within

the context of the lived reality of the individual. To this end, the research could be deemed as authentic and relatable. Knowledge can be widened and theory developed.

The research reported in this study is limited to a sample size of eighteen leader-academics and it would be inappropriate to generalise or extrapolate from its findings. However, it does provide a basis upon which a fuller picture of how leaders learn to lead and how this may vary in different types of universities. These interviews allow tentative answers to the research questions posed. It has been found that the nature of leadership for leader-academics in higher education is complex and demanding and requires a combination of management and leadership skills. This study also suggests that, in the absence of any formal professional development, the majority of what leaders do is learnt, self-taught and acquired throughout their life history. It also suggests that leaders do go through life phases, although not as distinct as suggested by the literature for school head teachers. A recontextualised model of life stages for leader-academics in higher education has, therefore, been proposed.

This study also concludes that the influence of critical incidents and significant people has a profound effect on how leaders have learnt to lead. In contrast it has not been demonstrated in this study that professional training and development has had a significant influence on how leader-academics have learnt to lead. This is largely due to the lack of training received per se and the perception of the training that they had received was largely ineffective or insufficient. In the light of this latter finding, I have suggested the need to engage leaders with more formal processes of development if they are to fully benefit from the tacit knowledge gained throughout their life history.

These conclusions have been reached from research undertaken with leader-academics of highly rated faculties. This may have had an impact upon the findings. For example; working in a highly rated faculty may serve to raise the morale and self-esteem of those interviewed and for those who they lead. In other faculties, which do not enjoy such parity of esteem, other contextual factors may be at play. The study, however, serves to provide key insights to inform the ongoing research agenda which should now be broadened to include a range of faculties.

The Contribution and Further Research

The research has been successful in making a contribution to the knowledge of how some leaders in higher education have learnt to lead. The findings from this research provides information to further our understanding regarding:

- The roles and responsibilities of leader-academics and the importance of the inclusion of different types of universities
- How leaders enact their leadership role
- The importance of experience in influencing how leaders learn to lead
- The types of experiences which have been most significant in how leaders learn to lead
- The benefits of having influential people in leaders' lives to guide and develop them
- The stages that leader-academics in higher education go through on their journey to and in leadership
- The types of continuous professional development that benefit leaders and their careers, in particular the importance of networking and mentoring

- The opinions of leaders to the value of generic training and development programmes.

How The Contribution Can Be Applied

The contribution made by this research can be applied in the following ways:

1. To academics and professionals in their treatment of lecturers and researchers intent on developing a career. The findings of this research serves to broaden these individuals' knowledge and understanding of the influences, experiences and attitudes gathered on the journey to leadership and how best to advise and counsel them to achieve their professional aspirations in the light of organisational constraints and other demands on their time.

2. To alert aspiring leaders to the complexity of the role of leader-academic and to promote their understanding of how best to attain the necessary experience, knowledge and understanding to achieve and sustain leadership success.

3. To aid those responsible to devise meaningful and marketable in-house continuous education, training and development programmes to commence from day one of their careers. This process must be viewed as investments, not costs, to enable progressive development of potential leaders which will impact on the faculty and, ultimately, the success of the organisation.

4. To help further inform the research agenda and the literature regarding leadership in higher education, particularly at middle-level leader-academic level.

Suggestions for Further Research

The research employs semi-structured biographical interviews with eighteen individuals located in a relatively narrow geographical area. As this approach emphasises subjectivity, description, interpretation and agency, it is likely that the nature of the locality from which leaders have been drawn would impact on their life history and interpretations of it. Although this is an accepted outcome of this type of research, it does place limitations on the extent to which the knowledge gained in this research is transferable to other localities outside this geographical region. A more comprehensive study would be to draw upon leaders from higher education in a more diverse geographical region such as the Midlands or the south-east of England where leaders' life history may be very different.

A more in-depth study could also include discussions with people within the leaders' life history and take accounts of significant people working with the leaders, which would triangulate the data and offer a more rounded view and therefore enhanced understanding of how these leaders have learnt to lead. Similarly, a longitudinal study, tracking leadership development of a group of individuals from early on in their career would establish the real impact of events in their life history. In this way, the life stages as proposed in Figure 5 could be explored on a larger sample and, as a result, be further refined.

An outcome from the research seemed to be the distinct lack of mutuality between interviewees and their employing higher education institution. By this I mean that often,

respondents indicated how they did things for themselves, for example, organised their own training and development without the benefit of another's advice. The majority did not even bother. Critical questions that need to be asked by higher education organisations surround a fundamental principle of academic identity to be intellectually rigorous and analytical yet they are remarkably untheoretical and rigorous about their own practice. What are the reasons for this? Do they have the tools to develop people? Bearing in mind this observation and particularly the latter question, I have offered a framework (Figure 6) which could kick-start development and be useful when counselling potential and current leaders towards further development. It would be interesting to attempt to develop this proposed framework and explored in a real life setting, particularly when developing a leadership development strategy in line with organisational strategy.

In a similar vein, one of the tentative conclusions drawn from this study is the inappropriate nature of formal professional development so far delivered. However, this only can be considered from the data emanating from this study. It would be interesting to explore how recently developed professional development programmes are intending to develop leaders capacity to lead and to what extent the participants of the programme are both engaged in the process and are allowed to draw upon experiences from their life history.

