CHANGING TIMES: THE ROLE OF THE CURRICULUM MIDDLE MANAGER WITHIN COLLEGES OF FURTHER EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

There has been a significant increase in interest of the role of academic middle leaders within education in recent years. However, little research exists on the specific role of curriculum middle managers within colleges of Further Education. This study explores the role of curriculum middle managers within three colleges of Further Education situated in the West Midlands and Staffordshire region of England. A mixed method, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were use to secure the perceptions of senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers.

The findings show that the role of the curriculum middle manager in Further Education is complex and demanding and is still being developed to take into account the changing focus of the Further Education sector. In practical terms, the study highlights the influence that senior management are having on the enactment of the role, including the prioritisation of certain tasks.

This study captures insights which should inform the future research agenda in Further Education, including highlighting possible areas for further research on this topic. Recommendations are made that encompass proposed improvements to:

- the current definition of the role of the curriculum middle manager;
- the range and scope of tasks expected;
- staff management.

It is further proposed that there is proactive dissemination and communication of the responsibilities assigned to the role if more effective working relationships are to be achieved between curriculum middle managers and their role set.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND SETTING THE CONTEXT

Introduction

In education much has happened to redefine both the role of curriculum middle managers in Further Education and the expectations of those with whom they work. Since the early-1990s, Further Education colleges have experienced extensive changes in the way in which they are required to operate. New systems of funding, external accountability and overall responsibility for the financial 'health' of their individual colleges have altered and continue to alter the role of both senior and middle managers.

This chapter introduces a research project that sought to examine the perceived role of curriculum middle managers in light of the change in management focus that has occurred, and to some degree is still occurring, within Further Education. In doing so, the project not only seeks to develop the general understanding of the role of curriculum middle managers, but also to provide information that could inform lecturers aspiring to such roles, the senior managers of curriculum middle managers, and curriculum middle managers themselves.

The projects aim was to explore and assess the extent to which the impact of the shift in managerial responsibility following Incorporation has influenced and shaped both the current and perceived role of curriculum middle managers. It examines whether their stated role relates to the tasks that they prioritize and the expectations of those colleagues that they interact with when performing their tasks, and in the wider educational arena, as established by analysis of current literature. The aims build upon existing published research that demonstrates that there is a general lack of clarity and understanding regarding this role, and also to expand the level of knowledge available and identify areas for further research in the future. In addition to the views stated in the literature, personal experiences of working as a curriculum middle manager in a number of colleges of Further Education have shown that there is a general lack of understanding within such institutions regarding the overall purpose of the curriculum middle manager role and the nature of their responsibilities and contribution to the work of the college. This has on occasion resulted in tensions between academic staff, senior management and curriculum middle managers.

In addition to the aim of building upon existing published literature, it is anticipated that this research will contribute to the ongoing demystification of the role, its purpose and responsibilities; providing information that could inform practitioners aspiring to such roles, managers of post holders, and curriculum middle managers themselves. The key research questions based on this literature and the research aims are:

- What tasks do curriculum middle managers consider to be part of their role?

- How does the perception of the role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- Who influences the ways in which curriculum middle managers carry out their responsibilities?
- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

The research questions are intended to define the investigation, rather than limit it. They are designed to enable a range of answers to be forthcoming from the data collected. Indeed, it is likely that respondents from different positions within the three colleges used in the project will hold different perceptions that in turn impact on the way in which the role is perceived and/or enacted. There may also be implications for role development where differing perceptions exist within the organisations, giving rise to the potential for misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the role and its responsibilities.

The theoretical aim was to discover what influences are brought to bear on the role of curriculum middle manager through both its enactment, and the perceptions held of it. It is my belief that both in practice, and in the perceptions of others, this role is key, a view shared by a number of commentators (Gleeson and Knights, 2008; Hannagan et al 2007; McTavish, 2007; Mercer and Ri, 2007; Briggs, 2005; Leader, 2004).

Data Collection

Without a doubt, the role of the curriculum middle manager is complex and in such a diverse sector, which is apparently in a constant state of change, any evaluation of the role of curriculum middle managers attempts to define a moving target (Briggs, 2005). Thus it was a matter of viewing the activities of curriculum middle managers, and the expectations of those with whom they interact when carrying out their role, in relation to an inventory of generic tasks situated in a specific period in time. The classification developed by Wise (1999) was used as a basis to understand the tasks commonly carried out and the tasks perceived to be needed to be carried out as part of the role of a curriculum middle manager. These tasks were grouped in relation to the four key generic functions identified in the literature as making-up the curriculum middle manager's role. That is, Administrative, Academic, Managerial and Educational. In order to obtain data for this investigation a questionnaire together with a series of interviews with a sample of lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers were undertaken at three colleges. In total 131 questionnaires were distributed, 79 completed and returned (60 per cent response rate); 17 interviews were conducted. Interviews were undertaken and questionnaires completed on the basis of institutional and individual anonymity. This provided an insight into the perceptions held by three levels of college staff and enabled the identification of areas of similarity, difference and tension. The reasons for selecting

this approach are presented in detail later in the thesis, along with consideration of alternative methods and their merits and problems within this investigation.

As a curriculum middle manager myself, and the researcher for this investigation, I recognise that I need to acknowledge my own experiences. Whilst my experiences have been valuable in identifying an area for study, I need to be aware of the tendency to include preconceptions into either my questioning and/or my analysis of the data. Consequently, I have implemented a number of measures during the design and implementation of the project that endeavour to curtail researcher bias as far as possible in order to discover other views, whilst using my understanding and knowledge of university administration to aid interpretation of the findings and these are addressed fully in the Research Design chapter.

Justification for and context of the research

In this introduction, firstly, the study is situated in relation to government policy surrounding Further Education; secondly, the study is placed in context; thirdly, antecedents of the study illustrating theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were used to interpret, analyze and discuss the role of Curriculum Middle Managers are described; and, finally, an outline of the thesis previews subsequent chapters presenting the review of the wider literature on the role of middle managers, the research methods deployed, the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews; and the examination of the findings.

Background Government Policy

Further Education is a large sector catering for over 4.5 million students and employing over 300,000 staff (DFES, 2007). The sector was originally founded in the 1944 Education Act, during a time of apparent partnership or consensus between the state, local government and educational professionals (Dale, 1989). This period of apparent agreement on educational policies begin to change significantly following the economic crisis of the early 1970s. The rise of Thatcherism in the 1980s with its ideals of a "free market and strong state" (Gamble, 1988, p.12) introduced policies that restructured the governance of the public sector, including education.

This shift towards a primarily economic agenda was reflected in the policy developments in Further Education, with reforms of both curriculum and institutions aimed at ensuring that the sector was more relevant and responsive to the needs of the economy. Such writers as Leathwood (2000) and Hannagan et al (2007), characterize these changes, as changes that had an emphasis on efficiency, measurable performance, outputs and competition. But more importantly, the message suggested that there was a real need to review the role of middle management within the public sector (Drucker, 1988).

The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) granted colleges their independent corporate status, and allowed them to be governed by non-elected boards, drawn mainly

from business and industry (Gleeson and Shain, 1999), rather than the Local Educational Authority that had previously been the case. This was commonly known as Incorporation. In order to oversee the sector the Further Education Funding Council was introduced by the Government. The Council assumed responsibility for, amongst other things, funding and introduced a new funding mechanism that allowed funds to be "clawed back" if colleges failed to meet recruitment targets, retain students or if students were unsuccessful in achieving their qualification (Gleeson and Shain, 1999).

Gleeson and Shain (1999) argue that Incorporation not only increased the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the college senior management team but also, by the very nature of the changes that it introduced, laid the foundations for the need for colleges to review the structure, functions and duties of their senior and middle management team members. For the effects of Incorporation were such as to change the very organizational values and culture within colleges (Briggs, 2005), forcing them to move away from what many saw as a student-centred culture to a much more competitive and businesslike culture which was primarily concerned with income generation and survival in the market-place (Withers, 2000; Hannagan et al 2007). The role of both senior and middle managers had to change to reflect this new focus, with the need to balance the college's budget to some degree taking precedence over anything else (Withers, 2000), leading to an increasing reluctance by teaching staff to move into curriculum middle manager roles (Gleeson and Knights, 2008).

This view is supported by Gleeson (2001) who suggests that the biographical information gained from his research indicates that Incorporation was a period in which not only did managers at all levels have to learn new skills but also the working practices and culture within colleges changed dramatically.

Clearly, Incorporation was a life changing experience for most managers within Further Education, with a number of researchers (Gronn, 1999; Withers, 2000; Gleeson, 2001) identifying this period as one of the most significant periods in the history of Further Education. This raises the question of whether the increase in functions for which the college was responsible for following Incorporation, together with the impact of the new funding mechanism, had, and still has, a real impact on the role of middle managers. A question that is at the heart of this study.

Setting the Context

Despite an apparent constant state of change, Further Education has attracted little attention from the research community in England and Wales (Hughes et al, 1996; Lumby, 2001) and management within this sector even less (Briggs, 2001). The work of Gleeson and Shain (1999), Briggs (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005), and to some degree Leader (2004) and Gleeson and Knights (2008), provides a brief insight into role of the middle manager within colleges of Further Education. However, while their work explores some important issues, issues that illustrate the complex nature of the post-Incorporation middle management role, their studies tends to concentrate on the wider

issues concerning the work and role of middle managers generally rather than on the role of curriculum middle managers specifically.

This study centres on the role of curriculum middle managers within Further Education, an area that could be argued is both interesting and valid in its own right. Firstly, there is a lack of research that describes and analyses the specific role of curriculum middle managers within Further Education. Existing research tends to be centred either on the role of curriculum middle managers in schools (Wise, 1999; Bennett et al, 2003) or investigates a wide range of middle manager roles within colleges of Further Education (Briggs, 2003). This study seeks to examine the actual and perceived role from both the perspective of the curriculum middle manager and that of those colleagues that they interact with on a professional basis – documenting and interpreting the generic tasks that they perform or are expected to perform, comparing stated priorities and influences from lecturers, senior managers and curriculum middle managers themselves.

Secondly, the study seeks to investigate into what some have referred as the "shift from 'professional paradigm' to 'managerial paradigm' (Briggs 2002, p.13). It explores the fundamental cultural changes that have happened within college senior and middle management teams following Incorporation (Watson and Crossley, 2001) and investigates the claim that there has been a change in priorities and attitudes from that of their public sector roots, emphasizing public service, to that of a quasi-private sector organization, emphasizing efficiency, accountability and profitability (Watson and Crossley, 2001; Hannagan et al, 2007).

The emergence of this second issue has provided further stimulus to the debate surrounding the true nature of the middle manager role in the ever-changing sector that is Further Education. However, as the issue of the study is situated in such a volatile sector of education, it is acknowledged that the findings from this project may only offer an insight into emergent and constantly changing situation. The study is therefore intended as a contribution towards understanding the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers in Further Education and, as stated previously, is aimed at aspiring curriculum middle managers, as well as current curriculum middle and senior managers.

Antecedents of the Study

Two key works were influential in the choosing of the topic for investigation and initially helping to frame the study. Briggs in *Modelling Aspects of Role Among Middle Managers in English Further Education Colleges (2003)* reviewed and analysed the changing role of the middle manager in English colleges of Further Education, and indicated potential frameworks of categorisation for the curriculum middle manager role. Her framework, although aimed at analysing the role of curriculum and non-curriculum middle managers, was found to be useful in revealing how curriculum middle managers within Further Education are influenced in performing their role by the perceptions of the managers' role set: managers' team members, the managers themselves and the senior managers. In addition, it provided a framework to consider the impact of what has been described as the shift in managerial responsibility that had taken place during the late 1990s (Leader,

2004; Briggs, 2003; Watson and Crossley, 2001; Gleeson and Shain, 1999); a shift in responsibility that Briggs (2003) argued was at the centre of the perceived difference in expectations between lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers.

This particular conceptualisation of the role of middle managers in Further Education had never been undertaken before. While there have been substantial research projects examining the role of middle managers in schools, for example, Bennett *et al* (2003) have conducted a number of research projects on behalf of the National College for School Leadership into the role and purpose of middle leaders in schools and the future role of middle leaders in schools, there has been no similar work that specifically attempts to clarify the situation in Further Education.

Briggs (2003) considered the role of middle managers following what she describes as an intense period of change, focusing in on the fundamental impact of the shift in managerial responsibility. In recognising this paradigm shift she highlighted and explored the fundamental change of the middle manager's role/responsibilities within both college culture and hierarchy. Exploring the question of power and role of these "new" middle managers she attempted to provide via her study's six-research questions an insight into the true function of middle management within Incorporated Further Education colleges. This study draws heavily on the answers to these questions. In particular, the findings of her first three research questions which directly relate to the actual role and perceived role of middle managers.

However, despite the insight provided by Brigg's (2003) study the concept of a shift from a 'professional paradigm' to a 'managerial paradigm' (Briggs, 2003, p.44) continues to be central to this study. The change in the overall focus of the role of the curriculum middle manager away from pedagogy to management is seen as a continuing phenomenon and, as such, continues to create questions as to their exact role; a Question which this study aims to explore.

The second key work, influential in framing the study, was Christine Wise's study of academic team leaders in secondary schools who were in middle management positions. The study examined both their perceived role, together with how that related to their stated role, and how they prioritized tasks within their role. Wise (1999) in *The Role of the Academic Middle Manager in Secondary Schools* combined an original theoretical framework, with a survey of middle managers in three schools and three case studies to develop a model to classify the tasks expected of the academic middle manager in schools.

Wise (1999) sought to outline and understand both the actual role of the academic middle manager and their perceived role as determined by members of their role set. An attempt was made to construct the role of academic middle managers using the theoretical insights derived from such commentators as Bennett (1995) and Armstrong *et al* (1993b), who suggested that classroom teachers were responsible to their middle manager who in turn has to try to co-ordinate their efforts in line with the whole school vision. Wise (1999) concludes that there is clear evidence that academic middle managers are shifting their emphasis from teaching and routine administration towards management but there is

little indication that they are being given the time and resources necessary to support this change. This study draws heavily on the model developed to classify the tasks performed by middle managers and utilizes this model as one method to analyze the data collected within this study.

In addition to the two key works outline above, the study also draws heavily on the theoretical and empirical work of the following commentators, all whom have contributed to the body of knowledge relating to curriculum middle managers:

• Gleeson and Shain (1999)

The paper critically examines the complex and contradictory role played by academic 'middle' managers, as mediators of change, in the reconstruction of professional and managerial cultures in the Further Education sector. It explores the role played by middle managers as an ideological 'buffer' between senior managers and lecturers through which market reform is filtered in the Further Education workplace.

• Leathwood (2000)

The paper highlights how managerialism has become increasingly dominant in the marketised Further Education sector. It discusses how recent changes in management discourses and practices in colleges have been described in terms of a move from a rather 'benign' paternalism to an aggressive and 'thrusting' entrepreneurial managerialism. It explores the ways in which management is performed and perceived, and how staff identities are constructed within this discursive context.

• Simkins and Lumby (2002)

The paper reviews how economic and social change has led to government policy, with strong pressures to enhance student learning and outcomes and to reduce costs within the Further Education sector. The article reviews a range of research which addresses the consequences of these changes for college cultures, highlighting the increasing polarisation of values between managers and lecturers.

• Bennett et al (2003)

The research paper examines the pivotal role of the middle leader in implementing existing policies and introducing change. It identifies major tensions that affect how middle leaders define and carry out their responsibilities. These tensions are between senior staff expectations that the middle leader will perform a management role and a common belief among middle leaders that their loyalty was to their department or subject responsibilities.

• Leader (2004)

The paper contributes to the discourse on strategic decision-making in colleges of Further Education and reviews the actual role of the academic middle managers in participating in that process. It considers the affects of Incorporation, discussing the issue of the perceived shift in roles between senior and middle managers and their final identity that has emerged.

• Hannagan *et al* (2007)

The paper presents considerable evidence of a strategic approach to management practice within colleges. The research indicated strong central control by senior managers with little evidence of instances where middle managers actually influence overall college policy. It suggests that in all colleges the most important factors for change were Incorporation and finance, with competition less important and curriculum and technological change least important.

•   Gleeson and Knights (2008)

The paper highlights reluctance among middle managers in Further Education to become leaders because they seek more space and autonomy to stay in touch with their subject, their students, and their own pedagogic values and identities, family commitments and the balance between work and life. This reluctance is reinforced by their scepticism that leadership in Further Education is becoming less hierarchical and more participative.

Summary and outline of the research

This research has the main aim of discovering more about why and how the role of the curriculum middle manager has developed and what its responsibilities are. It builds upon work that has considered the changing nature of the curriculum middle manager's role and the ever increasing workload that has followed.

Through considering a number of issues connected with undertaking research of this nature a mixed method approach was selected that would enable the obtaining of rich data that focussed clearly on the research questions. This is a small scale research project that has been designed to contribute to the growing understanding of the role of curriculum middle managers, to meet the assessment requirements of a Doctor of Education programme of study and also to support my personal professional development as a curriculum middle manager. It is of necessity very focussed in its content and outcomes; however, possibilities for further research are discussed later in this thesis.

The chapters which follow present the research as follows:

•   **Chapter 2 Review of the literature**
This section discusses the conceptual theory and empirical research within which the current study is set. The section begins with a discussion of the literature relating to the Incorporation of Further Education colleges and how this has not only affected but also defined the current role of middle managers. The review then moves on to look at the issues of role, power and function as they relate to the role of curriculum middle managers. These themes, identified within the relevant literature, represent the fundamental issues surrounding the initial change in job role but also reflect the main factors that still appear to create critical tensions and generally blur the role of curriculum middle managers.

- **Chapter 3 Research methodology**

This section presents a rationale for the methodology and methods used in the study, including details of the sample, the method of data analysis and the ethical issues underpinning the study.

- **Chapter 4 Presentation of findings**

This section presents the conceptual basis for the overview of the role of curriculum middle managers presented by this study. The analysis draws on the data gained from the view points of the members of the role set in order to depict and discuss the various aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role in relation to the studies research questions.

- **Chapter 5 Discussion of findings**

This section presents a discussion of the themes developed through the study. The section examines both the actual and perceived role of the curriculum middle manager, linking the key findings of the study to both the research questions and existing literature.

- **Chapter 6 Conclusions**

The outcomes of the study are summarised and presented in relation to the research questions and in the context of existing research. Just as this research work has been designed to develop the ideas of others researching this topic, a number of potential future research areas have come to light during this research, and the chapter concludes with an outline these.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE: ROLE OF CURRICULUM MIDDLE MANAGERS IN FUTHER EDUCATION

Introduction

The literature on middle managers within education in different contexts is both wide-ranging and diverse. However, there are only a few substantial studies that specifically consider the role of curriculum middle managers in Further Education. This lack of research is surprising; especially when you consider that the sector has undergone a decade of intense change (Gleeson and Knights, 2008; Briggs, 2003). Incorporation of colleges in 1992 introduced a funding system that demanded stronger lines of accountability and therefore, by necessity, instigated a fundamental change in not only the structure of management within Further Education colleges, but also the roles, functions and culture of the sector's middle managers (Leader, 2004).

Clearly, Briggs (2003) supports the broad aim of this research, identifying the overall lack of role clarity in the role of middle managers. Indeed, Briggs (2001) goes onto argue that further research into this area is necessary as:

> "There are fewer empirically-based studies than in the school sector for college researchers and managers to consider" (p.12).

This is echoed by a number of other writers (Gleeson and Knights (2008); Leader, 2004; Gleeson and Shain, 1999) who also support the view that an investigation into the role of curriculum middle managers would build on current understanding and add to the growing knowledge base of curriculum middle managers, their roles and perceptions of those roles.

In this chapter it is proposed to select a number of major studies which have contributed to the understanding of either the role of curriculum middle managers in Further Education or the wider literature on middle managers in education. These studies are considered to have been significant in providing both theoretical concepts to underpin the research and in indicating key themes to understand the role of curriculum middle managers in Further Education. The review is thematic in its nature and does not claim to be an exhaustive review of all the available literature surrounding the role of middle managers in education.

A number of individual texts concerning curriculum management in schools and Higher Education have also been included for comparison with the Further Education context, although a comprehensive review was not undertaken in this area, as the focus of the research is upon colleges. However, as the literature on the management of schools and universities provides a rich source of conceptual material on topics germane to this

research, it was decided that this, together with generic management literature, would provide support for, the small body of Further Education literature. Indeed, the relevance of this literature has increased over recent years as the amount and types of educational work that colleges and schools collaborate on increases. With a 14-19 curriculum within colleges now being seen as the norm, the number of teachers and managers from the school sector being employed by colleges to teach and manage their under 16 provision is increasing each year. Researchers suggest that higher education is a sector having much in common with Further Education as its business is increasingly being driven by the need to generate income, with the management of its curriculum reflecting the complex money-generating infrastructure of today's colleges and universities.

The review begins with a discussion of the process of the literature search, followed by literature relating to the Incorporation of Further Education colleges and how this has not only affected but also defined the current role of middle managers. The changing role of senior management and how this has affected and developed the role of curriculum middle managers is then considered before examining the scope of the term middle manager. The review then moves on to look at the key issue of role, especially as it relates to actual tasks undertaken by middle managers, before exploring the issues of power/authority and function as they relate to the overall role of the curriculum middle manager.

The themes which have been identified within the relevant literature, represent the fundamental issues surrounding not only the initial change in job role but also reflect the main factors that still appear to create critical tensions and generally blur the role of curriculum middle managers. Issues that have shaped and influenced the research project in relation to its key purpose and research questions.

Literature search

In this section the process of searching for and reviewing relevant literature to review is considered. The literature discovered is considered in relation to the provisional research questions. From this the conceptual frameworks emerge which support the development of the final questions on which the investigation is then based.

Literature search process

In order to achieve an effective coverage of directly relevant literature, clear parameters were devised for defining the search (Wallace and Poulson, 2003). The search process concentrated initially on literature that considered curriculum middle managers in Further Education. However, this was then expanded to include literature considering academic middle managers in schools and universities.

Careful consideration was given to the age of the work to be included. A prominent date in the development of the modern college of Further Education was 1992 when colleges were incorporated and the control by the Local Education Authorities was removed. Consequently, it was decided that 1992 was the earliest date that would be included in the

search, with 2008 being the most recent, as this would give a view of what was currently being investigated and written about in the areas directly covered by the study.

Having decided on the preliminary research questions in order to focus the literature search, and defined the data parameters for publications to consider, it was possible to undertake the search in a number of stages to:

- review related professional journals already held;
- identify journals, books and authors that published in the area of curriculum management in Further Education from references quoted by the authors of these items already held;
- undertake a general electronic library catalogue search for books and journal articles that considered the role of curriculum middle manager in Further Education;
- identify the types of materials likely to be most relevant and useful to the study.

The Journal of Further Education publishes a quarterly journal that looks at key issues within Further Education and gave a relevant base from which to start the search. A systematic review of each issue gave me a clear view of current research and writing in the area of curriculum middle management. A number of authors were noted in relevant articles and making notes of these in order to follow them up at a later date to establish how pertinent they may be proved invaluable. Articles in the journal that were directly related to the main research aims were identified and collected for more detailed reading and value assessment.

Use of electronic academic library catalogues enabled a follow up of the leads identified in the first two stages of the literature search and an assessment of relevance to this research. This supported the generation of key words that were then used to enable the setting of clear search criteria for general electronic literature searches of books and journals. The search parameters set were 'middle managers' and 'Further Education' as more specific criteria resulted in too few returns to be useful as an overview of what was available. Having identified a wide range of sources these were then filtered down by using other criteria including 'curriculum' and 'role'.

This resulted in a reasonably manageable quantity of texts to read and consider in light of the preliminary research questions. This process also enabled the identification of a few academic journals that periodically published articles relating to curriculum middle managers in Further Education for which publication alerts were established through Zetoc. This has enabled the identification of some very recent work to support the data analysis and development of conclusions and recommendations.
In the succeeding sections of this chapter, the results of the literature search are considered in the context of the main research aims.

Incorporation

The 1980s and 1990s saw major changes in the management of public sector organizations within the United Kingdom (Leathwood, 2000). Leathwood (2000) characterizes these changes, as changes that had an emphasis on efficiency, measurable performance, outputs and competition, changes which the Government of the day argued were aimed at "raising standards" and ensuring "value for money" from the service provider (Leathwood, 2000). The message being put forward at the time suggested that to be effective, an organization needed to be flexible, lean, responsive and have a flat management structure (Drucker, 1988). In particular, the message reinforced the literature (Drucker, 1988; Kanter, 1989; Peters, 1992) that there was a real need to review the role of middle management within the public sector (Drucker, 1988). As Thomas and Dunkerley (1999) observed:

> "Of particular focus for criticism … is middle management. Seen as the 'non-value adding' stratum of the organization, middle managers are accused of adding unnecessary costs, slowing down decisions-making, creating barriers between the organization and the customer, disempowering workers and impeding information flow (p. 158).

For colleges of Further Education these changes came in the form of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. This Act granted colleges their independent corporate status and allowed them to be governed by non-elected boards, drawn mainly from business and industry (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) rather than the Local Educational Authority that had previously been the case. In order to oversee the sector the Further Education Funding Council was introduced by the Government. The Council assumed responsibility for, amongst other things, funding and introduced a new funding mechanism that allowed funds to be "clawed back" if colleges failed to meet recruitment targets, retain students or if students were unsuccessful in achieving their qualifications (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). This new funding system introduced its own levels of accountability and data management, requiring colleges to develop new systems to monitor data and track students and necessitated not only additional middle manager roles (Briggs, 2005) but also a change in working practice for existing curriculum middle managers (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). At the time the accuracy of student data formed the basis of the college funding mechanism, with curriculum middle managers being held responsible for the accuracy of the data within their area. Some might argue that this was one of the first moves towards realigning curriculum middle manager roles to that of their business counterparts (Gleeson and Shain, 1999).

While Incorporation increased the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the college senior management team (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) it also, by the very nature of the changes that it introduced, laid the foundations for the need for colleges to review the structure, functions and duties of their senior and middle management team members (Gleeson and Shain, 1999), for the effects of Incorporation were such as to change the very organizational values and cultures within colleges (Briggs, 2002), forcing them to move away from what many saw as a student-centred culture to a much more competitive culture which was primarily concerned with income generation and survival in the market-place (Withers, 2000). The role of both senior and middle managers had to

change to reflect this new focus, with the need to balance the college's budget to some degree taking precedence over anything else (Withers, 2000).

Gleeson (2001) supports this view and suggests that the biographical information gained from his research indicates that Incorporation was a period in which not only did managers at all levels have to learn new skills but also the working practices and culture within colleges changed dramatically. He contends that:

> "With little experience of business, information, human resource or management systems the initial excitement of college independence soon wore off for 'first wave' principals and senior managers. Many such pioneers retired early as the funding and political ratchet of industrial disputes over lecturers' pay, conditions and contracts increased. Not surprisingly there has been great variation in management and leadership response of colleges in the post-Incorporation period" (p.189).

Clearly, Incorporation was a life changing experience for most managers within Further Education, with a number of researchers (Gronn, 1999; Withers, 2000; Gleeson and Shain, 1999) identifying this as one of the most significant periods in the history of Further Education. However, while the earlier literature provides a good basis to review the initial effects of Incorporation, it fails to provide a complete answer to the question of whether the increase in functions for which the college was responsible following Incorporation, together with the impact of the new funding mechanism, had, and still has, a real impact on the role of middle managers. Briggs (2005) in her research into the work of middle managers in Further Education colleges considers these questions and suggests that Incorporation was merely the initial catalyst for the change in role for middle managers. Indeed, Briggs (2005) goes on to argue that since Incorporation there have been a number of changes in the overall framework for accountability of colleges of Further Education that has led to the need to focus the role of the curriculum middle manager almost entirely on issues relating to financial accountability. Briggs (2005) states that:

> "In 1997, a revised framework for college inspection was introduced, including mandatory self-assessment, and the new millennium brought the transfer of accountability from the Further Education Funding Council and its inspectorate to the Learning and Skills Council, the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education. These changes intensified the focus upon systems of accountability for all college managers" (p.28).

This is an interesting argument, for while it supports the view of such researchers as Gleeson and Shain (1999), Watson and Crossley (2001) and Leader (2004) that Incorporation moved the focus of the role of the curriculum middle manager away from pedagogy, it also introduces the idea that the often quoted shift from the 'professional paradigm' to 'managerial paradigm' (Briggs, 2002, p. 13) is a continuing phenomena.

Summary

This section has shaped and influenced the research project by highlighting the need to consider the role of curriculum middle managers in light of the overall college environment, which would at times seem to both facilitate and impede it.

Changing Role of Senior Management

Introduction

Mercer and Ri (2007) point out that in recent years the importance of the role of middle managers within education has been highlighted by a number of writers (Harris et al., 2003; Adey, 2000; Bennett, 1999; Busher and Harris, 1999; Brown and Rutherford, 1999, 1998; Glover et al., 1998). This realization was revolutionary because prior to the work of Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) there was a clear assumption that the effectiveness of schools was directly linked to the leadership of the headteacher. As Pauline Perry, Chief HMI, stated:

> "Headships have always been the most important single posts in the entire
> education service, and recent developments, thrusting the individual school into
> even more prominence, have placed more weight on their role" (Perry, 1992, p.4).

Withers (2000), in considering the evolution of the role of the principal in Further Education, places the changing role of the principal at the forefront of biographical events that shape their ideals and working practices following appointment as head/principal. He cites such major external influences as "Incorporation" and "funding changes" as evidence of the type of events that the principals interviewed in his research saw as key influences upon their leadership style. Wither's (2000) research identifies recurring themes which those interviewed see as significant in shaping the way they lead their college. In the case of Incorporation, Withers (2000) argues that:

> "The principal's role as a result of Incorporation had changed almost out of all
> recognition to one of 'managing director'. Different leadership and management
> skills were required" (p.372).

Withers (2000) also reports that most principals in his study had problems coming to terms with the additional skills that were now required in the incorporated college and had to either learn these skills quickly or consider retirement. Clearly, Incorporation was a life changing experience for most principals, with a number of researchers (Gronn, 1999; Withers, 2000; Gleeson, 2001) identifying this period as one of the most significant in a number of principals' life stories; a period that not only forms an integral part of their professional make-up, but also, greatly influences their unique leadership style and ultimately what tasks they expect other managers to perform.

As senior management teams, that is employees identified by the college's articles of Incorporation as holding a senior role, decreased in size as part of cost-cutting, and

increasingly concerned themselves with strategic planning, middle managers appointed from the lecturing ranks, have been required to take on broader managerial roles (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). They not only manage budgets and people in the pursuit of greater efficiency, but also mediate tensions and dilemmas associated with rapid and unpredictable change; tasks which were once associated with members of the senior management team (Gleeson and Shain, 1999).

Management in Further Education

The changing role of senior managers has clearly in turn affected the day to day overall responsibilities of curriculum middle managers (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). Longhurst (1996) argues that the preoccupation of college senior managers is one of maximizing income and minimizing costs. However, as Briggs (2003) highlights, during this period of 'operational efficiency' there was also a drive for 'effectiveness', "stimulated both by government requirements in the form of targets, and by a professional concern for educational values (p.5).

Briggs (2003) reviewing the work of Randle and Brady (1997a and b) argues that:

"… a paradigm shift has occurred from a "professional" system based upon the primacy of student learning, concern for academic standards, a collegial 'community of practice' and professional autonomy, to a 'managerial' one based upon primacy of student through-put and income generation, concern for efficiency and effectiveness, control by mangers and the market and a surveillance culture based upon measurement against performance indicators…. This shift produces tension between 'organic' pressure to provide according to differentiated student need and the 'mechanical' pressure to address the needs of the organization as a whole" (p.51).

This Randle and Brady (1997a and b) suggest leads to a 'new' type of manager, with a completely different set of values from that of the traditional academic staff, who represent public sector professionalism. This produced a lack of understanding of the academic middle manager position by academic staff, which although linked to academic middle managers in schools, was aptly summed up by Leask and Terrell (1997):

"At the centre of the management sandwich is the middle manager, working with the practical difficulties and pressures from below, and the higher aspirations from above. While the logic, aspirations and value judgments of senior management may be clear, practitioners living with the daily reality of classroom life may have a different view" (p.362).

But is this 'shift' in values really surprising? College principals, together with other senior managers, set the organization's objectives and curriculum middle managers are tasked with working towards these goals (Briggs, 2003). In the case of colleges of Further Education, due to the nature of their funding methodology and accountability, these goals tend to be linked to the generation of income (Briggs, 2003).

While Wise (1999) in considering 'role set' influences of academic middle managers (discussed later under role) suggests that:

> "In all four areas of decision making the middle manager's team were considered to be the most influential…. The 'Head and senior management team' were the second most significant category" (p.360).

It is argued that the influence of the senior management team in colleges of Further Education, due to such practices as the intense targeting and monitoring of middle managers (Gleeson and Knights (2008), outweighs all others in the role set. While issues relating to the influence of the 'role-set' are discussed later under 'role', it is argued that the core values which guide college practices are directly linked to the senior management team's drive to generate income and meet targets. The changing role of the principal and other members of the senior management team discussed earlier have, by the inclusion of tasks previously undertaken by the local authority, directly affected the role of curriculum middle managers. As Gleeson and Shain (1999) point out "… managers comply either willingly or strategically with new practices within colleges" (p.462).

McTavish (2007) and Briggs (2005) both suggest that in practical terms this has led curriculum middle managers to spend more and more of their working day dealing with tasks linked to income generation, accountability and administration, than tasks relating to the pedagogical needs of their area. A situation that Gleeson and Knights (2008) argue has led to reluctance by teaching staff to take on middle manager roles.

Ofsted (2005) recognises that the funding change from FEFC systems to those of the LSC, together with the accompanying change in inspection and self-assessment frameworks that followed, has led to a fundamental change in the tasks expected of curriculum middle managers. Colleges have learned to be more businesslike, and their business is learning (Ofsted, 2005). Government sponsored functional literature has been produced which sets out management standards and discusses their application (FENTO, 1999, 2001, 2002). Indeed, there have been investigations of, and proposals for, management training in Further Education (DFES, 2002). All of these serve to clarify the Government steer on the purpose and management of the learning business. Indeed, Ofsted (2005) recognise that management within Further Education matters; it matters because so many learners use Further Education and recognise that a coherent provision in a local area depends on an effectively functioning FE sector if all learners are to have access to suitable opportunities.