Summary

What emerges from this small-scale study of eighteen middle-level leader-academics in higher education is the importance of their education and social values that have been developed through their life histories. The influence of family and teachers, colleagues and professional experiences has served to inform how leaders have learnt to lead.

This study has also highlighted the huge dearth in the literature relating to leader–academics in higher education in particular that relating to their professional development. It is rather remarkable that higher education institutions, regarded as seats of learning, appear to lack any commitment to the development of potential leaders within any form of structured succession plan. A gap has been identified in this research of meaningful professional development at various stages in their careers. The challenge is to bring informal processes of learning gained throughout a leader's life history into meaningful development initiatives. By doing so, the virtual nature of training can be brought into the leader's real world and, therefore, more credible and productive to those who participate. This includes establishing formal mentoring systems, encouraging the formation of meaningful networks and providing guided critical reflection on practice.

There is also the need to recognise and respond to specific needs at particular stages in their careers. There is a place for formal programmes to teach those aspects of leadership that can be taught and learnt, but, in the main, providers should aim to enhance those aspects of leadership which have been acquired through individual life histories. This must be a necessary requirement if the quality of leaders are to meet the demands of higher education in the twenty-first century.

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APPENDIX 1

Letter to Interviewees

Telephone: xxx
Facsimile: xxx
E-mail: <u>xxx</u>

Address of potential interviewee

1st September 2005

Dear XX

I am a lecturer in Human Resource Management at Swansea Institute of Higher Education. I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education with Birmingham University. The working title of my thesis is: 'The journey to leadership: a study of how leader-academics in higher education have learnt to lead'. The outcome of this research is to hopefully contribute to a better understanding of leadership development in Wales Higher Education and beyond.

My research involves interviewing leaders of successful schools in Higher Education to identify how those leaders have learnt to lead. As the XXX is one of these, I would very much like to interview you. The interview would last approximately one hour and would be a semi structured interview exploring themes within your life history such as critical incidents, significant people and continuous professional development from childhood up to the present day. I shall be adhering to the BERA (2004) ethical guidelines for research and therefore, although your contribution would be invaluable to my research, it would remain anonymous.

If you can agree, in principle, to being interviewed, could you please either complete the reply slip attached and return in the addressed envelope enclosed, or reply to the above email address? I can then provide you with further details, answer any queries or concerns that you may have and arrange a mutually suitable interview time. Your help with this would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Inman

NAME

I agree/do not agree in principle to being interviewed
Please contact me/my secretary on:
(email/tel)……………………………………………………. to arrange a suitable time.

Preferred dates/times (optional)……………………………………………………..

THANK YOU

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questions

Interview information

<u>The Journey to leadership</u>

A study of how leader-academics in higher education learn to lead

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research.

The aim of the interview is to understand more about leadership development by reconstructing and analysing the life history of selected middle level leader-academics. Contributions will be anonymous as it is similarities, themes and differences which shall be reported on in the thesis.

The interview will last approximately one hour and will generally consist of open ended questions around the following themes:

- Reasons for the success of your faculty/school/department

- The nature of leadership for the faculty/school/department (role, responsibilities, drivers, barriers)

- Formative years (parental influence, education, peer/reference groups)

- Your first post in paid employment (reasons, significant people/ incidents)

- Career development (drivers, significant people/ incidents, application of learning)

- Training and development for leading a faculty/school/department

- The future?

If you would like any further information, please do contact me on [phone number] or at [email address].

Thank you

The Journey to leadership

A study of how leader-academics in higher education learn to lead

I have chosen your faculty/school /department because of its excellent status – could you tell me why you think it is rated so highly? (evidence to reconfirm excellent status).

Current post
1. In terms of leadership can you tell me what that involves for you as the leader of the faculty/school/department?
2. What are the drivers and barriers to your aspirations as leader of this faculty/school/department?
3. Enabling/constraining factors

Formative years
Could you tell me about your formative years please? In terms of:
- Parental influence
- School/education
- Peer/ref groups
- Drivers/motivational factors
- Significant people/ incidents
- Leadership positions
- Learn anything which you apply now

First post
I now want to look at how you became a leader: career history
Could you tell me what your first post was – why chosen?
- Drivers/motivational factors
- Significant people/ incidents
- Learn anything which you apply now?

Career development
Could you please outline your career following on from your first post until your current post?
- Drivers/motivational factors
- Significant people/ incidents
- Learn anything which you apply now?

Future
Where next – any aspiration for the future or retirement?

Training and Development
Have you had any planned or formal training or development for leadership?
Could you outline what you have had and how helpful it has been
Is there any type of training or development that you would have liked or would still like?

APPENDIX 3

Interviewee sample

Interviewee	Type of University	Length of Service (years) 0-5, 5-10, 10+
1	Chartered	10+
2	Chartered	0-5
3	Chartered	5 - 10
4	Chartered	10+
5	Chartered	10+
6	Chartered	0-5
7	Statutory	10+
8	Statutory	5-10
9	Statutory	0- 5
10	Statutory	5-10
11	Statutory	5-10
12	Statutory	5-10
13	Statutory	5-10
14	Chartered	10+
15	Statutory	5-10
16	Chartered	5-10
17	Chartered	5-10
18	Chartered	5-10

Two of the interviewees above were female, but to maintain anonymity these have not been identified