The FENTO (2001) standards for middle managers, developed after extensive consultation with the sector, are built around four areas of manager activity; developing strategic practice; developing and sustaining learning and the learning environment; leading teams and the individual; managing resources. The phrase 'develop strategic practice' implies that the middle manager is involved in devising ways of implementing strategy, rather than being principally involved in making it; likewise 'sustain learning and the learning environment' comprehensively includes service and student service roles

as well as those directly involved with curriculum delivery. The final two categories are uncontentious; the combined focus on teams and the individual echoes Adair's (1983) three-fold role of managing the task, the team and the individual. Managing resources may be interpreted broadly: all the curriculum middle managers in this study managed staff as a resource and managed tangible resources, but not all had a budget of their own.

Colleges are making a historic shift from seeing themselves as isolated businesses to collaborating effectively, particularly with schools, within a local system that serves the needs of young people, adults, communities and employers (Ofsted, 2007). However, despite the evidence of increasing quality, it remains true that not all FE colleges are effectively led (Ofsted, 2008). There are powerful structural reasons why some colleges fall into inadequacy, with a clear link between successful learners and effective leadership and management. The best leaders and managers make sure there is teaching and learning of good quality so that learners get the qualifications they set out to achieve (Ofsted, 2008).

Participatory styles of management are taking some time to become embedded in colleges, often because middle managers have become used to senior managers deciding everything amongst themselves (Ofsted, 2008). However, in a small number of colleges, a more collaborative and inclusive style of management has helped to distribute responsibilities more effectively (Ofsted, 2008). It has given middle managers more ownership of their areas of responsibility through delegated budgets and negotiated business planning (Ofsted, 2008). However, generally, the roles and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers are far too complex, individual managers have too wide a span of responsibilities, and an intricate matrix of cross-college responsibilities leads to managers and staff not understanding fully who is responsible for what (Ofsted, 2008).

Ofsted (2007) suggest that the quality of leadership and strategic management tends to be weak where:

- "hierarchical structures constrain the amount of leadership managers and staff can show;

- leaders and managers do not analyse data on learner outcomes systematically enough in order to judge how well learners are doing on different courses within the college;

- communication between senior managers and staff is weak with too many staff not
  understanding the strategic priorities of the college or how they can contribute effectively to them;

- the lines of accountability and distribution of responsibilities are confused, managers have too wide a span of responsibilities and have to line-manage too many staff;

- leaders and managers set targets which are not challenging enough or do not link closely to the college's overall strategic priorities;

- leaders and managers place too much emphasis on supporting learners and teachers, and not enough on challenging them to aim higher and to achieve more;

- leaders and managers get bogged down in bureaucratic processes, often associated with finance, contract compliance or estates, and do not focus enough on raising attainment and improving quality" (Ofsted, 2008, p.25).

The traditional notion of leadership as leading from the front is not as nearly important in FE colleges as gaining the trust of organizational members as followers and gaining their permission to be lead. Thus, leadership depends on gaining legitmacy. This gaining of legitmacy is often through relentless attention to a multitude of varied, and what might be called mundane tasks (Ofsted, 2008).

<u>Summary</u>

Consideration of the changing role of the levels of management within colleges of Further Education has shaped and influenced the research project by contextualising the practical role of the curriculum middle manager in relation to those of senior management and has therefore helped to develop conceptual frameworks to further study the issue of role, power and authority.

Defining the Term Curriculum Middle Manager

<u>Introduction</u>

"Theory and practice are uneasy, uncomfortable bedfellows, particularly when one is attempting to understand the complexities of human behaviour in organisational settings, and still more so if the purpose in seeking to achieve such insight is to influence and improve practice. Such issues have been faced for nearly a century in industrial management and public administration" (Hughes *et al*, 1985, p.3).

As Hughes (1985) observes, the concept of the middle manager has been at times understood, in organisational terms, as the essence of what it is to be a manager and at other times as the traditional impediment between senior management and the workforce, with a number of positions between these polarities (Clegg and McAuley, 2005). However, the concept and discourse relating to curriculum middle managers within Further Education is also situated in the wider literature relating to that of management generally as well as that of management within education specifically. It is intended therefore to review both sets of literature under this section.

<u>Management</u>

Taylor (1914) in developing his theory of scientific management suggested that the emergence of the management cadre was crucial to organisational success. As the twentieth century progressed the concept of management developed and emerged as a profession in its own right (Dawson, 1994), with its own distinctive ideals and discourse (Clarke and Newman, 1997). At the heart of this discourse are a number of key concepts that claim to explain, "why businesses need managers" (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.34). These key concepts argue that:

> "The prime purpose of the manager is to ensure that the organisation serves its basic purpose … The manager must design and maintain the stability of his organisation's operation. The manager must, though the process of strategy formulation, ensure that his organisation adapts in a controlled way to its changing environment … The manager must ensure that the organisation serves those people who control it" (Lorsch et al., 1978, p.96).

The modernist constructions of the work of management have over the years shifted within these dominant themes. The classical understanding of the nature, role and purpose of management has been up-dated over the years by critiques of its "scientific" claims to linearity in management process, by attempts to humanize the concept, and by consideration of what managers really do (Clegg and McAuley, 2005). Although this has not particularly questioned the concept of management itself, radical critiques of the concept and legitimacy of management as an activity have also emerged (Clegg and McAuley, 2005). In this context, Clegg and McAuley (2005), argue that it is significant that a postmodern view of management suggests that it is:

> "… a category of human existence and sense making [that] is destined to become a fleeting image of order and … Management is merely a transparent image, an arbitrary interpretive constraint on free-flowing co modification … thus management disappears with the myth of human agency" (p.21).

While this offers a good insight into management as an activity, a more practical definition is put forward by Bennett (1995) when he suggests that:

> "Management consist of a mass of fragmented and disjointed activities, constant interruption, pressure for immediate answers to questions or solutions to problems, and a heavy reliance on word of mouth messages rather than measured and considered memoranda (p.30).

Such definitions of management serves to illustrate that management is not constituted by the number and scope of managerial jobs alone but also by the institutionalized meaning of management in a particular society (Clegg and McAuley, 2005). This being the case both the term middle manager and Further Education need to be considered within the same context.

Middle Managers

Gunter (2001) points out that there is a real need for the role of middle managers within education to be defined and understood as their work is directly linked to the success of their educational institution. But defining middle managers is not easy. Within the general literature reviewed, middle managers have been referred to as:

"A general manager who is responsible for a particular business unit at the intermediate level of the corporate hierarchy" (Uyterhoeven, 1972, p.136).

"A hierarchy of authority between the operating core and the apex" (Mintzberg, 1989, p.98).

"Those below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision" (Dopson et al, 1996, p.40).

Bennett (1995) in considering how the term middle manager is used in schools appears to support these views and further suggests that a middle manager is:

"… anyone with a promoted post in a secondary school with fewer than five responsibility
points, or below the status of senior teacher, is likely to be seen as middle management,
providing that they hold a defined responsibility area which involves them having to co-ordinate some aspect of the work of another teacher …" (Bennett, 1995, p.109).

This is a wide definition and would at first sight seem to encompass a large number of staff within a school. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the definition is so wide as to limit its credibility. Bennett (1995) seems to recognize this and goes on to link status to his definition, arguing that:
"The idea of middle management assumes a hierarchy of status in the organization, with those in senior positions providing leadership and direction and those in the middle
ranking positions having responsibility for spreading understanding of the leadership and support for that direction so that everyone works to the same objectives" (Bennett, 1995, p.137).

The literature surrounding middle managers would appear to support Bennett's (1995) view; suggesting that middle managers occupy a pivotal role between the strategic interests of senior management and the operational interests of front-line managers and employees. But while this provides an insight into the importance of the role, and may influence the definition of the term middle manager by setting important boundaries as to their organizational status, it fails to provide any practical insight into the use of the term.

 This view is supported by the work of Clegg and McAuley (2005) who suggest that to understand the term middle manager you have to understand the historical development of the role. Clegg and McAuley argue that an inspection of management literature since

the early 1970s highlights four dominant discourses that have shaped the development of middle management theory (Table 1 below).

Table 1: Four Dominant Discourses

First Discourse	From the 1970s middle management was depicted as representing core organisational values and that through this values orientation middle managers become an agent of organisational control. In this sense, the middle manager is depicted as the buffer between essentially transient senior management and the essentially instrumental orientation of the employee.
Second Discourse	Emerged in the late 1970s but became particularly powerful in the early 1980s and perhaps represents the nadir of middle management, represents the middle manager as essentially a self-interested agent of control. In this discourse, the middle manager is essentially redundant, a layer of noise between the vision and strategies of senior management, and the to-be-empowered employee.
Third Discourse	Became increasingly powerful in the mid-1980s, depicts the middle manager as a key actor in the development of the managerialist discourse. Here the middle manager is seen as a ''corporate bureaucrat'', agent of organisational control. In this discourse, the middle manager is essentially acting as the agent of senior management.
Fourth Discourse	Emerged in the 1980s but with a backward gaze at the discourse of the 1970s, is one in which the middle manager is conceptualised as transmitter of core strategic values through the enactment of the role as mentor, coach and guide. In this view, the middle manager is understood to be a repository of organisational knowledge who exercises essentially benign control through personal but organisationally located wisdom.

Adapted from Clegg and McAuley (2005).

While each of the four discourses identified by Clegg and McAuley (2005) clearly have unique characteristics by the very nature of the ever changing concept of management they may coexist within organizations. Indeed, the concept and role of middle managers also needs to be situated in the context of their individual educational sectors (Anderson et al, 2003). This is an important factor, for it is clear that schools, Further Education and higher education often have a different understanding of the nature and role of middle management in their own institutions (Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Briggs, 2005, Bennett, 2003).

Clegg and McAuley (2005) in considering the role of the middle manager in the context of higher education institutions argue that there are four "ideal-type" (detailed in Table 2 below).

Table 2: Ideal-Types

The ''Corporate'' HEI	This is the ''well-managed'' institution with a high emphasis on the capabilities of managers at every level in the organisation and in all aspects of the organisation's life. Typically there is a high emphasis on core purpose and vision, on issues of organisation design and structure and on strategic business planning, and that the HEI is seen to be aligned to issues of change in the environment through the use of conventional (tried-and-tested) techniques and models. In this essentially top-down model, middle management has a complex role. Firstly, as the university develops a corporate sense of itself, it may be that there is a process of ''delayering'' to diminish the perceived threat of more ''traditional'' middle management groups. Secondly, if the remaining middle management is understood by senior management to be well aligned to the corporate goals, then some of them — occupying key symbolic leadership roles — can be seen to enact core organisational goals. Thirdly, other middle managers can be seen to occupy core ''corporate bureaucratic'' roles in enacting the managerialist agenda. The conduct of management is therefore conceptualised around the first three of the discourses discussed above, although there may be some aspiration to the fourth.
The ''Strong Culture'' HEI	The HEI has a strong understanding of what it is to be this HEI. There is a strong and shared understanding of the purpose of the HEI and its place within the local, national and international environments. In this sort of HEI middle managers are the transmitters of the culture across boundaries (horizontally and vertically) and are concerned with organisational integration and the preservation of the sense of mission and purpose — i.e. the fourth discourse.
The ''Arena'' HEI	Here the language, rhetoric, discourse and claim to ''truth'' of middle management is one of many competing rhetorics within the HEI. It takes its place alongside the claims of senior management, academics (who themselves have different discourses of organisational life), administrators, the infrastructure experts (e.g. IT, facilities management), and so on, who constitute the arena of interest in the way the HEI ''should be run''. Sometimes their claims are transcendent, for example, when the deans or school directors are enabled to run their own faculty in their own way, and at other times other ''imperialising'' discourses come along that diminish the power of the rhetoric. Characteristically, we would suggest, the most comfortable discourse for the middle manager in HE is the fourth, namely transmitting core strategic values through mentoring, coaching and guiding. However, to achieve an imperialising discourse, chameleonlike the middle manager may adopt the discourse of managerialism, or the discourse of

	representing core organisational values.
The ''Communitarian'' or ''Collegial'' HEI	Essentially, the academics who comprise the beating heart of the organisation agree with one another that they will work with each other whilst retaining their individual interest in teaching and research, or whatever. They claim to create complex networks of interest and mutual involvement and would eschew any attempt at active management. Universities are in their traditions a bit like monasteries. Once accepted into the community of scholars, people are left to do their own thing as long as the traditional rituals and duties are observed''. In this model, any explicit discourse of ''management'' is eschewed (or accorded residual status in ''support services''), but in an implicit manner may be present in the form of the fourth discourse — the benign ''senior person'' who represents something of the university's values and who acts as mentor, as guide in troubled times.

Adapted from Clegg and McAuley (2005).

In detailing the four "ideal types" of institutions Cregg and McAuley (2005) recognize that there are a large number of often complex and contradictory discourses that attempt to dominate higher education institutions and ultimately the higher education sector. However, the discourse identified by Cregg and McAuley (2005) not only reflects that of the higher education sector but also provides an insight into that seen in the Further Education sector. Further Education institutions like higher education institutions and schools are under constant and changing internal and external pressures that affect both performance and the perception of performance (Briggs, 2005). It follows that Further Education institutions have to adapt to what Cregg and McAuley (2005) refer to as a "type" to meet these changing times – with these types reflecting that of higher education institutions (Briggs, 2005).

Further Education

Within Further Education, like that in schools and Higher Education, the term 'middle manager' is employed to denote a diverse group commonly referred to as 'middle management' (Gleeson and Knights, 2008). Specifically, within their various institutions, they are often known by one or more of the following broad titles: programme manager, programme developer, coordinator, head of area, sector head, curriculum leader or programme leader" (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). However, as previously discussed the term "middle manager" has a meaning that varies across educational sectors and systems (Anderson et al, 2003) and is often used in its widest sense in Further Education to denote those who have some form of management or leadership responsibility, albeit often at a very low level (Gleeson and Shain, 1999).

The wide range of job titles and roles makes it difficult to provide a simple definition of the term middle manager as it relates to colleges of Further Education. As discussed above, it is clear from the literature that they occupy a central and pivotal role within a

college (Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999) but as such writers as Clarke and Newman (1997) suggest:

> "… management is no longer the sole province of the most senior organizational tiers …, but has cascaded down organizations to relatively low paid, low status jobs with managerial titles and responsibilities" (p. 69).

I suggest that few writers would argue with Clarke and Newman's (1997) submission that more and more teaching staff are undertaking what have traditionally been seen as management responsibilities. This increase in managerial titles and responsibilities has certainly contributed to the confusion (Clarke and Newman, 1997). Indeed, a review of the dominant discourses on middle management as they relate to Further Education provides a framework to understand and gain an insight into the reasons behind this expansion.

Clegg and McAuley (2005), see Table 2 above, provide a framework to consider the dominant discourses relating to middle managers in higher education. Using this framework and contrasting relevant literature relating to Further Education, the development of the concept of the middle manager's role can be seen. In the first discourse, middle managers were seen as representing core organizational values and the concept is linked to the belief that they occupy a pivotal role in the organization and personally share its values and goals (Briggs, 2005). At the heart of the role within this discourse is the concept that middle managers can and will create a sense of shared organizational identity in which they:

> "… foster the linkages that intensive knowledge transfer requires" (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1998, p. 196).

As Ghoshal and Bartlett (1998) argue, this discourse suggests that middle managers must be able and willing to undertake the role of maintaining the internal systems of the organization, including leadership and team management tasks. But, in reality, Briggs (2005) suggests that the relatively low level nature of the actual roles created within college hierarchies during this period meant that individuals in such posts often perceived themselves as representing core academic values rather than the core organisational values associated with this discourse. Something that Hannagan *et al* (2007), Briggs (2005; 2004; 2003; 2002), Leader (2004) and Gleeson and Shain (1999) suggests is an indication that post-holders are disassociating themselves from the practices associated with their senior colleagues, preferring to negotiate with their teams and colleagues to affect change.

In the second discourse, middle managers were seen as self interested agents of control who during the 1990s continued to be committed to organisational values as discussed in the previous discourse. However, as their role developed, it was clear that they suffered from dysfunctional control caused by a premonition that the pivotal role has built into it a degree of impotence as middle managers are:

"… squeezed between demands of strategies they do not influence and the ambitions of increasingly independently minded employees" (Kanter, 1986, p.19).

Briggs (2005) recognizes this position, suggesting that during this period, especially post-Incorporation, the term middle manager was used widely within colleges of Further Education, causing organisational structures to grow with more and more layers of middle management. With such a range of roles falling within the term middle manager, a growing number of these roles lacked any real power or influence.

The third discourse reinvents middle managers as managerialist "corporate bureaucrats". Using the bases of the growth in the number of people in colleges who have a management role, or more accurately a management element to their job specification, this discourse argues that this group's urge for control has led to the development of "corporate bureaucracies"; with the idea of one voice and one logic that flows from the managerial discourse. Briggs (2003) recognises this period of change and suggests that the term middle manager was expanded within Further Education colleges under this discourse to include a wide range of non-academic and academic college staff into "middle managers". This, together with the erosion of the pivotal role by the effects of what Briggs (2003) refers to as the managerialist agenda, leads her to argue that during this period the term middle manager has been applied to roles with little or no real management power or role content; thus confusing the term even more. However, in relation to this study the confusion caused by the inclusion of non-academic staff is not problematic as the study concentrates on curriculum middle managers rather than general middle managers as in Briggs (2003) own study. That said, this discourse does highlight the need to define the scope of the term curriculum middle managers as it relates to this study.

In the fourth discourse, middle managers are seen as transmitters of organisational wisdom. Within this discourse middle managers are regarded as assets of the college, developing and maintaining core competencies within their areas of responsibility (Briggs, 2003). Critically, the term, and hence the role, is linked to the management of the tension between the long and short-term organisational aims of the college. Briggs (2003) suggests that this discourse again fails to provide either a clear meaning of the term middle manager or clarity the role within the hierarchical boundaries of college structures. However, what is clear is that within this discourse the role of the middle manager is linked to the advancement of core pedagogical values, as well as organisational goals. The role, and hence the term middle manager, displays these characteristics and represents a shift in focus. As Clegg and McAuley (2005) observe in relation to higher education, but is equally valid in relation to Further Education, this shift in focus:

"… is important because one of the dangers of the collegiate/managerialism [tension] is that it tends to down play some of the negative aspects associated with older forms of governance … there is a complex dialectic between pressures towards managerialism co

-existing in tension with collegiality, and between different and contested interpretations of core pedagogic concepts" (p.31).

The tensions identified by Clegg and McAuley (2005) appear to be central to the confusion surrounding the term middle manager within Further Education; a view shared by McTavish (2007) when considering management strategy within colleges of Further Education. However, the central position of the middle manager's role appears to remain a key feature of each of the four discourses discussed, with its central position not just a result of the middle managers' status within a hierarchy of management positions nor a reflection of their crucial communication role between senior management and lecturers but a recognition of the fact that college aims have to be translated into classroom practices and monitored for their effectiveness. This view is supported by Bennett (1995), who relating these ideas to school structures, argues that:

"The implication of the term [middle manager] is that there is a tier of management below them … which would suggest that middle management only operates where there is some kind of integrative structure through which the smaller units communicate with senior management" (p.105).

Bush (1997) defines structure as:

"… the formal pattern of relationships between people in organisations. It also expresses the ways in which individuals relate to each other in order to achieve organisational objectives" (p.45).

Using this definition of structure, Bennett (1995) suggests that middle management can only exist within a structure where lecturers communicate with their middle managers who in turn have a defined route to communicate with the senior management.
It is clear throughout each of the discourses discussed earlier that there has been a shift in workload following such major events as Incorporation. But also evident within the four discourses is a move from the language of management to the language of leadership. It is argued that this move has led to more and more people falling under the label "middle manager" (Anderson et al, 2003). However, while this label may accurately reflect the change in culture relating to what the organization sees as middle manager roles, it may not in reality reflect their true role within the organization. Gunter (2001) in considering this issue argues that:

"… the label of middle manager is inappropriate because it seeks to represent diverse work according to a unified structural dimension, and furthermore, by seeking to modernize teaching through the adoption of non-educational ways of working, such as line management, it challenges and undermines professional cultures" (p. 107).

This view is supported and to some degree extended by Simkins and Lumby (2002) who state that:

> "The traditional subject department led by an academic manager provides a particular focus for the tension between 'professional' and 'managerial' values, new organizational forms and new management roles suggest more complex patterns of response to change" (p. 18).

The changing and complex role identified by such writers as Hannagan et al (2007), McTavish (2007), Briggs (2005) and Simkins and Lumby (2002) would seem to add to the confusion as to the accepted meaning of the term "middle manager". Clearly, there is ambiguity about the meaning of the term, with middle managers being described as being caught in the 'crossfire' between the expectations of different levels in the management hierarchy (Bennett et al, 2003). This being the case, it is understandable that there is no consensus or simple definition of the term middle management in colleges of Further Education. Indeed, it maybe that the term can only be fully understood by understanding the tasks expected of and undertaken by middle managers (Hannagan et al, 2007).

Summary

Consideration of the term 'middle manager' has shaped and influenced the research project by highlighting the growth of the use of the term, the persistent confusion over the meaning of the term, and the need to understand the actual role of curriculum middle managers. It is argued that an in-depth review of the actual role that they perform will help to clarify the situation.

Role

Introduction

It was noted earlier that the use of the term "middle manager" has and continues to grow. This raises the question as to whether its use reflected a change in role or simply recognition of a pre-existing one. A number of writers (Hannagan *et al* 2007;   Briggs, 2005; Bennett, 2003; Armstrong et al, 1993) argue that it is important for role incumbents to fully understand their role and the expectations of others. This requires an understanding of the definition of role along with consideration of who defines a person's role. Indeed, Briggs (2003) adds to the importance of understanding the role of "middle managers" by identifying a number of stress factors affecting those working in Further Education. These for middle managers included:

" … the conflicting demands of management and teaching, the need for new skills such as financial management, a reduction in resources and an increase in the demands placed on the profession" (Briggs, 2003, p.55).

Understanding and consideration of role theory is therefore important if this study is to gain an insight and identify the key influences affecting the role of middle managers. However, the review of role theory is confined to definitions which can be used to examine the effect of changing, or ambiguous expectations of others and middle

managers themselves. Indeed, it is important to understand what role is and how it is defined before considering what tasks are likely to form the curriculum middle manager's responsibility. As Morgan and Turner (1976) point out:

"To us, the importance of role theory as a tool of analysis is that it directs our attention … to the properties of situations rather than to the properties of individuals" (p.8).

Kahn et al (1964) defines a person's office as their "position in terms of its relationship to others and the system as a whole" (p. 13). That is, the fundamental activities associated with the post itself. Kahn (1964) goes onto suggest that:

"These activities constitute the role to be performed, approximately, by anyone holding that office" (p.13).

Burnham (1969) supports this view but uses the term "position" rather than "office", stating that:
"… one might say that a person occupies a position, but performs a role …. A role is a dynamic aspect of a position" (p.73).

Hargreaves (1972) considers that the concept of role is much wider than that of position, using:

"… the concept of role in a broad way to refer to the behavioral expectations associated with a position" (p.71).

Rutherford (2005) in his review of the literature surrounding the term, argued that:
"… role is a dynamic rather than a static concept that shapes both the individual and their actions, generally in an unconscious and unreflecting manner. Roles give individuals a sense of purpose, helps them decide what they need to do and how they need to act, and are constantly defined and redefined by "significant others" (i.e., the various "role sets") in their lives" (p.278).

Clearly, there are those who argue that the term has a wide meaning and in practical terms is often associated with and defined by job descriptions detailing "a list of tasks or responsibilities" (John, 1980, p.47). However, such definitions are often criticized as de-contextualizing the post, making it difficult to view the contribution of the post-holder to the overall working of the educational organization (Wise, 1999). Ribbins (1988) recognizes this element when he defines role as:

"… the relationship between positions in a structure expressed in the behaviours considered appropriate rather than merely in the designated position themselves" (p.58).

Webb and Lyons (1992) consider the set of behaviors identified by Ribbins (1988) and argue that these are:

"… defined according to a range of expectations and reciprocal relationships set up by the nature of the organization and its internal 'culture' patterns" (p.99).

Wise (1999) argues that such definitions provide evidence that role is more than a mere list of tasks and responsibilities attached to a particular post within an organizational structure. In an administrative sense it may be linked with job descriptions, but role is not synonymous with job descriptions because the related tasks and responsibilities are only part of the role. Indeed, Bush (1991) argues that it has more to do with relationships with relevant others and the associated behaviours expected of the post-holder. Person specifications often, via such documents as organizational charts, list official relationships of the post-holder and other staff within the organization. However, in reality the predominant members of the role set may act very differently from those intended (Wise, 1999). As such, role must be thought of as dynamic and fluid because it is highly dependent on relationships and expectations for its definition. For as relationships change and develop so does the interpretation of the term role.

Wise (1999) summarizes the position and argues that:

"… an individual can be expected to perform in many different roles and role is the set of behaviours expected of an individual, in a particular situation, given their position within a structure as defined by their relationships with others, at that moment in time. But it must be remembered that, because role definition is dynamic, it is susceptible to differential perception which can cause problems" (p.24).

Clearly, Wise (1999) in her summary raises an important point as to who actually defines and affects the definition of role. This, together with the concept of the 'role set' is discussed in the next section.

Who defines Role

Handy (1993) in considering the expectations of and the behaviour associated with individual roles, states that:

> "Any individual, in any situation, occupies a role in relation to other people. Her performance in that role will depend on two set influences:

- The forces in herself – her personality, attributes, skills;

- The forces in the situation" (p.61).

The forces in the situation identified by Handy (1993) can be the expectations that others have of the role and therefore extends the definition to include the expectations that the members of the role set have of the focal role. Handy (1993) recognizes that there are many demands placed on middle managers by a wide range of individuals both inside and outside of the organisation. These individuals are referred to as the "role set" and comprise the group of people with whom middle managers "interact with in some non-trivial way" (Handy, p.61)

This view is supported and refined by Briggs (2003), who also recognizes and highlights that role is based upon the perceptions, understandings and values of a number of people. Briggs (2003) argues that:

"The role is defined by the role set, sometimes called role senders, who have a stake in the performance of the role. These are principally those whose 'offices' impact upon the role-holder through being adjacent in the organization structure or hierarchy, but can include anyone inside or outside the organization who is connected with the role-holder's behaviour. The role-holder is a member of the role set. All of the members of the role set develop beliefs about what the role-holder should and should not do. These expectations reflect their conceptions of the office, and of the role-holder's abilities" (Briggs, 2003, p.56).

While Briggs (2003) definition provides a comprehensive insight into those who influence and define role, it also highlights a number of potential problems. As Briggs (2003) stresses role is based upon the perceptions, understandings and values of a number of people. However, it must also be remembered that members of the role set each have a stake in the role: their own role, or their well being, in some way depends upon their perception of the role being carried out. This complex relationship can lead to a number of conflict situations. Both Briggs (2003) and Wise (1999) recognize that this can lead to:

- Role Pressure: "Where one or more members of the role set attempts to assure conformity with their expectations" (Briggs, 2003, p.56);

- Role Ambiguity: "… the role-holder does not know what to do, either through lack of information, or lack of understanding of how to comply" (Briggs, 2003, p.56);

- Role Overload: "… occurs when it is impossible for the person to complete all aspects of the sent roles within the time and resources available" (Briggs, 2003, p.57).

In a fast moving and often turbulent environment such as Further Education, with reduced resources and increased levels of accountability, it is easy to understand how the problems identified by Briggs (2003) can occur. However Bush (1995) makes an important point, suggesting that the extent to which each of these factors impinges on individuals' roles depends on many factors; suggesting that:

"An emphasis on structure leads to a notion of individuals being defined by their roles while a focus on people leads to the predominance of personality in determining behavior" (p.25).

Bullock (1988) agrees with these points and suggests that "there are two possible concepts of organization that affect role" (p.24). He argued that a structuralist approach would assume that people were independent of the organization and therefore a role was part of a hierarchy whereas an interactionist approach would assume that the "organization was negotiated by people and infer a more organic, human role" (Bullock, 1988, p.24).

Role-holder's Influence

"The dynamic nature of role is a result of the role definition being in a constant process of negotiation, which involves not only the expectations of others, but how the individual perceives these expectations and more importantly which he perceives as legitimate along with the manner in which he responds to them" (Wise, 1999, p.36).

Wise (1999) recognizes that the role-holder is central in influencing their own role. Ribbins (1988), supporting this view, suggests that "social actors do not merely 'take' roles as they are presented to them, but actively 'make' them what they are" (p.61). Hall (1997) agrees with this and argues that "an individual's performance in a job is as much about 'role-making' as 'role-taking'" (p.63).

In addition to their 'role-making' powers, Fondas and Stewart (1994) contend that role-holders, as managers, can and do, influence their role sets and, as such, "the manager can be the source of or otherwise affect the expectations sent by the role set" (p.88). Indeed, Fondas and Stewart (1994) go on to describe the impact a manager has on the expectations to which they will be subsequently held, as 'expectation enactment' which they define as:

"… impact that occurs as the result of the manager intentionally initiating opportunities to shape role expectations and as a result of automatic feedback and mutual adjustment between the focal manager and role senders. The word 'enactment' captures the notion of a manager actively, deliberately creating the environment rather than solely responding to it" (p.88).

While it is accepted that middle managers can and do influence their role, the true extent of this influence within a school or college situation must be called into question. The role set for curriculum middle managers within colleges of Further Education is diverse, with a number not being classed as educational professionals and yet being increasingly powerful. Best *et al* (1983) argue that:

"… it is tempting to exaggerate the degree of freedom which the individual can exercise over the shape of his role. This is especially true where roles are institutionalized in formal organizations like the school … The reality is of a dynamic, complex and often tense relationship between the free and rational actor on the one hand and formal structure of role expectations on the other" (p.54).

In addition to the issues discussed by Best *et al* (1983), Ribbins (1988) suggests that while schools do try to designate roles, the role written down is not always the same as the role enacted. In addition, Ribbins (1988) claims that:

"… the officially designated roles are by no means the only roles to be found in schools. On the contrary, there are a host of ascribed, achieved or confirmed informal roles which are an important part of the social structure of the school" (p.62).

Not only do informal roles add to the confusion regarding a person's role, but may at time be in conflict with the official roles and duties of the post-holder and may not have always been willingly accepted by the individual concerned Gleeson and Knights (2008).

Role Fulfillment

"The role expectations that the individual head of department possesses can often be in conflict with the way he is expected to carry out the job by members of the role set –
assistant teachers, other heads of department, senior staff, pupils technical assistants and parents - and while role conflict can be minimized by full discussion among all members, some, on both a personal and organizational level, is inevitable" (Morris and Dennison, 1982, p.38).

Role fulfillment can be problematic when there is a clash between other people's expectations of role and the role-holder's own self-concept (Wise, 1999). The difficulty of differential role perception is further highlighted by Howard (1988), who argues that:

"… senior management see the provision of the education process as the prima facie task … Middle and non-management see the role of management as providing direction and co-ordination of the day to day process of the school" (p.115).

Defining a person's role within a particular situation at a given time is difficult. The different perceptions of what the role should be and whether it is being fulfilled are likely to be a potential cause of disharmony and stress (Hannagan et al, 2007). Handy (1993) discusses the various types of disharmony that may occur and suggests that:

"Role ambiguity results when there is some uncertainty in the minds, either of the focal person or of the members of his role set, as to precisely what his role is at any given time. … or if [the role-holders] conception of the role differs from that of the others in the role set, there will be a degree of role ambiguity" (p.63).

"Role incompatibility results when the expectations of the members of the role set are well-known but are incompatible as features of the same role" (p.65).

"Role conflict results from the necessity for a person to carry out one or more roles in the same situation. The expectations of each role may be quite clear and the expectations be compatible for each role, but the roles themselves may be in conflict" (p.65).

Howard (1988) in considering role conflict noted that "… role conflict was more prevalent in middle management than at either top or lower levels of management" (p.94). Briggs (2003) supports this view and suggests that in relation to middle managers:

> "… it is likely that the role-holder will experience role ambiguity; the role may have 'moved on' without the role-holder being fully aware of the new expectations. The conflicting paradigms of professionalism and managerialism provide a good example of managers being in situations where they feel that their moral values are under threat, thus experiencing person-role conflict. Above all, in a situation of reduced resource and increased levels of accountability, managers are likely to experience role overload: they may understand the role to a reasonable extent, they may agree with what is to be performed, but they may simply not have the time or resources to carry it out" (p.57).

This reflects the traditional view put forward by Hargreaves (1975) who, in considering the role of head of department in schools, identified eight basic forms of role strain or conflict, these included:

- simultaneously occupying two positions whose roles are incompatible;

- lack of consensus among the occupants of a position about the content of the role;

- lack of consensus among the occupants of one of the complementary role positions;

- conception of role which conflicts with the expectations of a role partner;

- role partners having conflicting expectations;

- a single role partner having conflicting expectations;

- unclear role expectations;

- lack of the qualities required for adequate role performance

(Hargreaves, 1975, p.54).

Many of the forms of role strain identified by Hargreaves (1975) are expansions of definitions discussed earlier. However, they highlight the number of potential sources of conflict facing the middle manager.

In considering the issue of complying with role expectations Ribbins (1988) comments that there were three different ways in which an individual post-holder may appear to be complying with demands:

1. Role commitment – a situation in which the formal requirements of the role are accepted as ones that must be met but in which role performance are not personally valued;

2. Role attachment – a situation in which role performance is identified with own values and needs as a person;

3. Role distance – describes the situation in which an actor plays the role adequately but in a more-or-less offhand manner
(Ribbins, 1988, p.62).

However, despite ways to comply with others' expectations, some middle managers do not change their behaviour and practices, and thus come into conflict with others in their role-set. That said, Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) during their research into effective and ineffective department heads found that in most cases ineffective department heads could not be classified as simply not doing their job because they had a different perception of their role.

Bennett et al (2003), considering the development of the concept of role, defined it as what an individual, the role holder, understands their job to be. Clearly, this definition fits neatly into the idea that a person's role can be defined from such formal requirements as job description, contract of employment etc. However, while this definition may represent the formal legal view, in reality to understand a person's role it can be much more important to consider what the role holder perceives as the expectations of a range of different people with whom they interact when carrying out their job. The expectations of what Bennett *et al* (2003) refer to as the "role set" clearly impacts greatly on how the role holder enacts their role and ultimately on their experience, values and beliefs. As Bennett et al (2003) point out:

"… when an individual is subject to a range of expectations, deriving from
formal requirements, a range of colleagues, and their personal experience and value
system, it is likely that there will be conflicting expectations that the role holder has
to resolve in order for them to be able to carry out their work" (p.25).

However, while Bennett highlights the expectations of others as the most significant influence affecting the role of academic middle managers, Leader (2004), Briggs (2003, 2002, 2001), Watson and Crossley (2001), and Gleeson and Shain (1999) all argue that the concept of control is in reality the key to understanding the role of middle managers in Further Education. They suggest that control is at the heart of the long running conflict between lecturers in defence of professional and pedagogic values, and senior managers' need since Incorporation to promote the managerial 'bottom line'. In fact, a number of

writers (Gleeson and Knights 2008; Hannagan et al, 2007; Briggs, 2005, 2003, 2002, 2001; Leader, 2004; Watson and Crossley, 2001; Gleeson and Shain, 1999) agree that while Incorporation allowed colleges a degree of autonomy in some areas of their business, the control measures needed to ensure their financial viability and security have fundamentally impacted in the area of managerial responsibility and therefore curriculum middle managers' role. This view is typified by Gleeson and Shain (1999) who point out that:

> "Despite an increase in autonomy, FE colleges are in reality controlled by central government principally through the FEFC's funding mechanisms, The new funding formula, based on the principle of 'more for less', means that funds may be 'clawed back', if colleges fail to meet targets, retain students or if students do not successfully complete courses" (p. 463).

In practical terms, this has meant that the need for senior managers to ensure the financial security of their college has necessitated a fundamental change of organizational values and culture within colleges (Briggs, 2005). This, again in practical terms, has manifested itself in the perceived need to ensure income generation and this focus is now seen as outweighing almost any other concern (McTavish, 2007).

An interesting and relevant point, linked to the comments made earlier by Briggs (2003), is that made by Bullock (1988) who contends that:

> "The limited amount of time available for heads of department to perform their various roles was claimed to be an unreasonable constraint, and it was apparent that potential role conflict was built into their role" (p.63).

Wise (1999) supports this view arguing that previous research had shown that academic middle managers were given very little time to complete the management tasks expected of them and "this research has found that middle managers have not been given more time to complete these tasks" (p.372).

Leadership

During the 1980s and early part of the 1990s the traditional role of academic middle managers in schools centered on that of subject leader. While such academic middle managers routinely accepted the administration of their department or management of their areas resources, there was very limited management of staff (Wise, 1999). The literature related to this period highlighted this point:

> "Many department heads did not conceive of themselves as managers having responsibilities for others and being in positions of leadership (Earley and Fletcher -Campbell, 1989, p.103);

> "Many subject leaders confuse administration with leadership and take refuge in their

administrative work to avoid some of the inevitable problems arising, for example, from enhanced monitoring and evaluation of the work of professional colleagues (Glover et al, 1998a, p.7);

" Most people appointed to HoD posts … were appointed because they were successful teachers, not because they displayed any managerial expertise or recognized managerial potential … The HoD saw his/her role as that of subject specialist (Adey, 2000, p.425);

"Middle managers … have often been good administrators but not always good at learning or management" (Harvey, 2002, p.33).

While the literature identifies that academic middle managers lack leadership experience, Brown and Rutherford (1996) comment that:

"… educational leaders must learn to lead, not from the top of the traditional pyramid of authority in schools, but from the centre of a web of inter personal relationships … with people rather than through them…. [leadership] must be grounded in their professional expertise rather than their line of authority" (p.3).

Bush (2004) in discussing the changing role of academic middle leaders' in schools suggests that there has been a gradual acceptance of the leadership role, arguing that:

"The development of the middle leaders' role during the past 15 years has seen a gradual shift from a focus on heads of department as senior teachers, acting as role models for their colleagues, through an acceptance of the requirement to undertake often routine administrative or managerial responsibilities, then to a wider recognition of the need to lead a professional team of subject specialists" (p.5).

The changing aspect of the role of middle leaders is also recognized by Wilkinson (2002) when he suggests that there has been a "… tremendous swing towards leading people rather than managing resources" (p.18). But what is leadership? Yukl (1994) argues that:
"The definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no 'correct' definition" (p.4).

Gronn (2000) supports this view and states that "leadership is a phenomenon in the eye of the beholder" (p.5). However, he then goes onto suggest that "the potential for leadership is present in the flow of activities in which a set of organization members find themselves enmeshed" (p.19).

This point is supported by the work of Adey (2000) who in considering the role of Heads of Department in schools identified 35 discrete areas of responsibility, each with leadership potential. He categorized the 35 discrete areas under the following five headings:

- Teaching, learning and curriculum;
- Monitoring, evaluating and improving;
- People and relationships;
- Monitoring, evaluating and improving;
- Managing resources and accountability.

In considering the role of curriculum middle managers in colleges of Further Education Gleeson (2001) acknowledges the general categories identified by Adey (2000). However, Gleeson (2001) makes an important point in relation to Further Education when he stresses that the changing role of senior managers has, due to the need to change their own roles as discussed earlier, led to a limitation of some of these aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role. Leader (2004) supports this view and contends that this has in turn impacted on the leadership role of the middle manager and argues that:

> "… senior management deem that middle manager's role as transactional leadership – an operational or administrative function through which strategy is translated into action" (p. 68).

Leader would appear to be arguing that Incorporation has limited the leadership role of the middle manager to that of supervising operational or administrative policy, particularly in relation to matters linked to funding. Briggs (2005, 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001) in all five of her papers not only supports Leader's (2004) argument but also goes on to suggest that middle managers in Further Education now use their leadership role to ensure financial variability within their department, rather than their pre-Incorporation leadership role of ensuring the quality of teaching within their department. Briggs (2003) makes an important point suggesting that:

> "It might be argued that the main impediment to leadership among middle managers is their reluctance to acknowledge and grasp leadership, to reconcile the term to their own perception of their role: 'I would class myself as a facilitator, rather than a leader' (Curriculum manager CFGC: 27)" (p.203).

But this has not always been the case. Most researchers (Gleeson and Knights, 2008; Leader, 2004; Briggs 2005, 2003, 2002, 2001; Watson and Crossley, 2001), accept that since Incorporation in 1992, principals and those in senior management positions have adopted a role which is invested with greater power than previously, distant from other staff, focused on external relations and systems supporting activities other than teaching and learning. Their activity and values have been conceived as managerialist (Randle and Brady, 1997) including 'hard' and 'soft variants' of managerialism (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) and 'new' managerialist (Briggs, 2001). Overall, the analysis has been somewhat hostile, depicting a first wave of oppressive and competition-driven leadership (managerialism) replaced by a second wave of 'light touch' managerialism, which merely replaced overt control of lecturers by subtle manipulation.

However, middle managers have not attracted the same degree of hostility. They have, in the earlier literature (Briggs, 2001: Shain and Gleeson, 1999), been seen as focusing

largely on issues of teaching and learning and providing a vital bridge between lecturers and senior staff, and between programme area, department or faculty and external stakeholders (Briggs, 2001). Middle managers' responses during this early period have been analyzed as both accepting and rejecting change, metamorphosing the implementation of some aspects of change to reflect their values and beliefs (Shain and Gleeson, 1999).

But is this still the case? The more recent research of Gleeson and Knights (2008), Briggs (2005; 2003; 2002), Leader (2004) and Watson and Crossley (2001) suggests not. The overall picture which now emerges is one of leadership and management roles strongly differentiated by hierarchy, those at different levels not only undertaking different activities but impelled by different values. However, whereas previously middle managers had been seen as focusing in on issues relating to teaching and learning, and could therefore be seen as very much relating to the values of the teaching staff, their values now seem more linked to those of the more senior management members. Briggs (2001) points out that:

> "… middle managers in schools and colleges do not create the vision or set out the strategies for the institution, although they may act in an advisory capacity. Whilst the main concern for subject leaders in schools is to provide professional leadership for their subject, managers occupying similar roles in Further Education may be becoming more concerned with their role in operating the college as a business" (p.226).

Certainly, on the face of it her argument is quite persuasive. It is accepted that Incorporation not only changed the role of the Principal within Further Educational colleges (Withers, 2000) but also that of other SMT members (Gleeson, 2001). Clearly, their new roles primarily focus on the generation of income though the meeting of targets rather than tackling issues relating to the quality of teaching and the former can be directly linked to the issue of control (McTavish, 2007). However, the issue of control is not the complete story. Undoubtedly, it is an important factor in understanding the new role of middle managers within Further Education, but control is only one of several factors that interlink into the issue of job role.

Indeed, both Leader (2004) and Briggs (2001) go onto look at the issue of role definition and role conflict and consider whether the autonomy and authority of the new role actually allows middle mangers to do their job effectively. Leader (2004) and Briggs (2001) further explore the difficulty of the shift from "professional paradigm" to "managerial paradigm" discussed earlier under the issue of control. Their work ultimately provokes the question of whether it is still possible for middle managers in Further Education to lead from the middle?

Clearly this is not only a very important question but as is evident from the fundamental nature of the question for the answer to be yes we would need to accept that the leadership of the subject and subject team has been truly exchanged for a more

fundamental operational role in the incorporated college (Hannagan et al, 2007). Indeed, on a more fundamental level we would have to view professionalism and managerialism as opposed and unable to exist together (Gleeson and Shain, 1999); clearly, something that is still being argued (Gleeson and Knights, 2008; Hannagan et al, 2007; Leader, 2004; Briggs 2005, 2003, 2002, 2001; Watson and Crossley, 2001; Gleeson and Shain, 1999).

Leader (2004) argues that while it is crucial for the success of Further Education that the contribution of middle managers is perceived to be more extensive than merely paying 'lip service' to college strategic and operational policies, it would appear that in reality the lack of a clear role definition has resulted in the quite the opposite. This view appears to be supported by Briggs (2002), who drawing on the work of Glover *et al* (1998) but more heavily on the work of Bennett (1995), suggests that:

> "… the term 'middle management' implies a hierarchy, with senior managers creating the vision for the organisation, and middle managers articulating it in practical terms. This system assumes a downward flow of authority from the leader, given in order to promote what the leader seeks … Such role-holders may not be included on a regular basis in senior management decision-making and policy formation, yet the nature of their role means that they may have considerable 'local' knowledge, power and autonomy" (p.67).

Briggs (2002) not only appears to recognise the dual identity aspect of the role of middle manager, that is academic colleague and line-manager, but also identifies the downward flow of authority or power, which ultimately affects their ability to lead.

While there are a number of factors that clearly affect the curriculum middle managers' ability to lead, there is little doubt that 'leadership' is an important characteristic of their role (Gleeson and Knights, 2008; Briggs, 2003). This being the case, it becomes important to understand the practical inter-play of leadership with management, especially as it relates to the every day role and tasks that curriculum middle managers perform (Briggs, 2003; Wise; 1999). Fullen (1991) suggests that:

> "… leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration, whereas, management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, working with people" (p.157).

This view is supported by Hales (1993) who comments that:

> "Since management is, inter-alia, the management of other people, so a critical, if not defining, management task is that of influencing or modifying the behaviour of others" (p.17).

This is an important point, for as discussed earlier one of the most important elements of the role of the curriculum middle manager is working with and though others to achieve organisational goals; particularly relating to income generation (McTavish, 2007).

Indeed, it also a fundamental element of the idea that curriculum middle managers occupy a 'pivotal' role within colleges (Briggs, 2005). In practical terms, Gold (1998) suggests that this element of the academic middle managers role:

"… combines subject expertise with an ability to bring out that knowledge in other people … they may not be the most knowledgeable people in their subject, but they may well be the most knowledgeable people about how to teach it and how to ensure that it is well taught" (p.xiii).

However the extent of the curriculum middle managers leadership role varies according to their exact role within the college hierarchy (Hannagan et al, 2007). That is, what actual tasks are expected from their particular job role. In relation to the role of curriculum middle managers in Further Education, Briggs (2003) argues that her findings suggest that:

"In none of the situations [observed] are the managers in a position to assert themselves as leaders; the first does not wish to lead, the second is uncertain about the areas in which it is appropriate to lead, the third may fear to lead, and the last is uncertain as to who will follow" (p.203).

If leadership is, as Quinley et al (1995) suggests, the action of using power to influence others in the accomplishment of important organisational objectives, it would appear that the managers quoted by Briggs (2003) are not equipped to lead. Power and authority are often dictated by the resources a manager has control over (Wise, 1999). Briggs (2003) reports that senior managers within her study perceived that middle managers were given "the autonomy and resources that they need to do the job" (p.203). However, curriculum middle managers from the same colleges reported lack of authority over the areas in which they need to work. Clearly, if curriculum middle managers are to take on dispersed leadership roles, such issues need to be addressed.

Summary

Reviewing the issue of 'role' has shaped and influenced the research project in a number of ways. Firstly, it raised the question of the kind and actual nature of the tasks undertaken by curriculum middle managers. Secondly, it promoted reflection on how the actual tasks performed by curriculum middle manager compare to those expected by their 'role set'. Finally, it considered and reflected upon the dual nature of the role, highlighting the importance of both aspects of the role.

Classification of Tasks Undertaken by a Curriculum Middle Manager

Introduction

A number of writers (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999; Bennett, 1995; Earley, 1992; Hughes, 1985; Brydson, 1983; Lambert, 1972) propose models that attempt to outline the tasks

expected of curriculum middle managers. The basis of these models vary, a number are based on tasks gathered from observations of middle managers, and others are drawn from a more theoretical base.

Hughes (1985) in reviewing aspects of the role of head teachers argued the importance of distinguishing between the technical or professional aspect and the executive or administrative aspect. He proposed the following division:

Professional:

- Professional guidance to staff;
- Counselling pupils, parents and others;
- Personal teaching;
- Acting as spokesperson for the school on relevant educational matters;
- Involvement in external professional activities.

Executive:

- Allocative and co-ordinating functions within school;
- Relationships with the governing body, and with the LEA as employing authority

(Hughes, 1985, p.279).

This is a logical, if a little simplistic division of tasks but it can be applied to those tasks undertaken by academic middle managers. Those activities or tasks that can be linked to the teacher's professional training are simply categorized under the "professional" heading. While those tasks linked to the administration of the academic middle managers area are categorized as "professional".

Hughes (1985) classification, while easy to apply to the role of curriculum middle managers, lacks the depth and scope to view the complex tasks of post-Incorporation middle managers. Ernest (1989) in an attempt to widen the scope of the classification proposed four categories:

- Representation function – representing the department head; liasing with other departments; pastoral organisation; and parents;
- Management of human resources – leading team; selection of new staff;
- Managing the curriculum – planning the curriculum; organising the classes;
- Management of physical resources – budgeting

(Ernest, 1989, p.323).

If the term "Representation Function" is considered as the "Management of Interfaces" then the grouping of responsibilities of academic middle managers relates to what they managing rather than any skill required to deal with the task as used by Hughes (1985).

Brydson (1983), in reviewing the work of Taylor (1964), suggested the following four quadrants to consider the tasks undertaken by academic middle managers:

- Instrumental Academic;
- Instrumental Institutional;
- Expressive Academic;
- Expressive Institutional.

To aid the conceptualization of the classification, a diagram detailing Brydon's model is shown in Figure 1 below.
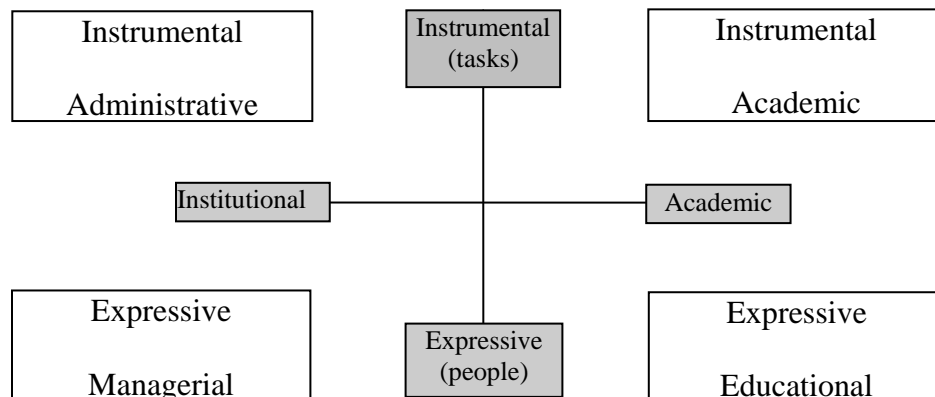
Figure 1: Classification of tasks from Brydson (1983, p.9).

Brydson (1983) expands on how each of the categories that he has identified relates to those tasks completed by academic middle managers.

Instrumental Academic Functions:

- Academic knowledge of education and department's subject;
- Aims and courses;
- Teaching methodology.

Instrumental Administrative Functions:
- Department accommodation;
- Decisions about resources;
- Ordering and production;
- Storage and use;
- Departmental records.

Expressive Managerial Functions:

- Leading a departmental team;
- Delegation;

- Professional development of departmental staff;
- Representing the department.

Expressive Educational Functions:

- Pupil diagnosis;
- Learning milieu;
- Discipline;
- Pupil attainment;
- Guidance for pupils and parents
(Brydson, 1983, pp.11-15).

Brydson's (1983) model is developed from a consideration of the fundamental dimensions of departmental management, considering the management of "tasks" to that of "people" and of the management of institutional aspects to that of the individual. It provides a realistic and flexible model to consider the often changing role of curriculum middle managers.

Wise (1999) supports the fundamental aspects of this model, arguing that:

"There is evidence that a classification divided into Academic, Administrative, Managerial and Educational where the model is based upon the fundamental constructs of being a continuum between people and things as one dimension and continuum between institutional and academic aspects as the other dimension has some grounding in theory" (p.63).

Wise (1999), in her research project, makes a few small alterations to the model, treating the "People Related" aspect as including all people pertinent and influential within the education system and the "Institutional" aspect as those agencies that work with the educational institution as part of the educational establishment. Wise (1999) stresses that:

"The model is based upon the idea that all middle management responsibilities fall somewhere on a continuum according to whether they are principally concerned with the management of people or tasks. Responsibilities can also be classified according to whether they are principally concerned with the management of institutional or individual ssues. This gives rise to a model with four quadrants. This model can readily adapt to changes within the education system and can be applied to cross-curricular co-ordinators as well as to heads of subject departments" (p.2).

In order to conceptualise the model, it is presented in Figure 2.

Administrative	Task Related	Academic

Institutional — Individual

Managerial	People Related	Educational
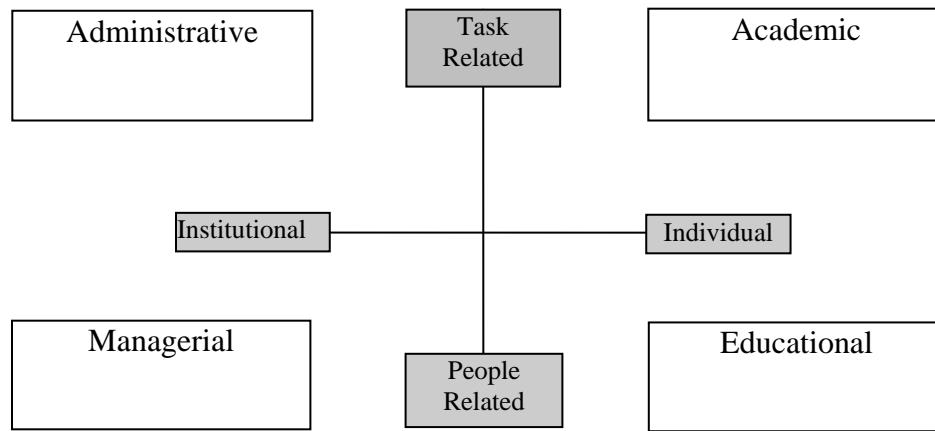
Figure 2: Classification of tasks from Wise (1999).

The model would appear to allow each task to be considered in their relation to its fundamental dimension and would therefore limit the number of tasks potentially falling into two categories or classifications. In addition, I would suggest that few would disagree with Wise (1997) when she argues that "this model can readily adapt to changes within the education system" (p.2) and is therefore still relevant today, something that is particularly important in relation to the ever changing and diverse environment of colleges of Further Education.

Wise (1999) provides further explanation of the structure of the model when she explains that:

> "Both instrumental, or task-related, areas are concerned with the organisational paperwork, non-personnel aspects of the role. The 'Academic' tasks are those which are directly supportive of the learning of the pupils within the subject whilst the 'Administrative' tasks are concerned with the whole school aspects of the role, paperwork which is not directly related to the learning process.
>
> There are two expressive, 'people-centred' areas within the model. The 'Managerial' quadrant is about the monitoring and development of staff leading toward fulfilment of institutional aims as well as professional development. The 'Educational' quadrant concerns the monitoring of work, progress and development of pupils as individuals" (p.2).

The advantage of a conceptual model for the classification of the tasks and responsibilities of the curriculum middle manager is that each of the quadrants has certain fundamental characteristics which can be applied to new tasks and responsibilities as they arise. In relation to this study, it is suggested that by utilizing the classification of roles developed by Briggs (2003), discussed earlier under role, with the model developed by

Wise (1999), this will provide a frame-work to consider the nature of the tasks undertaken by curriculum middle managers.

But what tasks fall within each of the areas of the model?

Instrumental Areas

The instrumental areas in the classification are 'Administrative' and 'Academic'. They are both linked to the organisational paperwork and non-personnel aspects of the role. 'Academic' tasks are those which directly support learning while 'Administrative' tasks are concerned with whole school/college aspects of the role (Wise, 1999).

Academic Tasks

The tasks placed in this category are generally not contentious and are accepted by most writers as being part of an academic middle manager's role (Wise, 1999; Bennett, 1995; Bullock, 1988; Lambert, 1972). Lambert identifies certain tasks that fall into this category. These are:

> "… the development and carrying out of school policy; the formulation of department policy and aims and objectives for the department: the preparation of the syllabus and its regular review; sole responsibility for the syllabus; and the annual review of the syllabus. In connection with curriculum development, the role-functions identified were the development of new curricula and teaching techniques; keeping abreast of contemporary developments; and the organisation of educational visits and visiting speakers" (p.79).

The role of innovator and manager of change and the tasks associated with this role would appear to fit into this category (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999). However, while such tasks as curriculum review, innovation and development clearly fall within this category, the mere production of policy is not enough (Glover, 1994).

Administrative Tasks

The tasks within this category can be contentious, with both role-holders and writers disagreeing as to whether or not they are an integral part of an academic middle managers role (Wise, 1999; Bullock, 1988; Lambert, 1972). Lambert suggests that the tasks within this category are concerned with:

> "… the choice and care of textbooks, apparatus and materials, stock and audio-visual aids;   with the deployment of teaching staff and ancillaries. Among the sundry functions in this category were such matters as testing, timetable, safety, and records and reports" (p.110).

The list of tasks provided by Lambert (1972) is by no means intended to be a definitive list of tasks within this category. Indeed, the conflict as to what tasks are included is

illustrated by the findings of Adams (1991) who argues that there is "… a conflict between administration (minor clerical tasks) and management" (p.72). However, other writers (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999; Bennett, 1995) suggest that this is not a real issue as the tasks within this category can be separated on the basis of their fundamental objective. That is, the Administrative area has an institutional component that highlights the need for academic middle managers to contribute to whole-school/college policies. As Bennett (1995) argues:

"… middle managers should be concerned with spreading the vision and delivering it in practice in the wide range of classroom and other activities" (p.19).

Briggs (2003) supports this view, incorporating such tasks into the "Corporate Agent" aspect of her view of the curriculum middle manager role.

Expressive Areas

There are two expressive areas within the model; Managerial and Educational. Both are 'people centered' and could be considered as 'managerial'. However, there is a distinction in that Managerial concerns the monitoring and development of staff leading towards better fulfillment of the institutional aims as well as developing themselves as professionals, and Educational concerns the monitoring of work, progress and development of students as individuals (Wise, 1999). However, while it is clear from the literature that instrumental or task-centered roles are considered straightforward, expressive or person-centered roles are complicated and cause academic middle managers the biggest problems (Wise, 1999). Wise observes that:

"… anything that seemed to indicate the supervision or control of staff seemed to cause heads of department some concern…. There is evidence of both role conflict, and role ambiguity…. any consensus on the head of department's role within the expressive area is mistaken" (p.71).

This view is supported by Briggs (2003), who in relation to colleges of Further Education goes on to suggest that due to the changes in curriculum middle managers role following Incorporation, the problems associated with tasks that fall in this area have increased significantly; particularly as they relate to 'people problems'.

Managerial Tasks
"… [the academic middle managers] task is to weld a team of teachers together and ensure that a department works towards a set of agreed and clearly understood objectives" (Tyldesley, 1984, p.254).

While a number of writers agree that a large proportion of the tasks under this heading relate to the leading and managing of a team of professional colleagues (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999; Bennett, 1995), they also suggest that the breath of those tasks is ever increasing, with a greater emphasis being placed on monitoring teachers' work and

assisting with their professional development (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999). Wise (1999) suggests that the types of tasks that fall within the Managerial area include:

- Functions which bring the head of department into contact with people in an institutional context;
- Holding regular departmental meetings;
- The leadership function such as setting a good example of teaching, inspiring and guiding the department;
- Assisting young teachers, and the taking of responsibility for probationers;
- Appointment of department staff;
- Supervision of staff methods of teaching;
- Sitting in at lessons of departmental staff (for the purpose of general supervision);
- Responsibility for the work of the department;
- Assessing the teaching competence of departmental staff (p.71).

Both Wise (1999) and Briggs (2003) report unwillingness by curriculum middle managers to undertake the monitoring tasks associated with this area of the model. However, while there may be unwillingness by those undertaking the tasks, it is clear that the expectations of the senior management team are that curriculum middle managers will control teacher behaviour and professional practice within their area or department (Briggs, 2005, 2003).

Educational Tasks

"Effective classroom management is the key to effective student learning. As head of department you will be expected not only to ensure effective learning in your own classroom but to know what is going on in other classrooms" (Donnelly, 1990, p.38).

Wise (1999) supports the view that this is an important task within this area of the model, but adds that academic middle managers generally try to avoid this task as they often find it "an embarrassing activity" (p.73). However, this view is not shared by Briggs (2003) who suggests that curriculum middle managers within Further Education accept this as a fundamental task within their role.

Wise (1999) suggests that the types of tasks that fall within the Educational area include:

- Liaison with those responsible for careers work and careers advice;
- Out of school activities and overseas journeys;
- Parents' evenings;
- Checking of progress through the syllabus;
- Standardization of methods of marking;
- Direction of homework;
- Dealing with the disciplinary problems of departmental staff (p.71).

Briggs (2003) recognises the fundamental nature of the tasks identified above, commenting that curriculum middle managers need to take a fair share of the responsibility for ensuring that all students' abilities are properly diagnosed, that students are placed on appropriate courses and that their progress is systematically monitored. However, while the curriculum middle manager may be responsible for these tasks, they do not have to do it all, some can be delegated (Briggs, 2003). Table 3 below provides a normative list of tasks under the four headings of the model. Clearly, as discussed previously, there are numerous tasks expected of the curriculum middle manager and figure 4 only represents an indication of the scope of the tasks associated with the role.

Table 3: Normative List of Tasks (Wise, 1999)

Academic	Administrative	Managerial	Educational
	Manage finances allocated;	Take a major part in appointment of new staff;	Teach the subject;
	Ensure maintenance of teaching areas;	Lead & motivate a team of teachers;	Liaise with parents;
Provide a structured syllabus for all age & ability groups;	Liaise with outside agencies;	Liaise between senior management & assistant teachers;	Liaise with feeder schools;
Participate in development planning at a dept. & school level;	Maintain staff records & write references for dept. staff;	Accept line management responsibility to a member of senior management;	Carry out any cross-curricular responsibilities;
Decide on the external exam syllabuses & options within the syllabus to be taught by the dept. & carry out necessary admin;		Hold regular, full meetings of the dept. together with informal meetings and sub-meetings as occasion demands;	Supervise the preparation & recording of all internal assessments including monitoring of books & marking;
Liaise with other heads of dept. & implement integrated courses if appropriate;		Monitor the progress of students on teaching practice and contribute to (ITT);	
		Help to ensure good general working conditions for staff;	
Manage books &	Prepare	Direct or co-	

resources so that appropriate materials are available when required;	requisitions, check the arrival & inventory of new books and materials, keep the necessary stock books and perform the annual stocktaking & checking;	ordinate the work of teachers in the dept., monitor their work e.g though classroom obs & accept responsibility for the control of their behaviour & professional practice within the dept;	
Ensure ongoing curriculum review, innovation & development, & lead dept. curriculum planning;	Assess the financial needs of the dept., present the case at the beg. of each financial year and make known any current adjustment of need.	Promote & plan the professional development of all dept. staff, especially probationary teachers as well as providing guidance & support;	Oversee the management of pupils ie monitoring progress by systematic record-keeping, disciplining, encouraging & reporting.
Advise senior management on matters relating to the subject & its place in the curriculum;		Plan deployment of staff to take account of individual strengths & weaknesses, skills & talents, career development as well as school needs;	
Maintain knowledge of the changing nature of the subject, & stay abreast of specialist content & method.		Assist in school leadership, contribute to whole-school decision making including whole school curriculum planning & implementation of whole-school policies.	

Summary

This framework has shaped and influenced the research project by providing both a conceptual model for the classification of the tasks and responsibilities of the curriculum middle manager and addressing a number of the concerns raised in the literature over the generic nature of the tasks undertaken.

Power/Authority/Autonomy

As discussed earlier, the role of the curriculum middle manager is wide and includes the management of staff as well as classroom management. This is seen as potentially problematic in colleges, like schools, where those who teach may be thought of as equal professionals. However, Wise (1999) suggests that:

> "… the manager can manage even though he is thought of as an 'equal' professional because of the role they inhabit…. Many staff confuse being an equal professional with equality of managerial power and responsibility" (p.49).

Lambert (1972) adds to this view and argues that authority is "… diametrically opposed to the very organizational principles of control and co-ordination by supervision" (p.11) However, Gunter (2001) argues that the existing research on middle managers looks more at their role and function and less at power. Gunter (2001) goes on to suggest that:

> "The real lives of heads, senior and middle managers, teachers, students, parents and governors is one of negotiation, conflict and compromise, that is ultimately about power and their place in it" (p. 139).

This certainly appears to be the case in relation to the power relationship of middle managers in schools. Bennett et al (2003) argues that:

> "Middle leaders have to rely less on formal authority than on informal interactions, people skills and professional respect in order to carry out their responsibilities. Subject leaders' authority is dependent on their professional expertise as a teacher and a subject specialist. In primary schools, subject co-ordinators frequently doubt if their subject knowledge is sufficient to allow them to be directive to their colleagues, or to create a strategic vision for the subject. Secondary school subject leaders tend to be confident of their ability to lead by example in both curriculum and teaching, but they do not view this as giving them the right to observe colleagues: professional colleagues could not be coerced into following their example" (p. 5).

However, middle managers within their new role are seen as the key agents in not only "brokering" change (Hannagan et al, 2007; Alexiadou, 2001) but also delivering the strategic goals of the organisation (McTavish, 2007; Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999). Power is therefore a key issue, for as Hardy (1997) points out:

"… actions that are crucial to the realisation of strategic goals do not just 'happen' – power is needed to orchestrate and direct them" (p. 6).

McTavish (2007) sees power as an integral part of educational management at all levels, a mechanism to get others to do what is wanted of them, even if it is against their will. Power in this case can be expressed in terms of control over others, as a way to modify and bring about the perceived change in behaviour. However, while the use of power in this way is sometimes valuable for challenging existing values and cultures within organisations (Hardy, 1997), it has limited use in the long term as sustained use often results in falling morale and even greater resistance to the changes management are putting forward. That said, if middle manger's are to fulfil their post-Incorporation role successfully they clearly need a degree of empowerment to implement policy and change (Hannagan et al, 2007).

Wise (1999), in reviewing middle managers in schools, agrees with Hardy (1997) and suggests that:

"If they [curriculum middle managers] are well informed in their subject area, well qualified and a first-class practitioner, they will be able to lead by example. They will have respect as a good teacher and will be able to attempt to influence their fellow professionals by the use of 'functional authority' based on competence. If that fails, they can resort to 'pulling rank', using formal authority based on position" (p.49).

However, Bennett (1995) warns against "pulling rank" because this form of authority is viewed as non-legitimate by many and the use of such power could result in non-compliance. He suggests that a manager should attempt to operate by consent because coercion does not produce equal commitment.

Hales (1993) describes "… power as a resource" (p.18) and "… authority as the possession of power resources and attempts at influence which are deemed legitimate and, hence, acceptable by those subject to them" (p.28). Hughes (1976) notes that in relation to heads of departments in schools their authority is often dependant on their delegated power from the headteacher. This may also be true for curriculum middle managers, Hughes suggests that:

"The occupant of an executive position, who is granted little authority and recognition by his superiors, tends to behave in relation to his subordinates in a cautious and defensive manner, which exposes him to as little risk as possible. Conversely the executive who is granted an appreciable measure of autonomy and recognition by his superiors is more likely , in his relations with subordinates, both to adopt a positive approach himself and to encourage others to become involved in executive function … It may well be that professional initiative and the exercise of discretion cannot properly be expected from school executives who are regarded, and who regard themselves as the powerless minions of a centralised and powerful bureaucracy" (p.54).

This position is reflected in the work of Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) who argue that there has been:

"… identified a need to empower middle managers to make real decisions which were then acted upon rather than, for example, referred to a more senior group for approval" (p.19).

However, Briggs (2003) in considering the issue of autonomy of middle managers within Further Education provides a valuable insight into the views of both middle managers and senior mangers, finding that:

"… one of the features of the paradigm shift from professionalism to managerialism has been a decline in professional autonomy. In this research, senior managers speak of having to find the balance between empowering middle managers and monitoring their work to ensure compliance to college strategy; they also report that some managers do not adopt an autonomous enough stance towards their role. Both senior and middle managers link autonomy in role with access to resources: without resources, the manager is not empowered to act. Middle managers generally report that they experience autonomy in their role which is necessarily limited, and the constraints of compliance and of resources may make them content with small degrees of freedom" (p.253).

Clearly, following Incorporation senior managers have enjoyed greater autonomy and power in the running of their colleges (Hannagan et al, 2007; Gleeson and Shain, 1999). However, the question arises as to whether middle managers have enjoyed similar benefits. Simkins and Lumby (2002) suggest that:

"Senior managers have become empowered compared with other members of staff, although having to work within strongly centrally directed policy agendas" (p. 14).

Briggs (2002) agrees with this view and further suggests that middle managers have little or no power as a right, but are merely given power by the true leader in order to "promote what the leader seeks". She accepts that middle managers have power and autonomy at a local level, but strongly argues that even this power only exists because it has been given to them to perform basic tasks and not as a fundamental right within their job role. This idea of incomplete empowerment not only links into the notion of role uncertainty and role clarity discussed earlier but also into the perception of middle managers merely being the "mouthpieces of the Senior Management Team" put forward by those middle managers interviewed by Briggs (2001, p. 234).

Interestingly though, it would appear that their power has not only been limited by Incorporation itself but also by the culture of increasing uncertainty, unpredictability and fear that has developed amongst middle managers themselves. As one of the middle managers interviewed by Gleeson and Shain (1999) states:

"I don't think our Programme Managers have very much power at all … You are constantly in a culture of reorganization … do not make too many waves because

it's very easy to reorganise and you're out. So I don't think Programme Managers stand up to the Principal in the way they should" (p. 472).

Not only has the focus of the college Senior Management teams changed since Incorporation and the introduction of a new funding system, but also it would appear that following Incorporation middle managers have lost most of the autonomy and power that they once had. In real terms, they now barely have any real power to make any policy decisions in their own areas of responsibility and, at times, have little power to tackle the basic aspects of their role, such as performance management.

Such writers as Leader (2004) and Briggs (2003; 2002; 2001) suggest that middle managers now at best only passively influence senior management decision-making and whole-college policy, and at worse they merely act as facilitators for implementing decisions that have been made at a higher level. Decisions that are often based on the financial needs of the college and frequently compete with the pedagogic values or views held by middle managers and their teams. Such a change in culture and job role must not only impede the middle managers perceived effectiveness in their job role but must also in practical terms causes frustration and hinders innovation and the freedom and ability to set the pace and direction of their team.

The research indicates that there is often a lack of clarity about where the boundaries of middle managers' authority lie and the dual identity of academic colleague and middle manager increases the existing ambiguity and tension in the role. The management cultures and structures that facilitate middle managers' roles are crucial to the effectiveness of the college as a whole, for as Briggs (2001) points out they "make the business of the college happen". However, this is not going to happen if the structures and power-bases of the college do not ensure that the leadership aspect of the middle mangers' role is clearly detailed and unambiguous.

Summary

This section has shaped and influenced the research project by highlighting the conflict between the perceived power/authority/influence/autonomy of the curriculum middle manager amongst that of the 'role set'. It also highlights existing ambiguity within the role.

Function

As discussed earlier, Incorporation bought about fundamental cultural changes within college senior management teams (Watson and Crossley, 2001), moving their priorities from that of their public sector roots to that of a quasi-private sector organization (Watson and Crossley (2001). In simple terms, the functions of college managers following Incorporation had to take into account the move from a student-centered organization to that of a business in a highly competitive environment (Briggs, 2003).

This change in focus seems to have impacted significantly on the perceived function of all senior and middle college managers. However, this is not really surprising as it must be remembered that the ethos, and indeed the primary role, of all private businesses is to be competitive and to produce a profit (Watson and Crossley (2001). All other considerations are mostly subservient to the function of income generation and as Drucker (1988) points out, this changes the focus of the function of managers; it is now a case of:

"Doing the right things is more important than doing things right" (p.61).

In relation to the function of middle managers within education, Gunter (2001) would seem to agree with Drucker (1988) and argues that:

"… middle management is becoming less concerned with child welfare and more a means through which accountability is achieved. In this way middle management is a creation of external policy and how senior managers require systems and structures that will secure implementation, rather than the product of how teachers seek to organize learning" (p. 108).

Clearly, in relation to the functional aspects of the role of middle managers both Drucker (1988) and Gunter (2001) not only recognize its changing nature but also the ambiguity that still lies at the heart of the role. Indeed, relying upon the work of Gleeson and Shain (1999), Gunter (2001) highlights some of the problems facing middle managers in Further Education and believes that:

"… FE has found that middle managers feel squeezed between senior managers and lecturers, and within the context of severe financial difficulties they talk from a position of 'double identities', of being a teacher with a huge contact commitment together with the pressures from above for economy and effectiveness" (p. 113).

This is not an enviable position to be in and undoubtedly adds to both the complexity of the role and the ambiguity of what is expected of curriculum middle managers. Briggs (2003) reports that the curriculum middle manager's own sense of authority in role is also an influential factor. Briggs (2003) indicates that curriculum middle managers are sometimes unsure of their actual function within the college, suggesting that sometimes their roles get mixed up by other people.

Summary

This section has shaped and influenced the research project by proposing that the function of curriculum middle managers is often confused, and adversely affects the function of the role.

Summary of key issues and themes from the literature

The fact that there has been very little research into the nature of the role of middle managers in colleges of Further Education, and hardly any at all focussing on the curriculum middle manager, makes this an interesting and potentially very useful study to current and aspiring curriculum middle managers, their senior managers and other teaching staff; especially in the context of the need to understand the future development of the managerial aspect of the role.

The literature review is closely focussed on the role of the curriculum middle manager as perceived by three key college groups and the specific issues that underpin the main aims of this investigation. Consequently, a number of key themes are both supported by, and emergent from, the literature reviewed. In addition to the basic role definition which has provided the means of situating the research, these themes fall into a number of distinct areas:

- identification of duties and responsibilities;
- role perception;
- role influences;
- role priorities.

Within each of these areas there are a number of sub-themes which provided areas to focus on during the data gathering process. The aspects of role definition emerging from this review are mainly in the areas of how far the role has been defined by the nature of the tasks undertaken by curriculum middle managers.

The duties and responsibilities of this role are again linked to a number of different aspects of definition and fall mainly into three areas including what the nature and range of duties undertaken is, what extent the current duties and responsibilities were previously undertaken by curriculum middle managers, and the different perceptions held by curriculum middle managers and their immediate role set. The authors of the literature reviewed in the context of perceptions held of the role raised the importance of being aware that the understanding of the role was different depending on the viewpoint of the role set member, and that the main individuals were the:

- senior management of the college;
- curriculum middle managers themselves;
- academic teaching staff (lecturers).

The perceptions outlined in the literature demonstrate views of the importance of the role to the core business of the college, the nature of the working relationship between senior managers, curriculum middle managers and academic colleagues. It also highlights the importance of the influence of other members of the curriculum middle managers' extended role set on certain key decisions and how this affects the role holders own priorities.

Conclusion

This literature review has enabled the development of the provisional research questions regarding the nature of the role of curriculum middle managers. It has identified that a need exists for further research in this area and the reasons for this. Whilst some scholars and practitioners have undertaken work in this area, there remains a common claim that the role of the curriculum middle manager is ill-defined and poorly understood.

The inclusion of publications from 1992 to 2008 has enabled a view over time and allows for the changes in college management structures since the Incorporation of colleges in 1992. It is interesting to note that the most recent publication echoes the same themes as the earliest ones, and that there are continuing pleas for further research into middle management roles in Further Education.

The research questions have refined and extended the investigation into what tasks curriculum middle managers are responsible for and how they are perceived to include perceptions from other staff at different levels within the colleges.

This study builds on the work already published and raises suggestions for other studies to continue the task of developing further our understanding of the role of curriculum middle managers within Further Education and how their role contributes to the overall success of the college.

In the next section, the research methods are considered in more detail, allowing a critical review of their appropriateness for the project.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

Denscombe (2003) suggests that the foundation of good social research depends on paying attention to certain elementary factors. He argues that:

> "If such factors are ignored or overlooked, the research will be open to criticism and serious questions may be raised about the quality of the findings. Good research depends on addressing these key points." (p.1)

It is with this in mind that this chapter aims to, firstly, consider the specific research questions being addressed by the study. Secondly, it locates and justifies the research approach and methodology, used in this study, within a broader epistemological context. Thirdly, the rationale for the method and the conduct of the research is explained and situated within the context of existing research theory; considering and responding to criticisms of the method used under three headings – Philosophical Criticisms, Technique Criticisms and Political Criticisms. Fourthly, ethical issues and the issue of validity, generalizability and reliability are considered. Finally, some perceived limitations are acknowledged, in considering the potential of the chosen methodology for research into the role of curriculum middle managers within colleges of Further Education.

Research Questions

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to examine what curriculum middle managers perceive as their role, together with the expectations of members of their role set. In previous studies (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999), academic/curriculum middle managers have been found to have a different conception of their role from that of their role set.

My own career history and current role as a curriculum middle manager in a college of Further Education supports this and has influenced my choice of research topic and the research questions detailed below. I have found that I have received a mixed response from colleagues over the years as to their expectations of the curriculum middle manager role and the level of responsibility associated with it and recognized by them. There have been conversations about whether the role itself requires the post-holder to undertake certain responsibilities in a particular manner, or whether it is just the incumbent's own personal approach, training and experience that have defined the role in the way that it is executed.

Certainly there appears to have been a lack of clarity of role definition and also ineffective communication of areas of responsibility in some cases. This has at times led to misunderstandings and even tensions where duties are being duplicated with academic staff or neglected because of a lack of awareness of need.

As an important aim of this research is to gain some understanding of people's perceptions of what these roles are and how they are developing, this research is being undertaken from a subjective, anti-positive stance. Initially there is a belief that people's knowledge and understanding of these issues are based on their own personal experience and insight. Institutions may, or may not, have policies and procedures for creating and developing these roles, but it is the interpretation of these by the respondents that will constitute the data and from which the conclusions will be formulated. The specific research questions are:

- What tasks do curriculum middle managers consider to be part of their role? This question attempts to discover the range or the extent of the role and

  responsibilities of curriculum middle managers. It aims to explore how far

  the role has change from the traditional models and how far this change is

  related to the effects of Incorporation and noted in the literature.

- How does the perception of the role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

  This question explores the factors that influence curriculum middle managers and their role set in defining their own role and responsibilities. It aims to consider issues of accountability, autonomy, as well as such wider issues as culture, expectations and role definition.

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

  This question considers the perceptions of different staff groups as to what

  they believe the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers to

  be. It intends to examine the conflict between the perceived role and the actual

  role.

- Who influences the ways in which curriculum middle managers carry out their responsibilities?

  This question attempts to highlight the practical aspects that can be deduced

from considering both the external and internal influences that affect the work of curriculum middle managers. The question while highlighting these issues also aims to provide a framework for considering the wider issue of culture, values, structure, professionalism and accountability.

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

This question considers the perceptions of different staff groups as to what they believe are the most important task's undertaken by curriculum middle managers. It intends to examine the conflict between tasks classed as Administrative, Academic, Managerial and Educational.

Design of the Study: Wider Frameworks

Cohen *et al* (2002) describe research methods as the techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering. That is, the tools used by the researcher to investigate the research questions and then analyse and interpret the information gathered. This, they compare to the aim of research methodology and suggest that:

"… the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry but the process itself" (p.45).

Clearly, both methodology and methods are important issues and are central to the success of the research project. The nature of the research methodology used ultimately informs the choice of research methods and thereby influences the process that will be used to collect, analyse and interpret the research data (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

In deciding on the underlying research methodology of the project, I have first considered the work of Wallace and Poulson (2003) who, like Gunter and Ribbins (2002, 2003), identify five different types of "intellectual project". Their work, see Table 4 below, provides researchers with a starting point to situate, focus and position their research within a wider framework.

Table 4: Intellectual Project Types

Type of Project	Features of the Project
Knowledge for understanding	Attempts to develop theoretical and research knowledge from a disinterested standpoint towards an

	aspect of the social world, in order to understand, rather than improve, practice and policy and their underlying ideologies
Knowledge for critical evaluation	Attempts to develop theoretical and research knowledge from explicitly negative/oppositional standpoint towards practice and policy, in order to criticise and expose the prevailing ideology underlying existing practice and policy and to argue why it should be rejected, and sometimes advocating improvement according to an alternative ideology
Knowledge for action	Attempts to develop theoretical and research knowledge with practical application from a positive standpoint towards practice and policy, in order to inform improvement efforts within prevailing ideology
Instrumentalism	Attempts to impart practical knowledge and associated skills through training and consultancy from a positive standpoint towards practice and policy, in order directly to improve practice within prevailing ideology
Reflexive action	Attempts to develop and share practitioners' own practice knowledge from a constructively self-critical standpoint towards their work, in order to improve their practice either within the prevailing ideology or according to an alternative ideology

(Adapted from Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2002)

In considering the five different types of intellectual project described in Table 4 above, I would situate my research within the knowledge for understanding category. The reason for this is that my project attempts to develop theoretical and research knowledge towards an aspect of the social world. My position within the research is that of a "disinterested researcher" (Bennett et al, 2001, p. 268). That is, I am "disinterested" in the sense that I have no axe to grind and no aspect of my work or social/economic status will be affected by the outcome of the research (although I do acknowledge that my status might be affected by the quality of the study and any subsequent publications). However, coming to this conclusion was not without its problems, as initially I thought that I was unable to consider the topic from a 'disinterested standpoint' as I was most definitely personally involved with what I was planning to research. But recalling the need to make familiar situations and events appear strange (Delamont, 1996) allowed me to develop and understand that I needed to take a more disassociated view. Indeed, understanding that the overall aim of my study was to understand, rather than improve, practice and policy and their underlying ideologies further supported this view.

However, while the work of Wallace and Poulson (2003) has provided me with an opportunity to situate my work within what many would consider to be an accepted category of knowledge, I do recognize that in considering their work, there may be a tendency to subconsciously try and fit my work into one of their defined categories rather than feel that my work exists outside of or crosses these accepted boundaries. Indeed, I

would further acknowledge that I am unsure that, in reality, research projects can really be categorized so easily as Wallace and Poulson (2003) suggest.

Philosophical Approach

Cohen *et al* (2002) suggest that the researcher has a number of different ways in which to investigate their research questions. Their choice will largely depend upon the ontology that underpins their research project; that is, the researchers' perception about the nature of reality and their stance as to how knowledge can be acquired and communicated (Briggs, 2003). Table 5 provides a brief insight into the subjective/objective approaches to knowledge that will be discussed below. It highlights the different views of social reality that not only exist, but also compete for the researcher's attention (Cohen *et al*, 2002).

Table 5: Approaches to Knowledge

Subjective Approach		Objective Approach
Reality and truth are the product of individual perception. There are multiple realties shared by groups of people.	**Ontology**	Reality and truth are a "given" and are external to the individual. There is a shared reality that most people would subscribe to.
Knowledge is subjective and is based on experience and insight. Normally researched using qualitative methods.	**Epistemology**	Knowledge is hard, real and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form. Normally researched using quantitative methods.
Human beings are creative and exercise agency. "Agency" is about your ability to be in control of your life and work, to take responsibility, and to make decisions.	**Human Nature**	Human beings are determined by their environments. "Structure" is about how external power and control structures (both organizational and cultural) determine your life and work.

(Adapted from Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2002)

The epistemology underpinning objective (positivist) research assumes that knowledge can be gained though detached value free investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). The researcher sets aside their own values and feelings and investigates "how things really are" and "how things really work", without the inclusion of such subjective elements as feelings or perceptions (Briggs, 2003).

This can be compared with the epistemology underpinning subjective (anti-positivist) research that considers that knowledge is hidden within the complex world of the lived experience, with multiple realities and meanings (Cohen et al, 2002). The researcher rather than setting aside his or her own values and feelings is seen as an integral part of the areas that they investigate (Cohen et al, 2002).

In relation to this research project, a subjective approach seems more consistent with both the topic being researched and my own philosophical stance. This is because I believe that the role of curriculum middle managers in colleges of Further Education is complex and can only be viewed via the experiences and perceptions of those involved. I accept the existence of multiple realties that are shared by the people who have taken part in my research project. However, my belief is that knowledge is subjective and influenced by an individual's life experiences and in order to address my research questions the information that I gather and analyse must reflect that of the individual's version of reality. In doing so I acknowledge that my own life experiences may affect not only the nature of the research, but also the interpretation of the results. As Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggest:

> "… in qualitative research findings are created by the interaction of inquirer and phenomenon, rather than the enquirer standing behind a one-way mirror and viewing and recording phenomena objectively" (p. 200).

While I acknowledge that my method of data collection will include a questionnaire (quantitative), the inclusion of semi-structured interviews (qualitative) within the research design allowed key aspects raised by the questionnaire to be explored in more detail. Indeed, it is the data from these interviews that explains the underlying influences and perceptions held by members of the three groups. The use of the quantitative (positivist) method is used to inform the more relevant qualitative method.

Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Traditionally, texts on research in the social sciences have portrayed quantitative and qualitative approaches as quite separate and based on very different paradigms and modes of enquiry (Bryman, 1992). Quantitative or positivist approaches, as used in social surveys and experimental investigations, are based on assumptions, methods and procedures drawn from the natural sciences. The research process is seen as a logical and ordered one, in which hypotheses are derived from general theories, and usually state likely causal connection between variables. Data is then collected and analyzed and the causal connection specified by the hypothesis is verified or rejected. Quantitative approaches are often based on statistical analysis of a carefully selected sample of cases, so that generalizations and predictions can be made about the population as a whole (Wallace and Poulson 2003).

Qualitative (or subjective) approaches on the other hand are based on a perspective that rejects the appropriateness of the natural science model for studying human groups and organizations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1989). Qualitative approaches, therefore, typically use methods such as participant observation or unstructured/semi-structured interviewing which, it is argued, give a more realistic and rounded view of the areas investigated, making it less likely that inappropriate conceptual frameworks and prior assumptions will be imposed on the study by the researcher. As Bryman (1992) points

out, rather than using predefined categories, frameworks and hypotheses, the qualitative researcher:

> "… looks through a wide lens, searching for patterns and interrelationships between a previously unspecified set of concepts" (p. 4).

Theory in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) terms is grounded in the data. That is, it arises from detailed consideration of the findings, and deriving patterns and frameworks from them.

However, more recently researchers in the social sciences have come to question a rigid dichotomy between the two approaches and have suggested that methods drawn from both traditions may be used to complement each other. Hammersley (1992) argues that the conventional dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative approaches is over simplistic, inaccurate and unhelpful to researchers. He points out for example, that many natural science researchers do not adhere to the tenets of logical positivism that are ascribed to them. Similarly, ethnographers occasionally use hypothesis-testing, and very frequently make quantitative claims in verbal form.

Mixed-Method Designs

The ways of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study are numerous. Patton (1990) endorses mixed-method designs and draws attention to the manner in which different approaches and methods that could be incorporated. His mixed models form 'pure' approaches that used various permutations of three basic elements. These involve the design of the study (experimental or naturalistic), the data derived from this process (quantitative or qualitative) and the mode of analysis (e.g. statistical). There is the option to mix approaches at each stage in this process. Cresswell (1994) suggests the following models:

- A two-phase design in which one approach precedes the other. Each phase is distinct, unrelated and self-contained. The second phase will be informed by the findings from the first;

- A dominant less dominant design. In this model a dominant paradigm is pursued for the majority of the study, with a small study using an alternative paradigm being used to illuminate specific issues;

- A mixed-method design. This involves aspects of each approach being used throughout the study in the majority of steps in the design.

In considering design issues, beliefs about the nature of research underpin decisions. Eisner and Peshkin (1990) identify a continuum of perspectives. At one extreme there were researchers who genuinely perceived methodologies to be complementary, felt the research questions should determine the selection of method and that both approaches should strive to meet the same criteria of rigour. At the other extreme were researchers

who may use mixed-method designs but harbour strong beliefs about the relative merits of each. Within this later group was a quantitative dominated view in which qualitative procedures were deemed worthwhile only for exploratory studies.

Miles and Huberman (1994*)* endorse linking designs, accord them equal status and provide their own schemata for how this might be achieved. They suggest several models. The first of these is consistent with Cresswell's (1994) mixed-methods design. Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study are fully integrated and occur concurrently and continuously. Secondly, a multi-wave design in which qualitative fieldwork takes place continuously throughout the study and quantitative surveys occur intermittently. The survey may therefore highlight aspects needed to be addressed during the fieldwork. Conversely the field data might suggest revisions to the subsequent surveys. The third and fourth designs use alternating styles and address the way in which the two aspects may be sequenced. Whilst they are akin to the two-phase design of Cresswell (1994) they are not intended to be distinct, but are intrinsically linked to each other. The first of these designs is a qualitative-quantitative-qualitative design. Within this framework the first qualitative study is exploratory, it is followed by a quantitative survey and finally a qualitative phase both to enrich and test the questionnaire findings. Lastly, a quantitative-qualitative-quantitative design. In this design an initial quantitative survey is employed to identify a phenomenon of particular importance, via fieldwork the qualitative phase extends and adds meaning to these findings. The final quantitative phase consists of an experiment that is informed by the two earlier phases but designed to test the merits of competing hypotheses. Miles and Huberman (1994) draw attention to the fact that combined in this way, both methods can fulfill descriptive, exploratory or inductive purposes. Similarly both can be used as explanatory medium or to test hypotheses.

Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) opposition to mixing methods within the same design is pragmatic rather than philosophical. They suggest that rather than achieving a superior hybrid the approach is likely to fail to meet an acceptable standard from either perspective. Such arguments are also supported by Leininger (1994) who argues that researchers are likely to have an insufficient grasp of the philosophical underpinnings of each paradigm. Whilst this draws attention to the difficulty of the approach it does not present a substantive argument. Ultimately the quality of research will need to be considered on its own merits.

There are numerous precedents for the use of a mixed method design (Wallace and Poulson, 2003). The particular combination of interviews and questionnaires, envisaged in this study has also been widely adopted (Stacey et al., 1975; Burgess, 1983; Bird, 1992). In Bird's (1992) study, a design akin to Miles and Huberman's (1994) iterative process was adopted. The process also illustrated how methods can be blended to elaborate on the data derived from other methods. Bird initially used a structured questionnaire as the aim was to produce data both quickly and in a format that policy makers could use. One issue this addressed was the proportion of students from disadvantaged groups taking courses. The focus in phase two however was to trace the means by which change was affected. As this involved exploring the participants'

understandings, she rejected a questionnaire on the grounds that it would be constraining and instead used interviews. In this way the two sets of data were used consequently to test hypotheses refined over the course of the research.

Questionnaires

The literature review established that there is little existing research on the role of curriculum middle managers within colleges of Further Education. Consequently this study is primarily exploratory in nature. A survey, via a postal questionnaire, formed the initial part of the research design. This approach was adopted as it represents an efficient method of obtaining data from a reasonably large population. The main aim of the survey was to establish data that could be probed in more detail during the course of the follow-up interviews. The survey consequently was a starting point rather than an end in itself.

The survey was designed to establish the role of curriculum middle mangers within colleges of Further Education, to explore the relationship between expectations, perceptions and the reality of the role and to consider the type of influences on curriculum middle managers in carrying out their role.

Whilst surveys are often associated with the questionnaire approach, the distinguishing feature is more to do with the mode of data collection and its analysis (de Vaus, 1991). Bryman (1989) defined the key features as entailing the collection of quantifiable data in respect of a number of variables (usually at a single point in time) with a view to determining patterns of association. Robson (1993), however, cautions that the "single juncture in time" condition is rarely met, although data are often treated as if this were the case.

Oppenheim (1992) also draws a distinction between descriptive and analytic surveys. Descriptive surveys seek to answer basic quantitative questions by establishing the incidence and distribution of variables through descriptive statistics. Analytic surveys explore the relationship between variables, often through correlational analysis. The aim in this study will be to combine the descriptive and analytic functions: firstly to establish the role of curriculum middle managers and secondly to explore the association between the perception of the role by senior managers, middle managers and teaching staff.

Like all research techniques, surveys have inherent advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages is their ability to provide an efficient method of capturing large amounts of data quickly and at relatively low cost (Wallace and Poulson, 2003). Questionnaire surveys also embrace many of the advantages associated with quantitative approaches (Denscombe, 2003).

The overall research design, operational definitions, measures and procedures can be made explicit with relative ease (Hakim, 1987). They are consequently open to inspection and "replicability"'. Reliability is high as each respondent addresses a standard list of questions. Data is capable of being coded into numeric form and consequently statistical analysis can be employed to explore the relationship between variables.

As surveys can accommodate large sample sizes the confidence with which results can be generalized can be determined within definable limits. There are, however, a number of criticisms of survey approaches. These have been summarized by de Vaus (1991) under the following headings:

<u>Philosophical Criticisms</u>

Whilst it is possible to go beyond description, to form interpretative hypotheses, these are often based on causal relationships (Oppenheim, 1992). The philosophical criticisms tend to center on this concept. Mills (discussed in Lincoln and Guba, 1985) proposed several methods of proof, one involves the concept of concomitant variation and this forms the basis of correlational methods. This asserts that if two measures vary together, one may be causing the other. This, however, does not provide a conclusive argument for causation: The fact that two variables are correlated does not prove that the first causes the second. It is equally plausible that the second causes the first or that both variables are jointly influenced by another variable that has remained undetected. Consequently criteria have been suggested to demonstrate a causal relationship (Haynes, 1992):

- A statistically significant association;

- The elimination of alternative explanations;

- Temporal precedence whereby one variable precedes the other in time and can reliably be considered to cause the variation in the other.

Whilst surveys can establish association, eliminating competing explanations is difficult and the temporal precedence is particularly problematic (Bryman, 1988). Not only do surveys not provide grounds to assume causation but also critics of quantitative approaches (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995) question the assumption that human social life consists of simple mechanical cause and effect relationships. The role of curriculum middle manager within colleges of Further Education is based on a complex layer of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes. These are ever changing and therefore cannot be treated as independent variables.

<u>Technique Based Criticisms</u>

Some criticisms are based on the narrow interpretation given to research issues. Whilst policy makers often want 'hard facts', such 'facts' require interpretation and need to be set within the social context in which they were created. The value of surveys is dependent on the quality of responses they receive. There are legitimate concerns about whether these accurately reflect the beliefs, attitudes or views of respondents. Respondents often feel irritation if the questions are not those they feel are important. Those respondents who can be identified may be more inclined to give socially appropriate or politically correct responses. Typically, respondents are disengaged from

the researcher's agenda and questions may be treated with insufficient gravity. Robson (1993) captures these points in describing responses as owing more to an:

   "unknown mixture of politeness, boredom, desire to be seen in a good light"
   (p.125).

Such factors are difficult to avoid during the analysis of the data, but may have important implications for the study. It also needs to be recognized that there may be little relationship between what people claim and what they do (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

Whilst surveys may be reliable, we need to have confidence that the questions mean the same to each respondent. Ambiguities or misunderstandings may go undetected. Even the distinction that is made between 'opinion' and 'factual' questions is misleading (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). Factual questions inevitably require a degree of inference and judgment that may require interpretation. Denscombe (2003) identifies that even minor changes to the wording can significantly affect the response they receive. In addition the meaning of a question can be modified by the mindset established by preceding questions. However there is little research on how such problems can best be addressed (Denscombe, 2003). Oppenheim (1992) raises similar concerns about the reliability of rating responses. Whilst some respondents are predisposed to use the ends of the scales, others avoid extreme categories. Such difficulties lead to the advice that conclusions should not be based on the response to a single question. Converse and Presser (1986) suggest split sample comparisons or multiple questions, that is 'within' method triangulation.

Practicalities make it difficult to include too many open-ended questions in a survey. Whilst open-ended questions provide respondents with an opportunity to expand their responses, coding difficulties may compromise reliability by introducing inconsistency. Consequently there is a need to predict what information will need to be collected from the start of the study and this can restrict the range of issues addressed.

Even where the sampling strategy is well structured, postal surveys often result in a low response rate. As the characteristics of non-respondents remain unknown, this inevitably casts doubts on how representative the results are of the population being studied.

Political Criticisms

Given the need to identify questions prior to the research, a danger lies in merely finding what was anticipated. Given this rationale, de Vaus (1991) argues that the variables used may be inclined to reflect the cultural dominance of accepted perspectives. Thus surveys may fail to generate knowledge but simply provide an ideological reflection of the dominant social reality of the researcher. Moreover the knowledge produced tends to give power, over its usage, to those who already hold power. Hence surveys have the potential to be politically manipulated. Moreover, the volume of data generated and statistical analyses can falsely inflate the importance of findings.

Without hesitation I accept the argument that social reality is fluid, contextually variable and determined by processes involving interpretation and negotiation. Clearly, a variety of factors affect not only the actual role of curriculum middle managers, but also their perceived role. How adequately can it be viewed as a function of a simple variable is open to criticism. Such considerations, however, underpin the decision to use a mixed-method design. The role of the survey was not to build an accurate model of the role of a curriculum middle manager in the way assumed above. The aim was to identify the probability with which key variables can be associated with the role, and then to explore these in more depth through the interviews. The survey consequently forms an important part of the research project, but is not an end in itself. The survey therefore informed the interview process, providing valuable data to refine the questions to be asked and even suggest new questions.

Clearly, there are relative strengths and weaknesses in my approach. Reliability and generalization are countered by concerns about the validity of the data surveys produce. Some of the superficial issues of validity were addressed through the piloting of the questionnaire and the modification to the wording of the questionnaire to that was used in the main survey, and of course by the in-depth interviews.

Nevertheless the more substantive philosophical assumptions that factors are fluid and contextually related remain valid. I have no response to the argument that I bring socially laden views to this study (Denscombe 2003). As a curriculum middle manager within a college of Further Education I am aware of and have views on the issues discussed within the research. However, awareness of this provides some safeguard against such distortion but little more. There will be inherent biases; where possible I will draw attention to the potential for these to compromise the outcomes. However much of the political argument is countered in this context by the research being conducted independent of funding, or the influence of policy makers, or college managers. As such, it has more potential to produce knowledge that may represent a challenge to those who hold power and produce change on behalf of less powerful groups.

Interviews

The interview element of the research represented the key part of the study. Informed by the survey, the interviews represent a relatively discrete aspect of the study and are addressed from a qualitative perspective. A semi-structured interview approach was adopted since, as Denscombe (2003) argues, the best way to explore people's perspectives is by talking to them; the reason for this decision is discussed below.

Discussion of the technique

Interviews have been described as a conversation with a purpose (Denscombe, 2003). Whilst they may have the appearance of conversation, an interview is not intended to be a two-way interaction. The aim is to obtain information and it is not customary for the

interviewer to raise and defend opinions (Cohen *et al*, 2002). It is initiated and controlled by the interviewer in order to pursue research objectives. The unnaturalness of this relationship has itself attracted comment.

Inherent in the interview is a power imbalance in which the respondent is placed in a subordinate role (Denscombe, 2003). This leads Powney and Watts (1987) to classify interviews on the basis of the degree of control involved. In respondent interviews, the interviewer remains firmly in control, hence both some semi-structured and structured interviews might meet this criterion. In informant interviews the main focus is to capture the interviewee's perception and the approach is less directive. The balance of power within an interview raises ethical concerns. An interview in which the interviewer appropriates information from the interviewee, solely for the interviewer's use, constitutes an asymmetrical power relationship. As such, it exploits those interviewed (Cohen *et al*, 2002).

The degree of structure is traditionally perceived to fall within a continuum, extending from structured to semi-structured or unstructured interviews. Structured interviews tend to derive from a quantitative, positivist tradition, typically involving the presentation of the same set of questions to interviewees. These are presented in a standardized form and responses are coded to fit prescribed categories. In an attempt to attain neutrality and preserve objectivity there is little scope for the interviewer to improvise or divert from the 'script'.

They are required to exhibit 'interested listening' which reinforces participation but exhibits no evaluation of responses. Tensions can arise from the fact that respondents must answer with reference to the interviewer's conception of the problem and are powerless to challenge underlying assumptions (Cohen *et al*, 2002). The other end of the continuum has been described as unstructured although whether such an entity can exist as a research approach has been questioned (Whyte, 1991).

Whyte (1991) argues that there must always be an element of structure to constitute research. The semi-structured approach is characterized by the use of open-ended questions and flexibility in the way that these are asked. The interviewer can consequently explain or clarify questions, thus increasing the potential of establishing a shared understanding and achieve a meaningful response. Many researchers would argue that it is not always possible to specify in advance what questions are appropriate, or even relevant. Semi-structured interviews attempt to understand the interviewee's perspective without imposing any 'a priori' categorization that might limit the inquiry (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). The approach consequently provides an opportunity to divert from the planned format and explore topics that arise within the interview. The aim is to capture rich and detailed material, usually in the interviewee's own words (Cohen *et al*, 2002). Differences between structured and semi-structured approaches spring from their epistemological roots. The interviewer must be an attentive listener who shapes the process into a comfortable form of social engagement. The quality of rapport, empathy and understanding is important to the outcome. The process has been likened to the unthreatening and cordial interactions that occur in everyday life (Denscombe, 2003). A

key issue is to develop the trust and confidence of those being interviewed, in essence "revealing private parts of their life" for "flimsy guarantees of confidentiality" (Finch, 1984 p.173). The level of informality achieved in the interview is, however, a matter of negotiation.

Technique Based Issues

From a positivist perspective, personal bias is more difficult to control in semi-structured interviews. Flexibility can introduce inconsistencies that affect the comparability of interviews. In interviews many important variables lie outside of the interviewer's control. The National Science Foundation (1997) draws attention to the way in which interruptions and seating arrangements may affect the proceedings and inhibit the acquisition of information. Another variable is the way in which information is recorded. Taped interviews enable the interviewer to remain attentive but introduce a level of formality that can inhibit what interviewees are prepared to disclose. Conversely note-taking may disrupt the flow of the interview, and can introduce selective bias into what is recorded.

The power dynamics that exist within society also have implications for how interviewees respond to the interviewer. Key variables include age, gender, status and ethnicity. In addition, the interviewer may hold a stereotypical view that interviewees may reject or find degrading. Being attuned to the culture enables the researcher to blend into the environment and to establish a common frame of reference. However it may also make it more difficult to recognize patterns in familiar situations and interpret the meaning attached to events. Whilst these comments focus on ethnicity they apply equally to the other factors. Some feminist researchers argue that it is preferable for women to interview women, as the interview process is affected by the status and role of women in society (Finch, 1984). The perceived status of the interviewer also has implications for the rapport and trust that can be established (Denscombe, 2003).

The age of an interviewer also influences the role that is assigned and may modify perceptions about status. Some of these factors can be manipulated; others are fixed. However once the interviewer's presentational self is cast, it has important implications for the outcome (Fontana and Frey, 2000).

Philosophical Issues

The flexibility in semi-structured interviews purports to enable a view of the informant's social world to be captured. Underlying assumptions are that such data are context independent and free from the influence of the interviewer. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) suggest that how the social world is experienced is partially constructed by language, as well as being the mechanism by which perspectives are conveyed. We take for granted that we experience the same reality and therefore understand each other in its terms. However there is an element of naivety in this belief. Moreover the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the nature of the discourse are at the heart of the process, but are problematic (Cohen *et al*, 2002). Dingwall (1997) is critical of the view that the

nearer we come to the interviewee the closer we come to their "real self". It ignores the fact that the self is a process that is accomplished in the interaction. Cohen *et al* (2002) illustrate this by drawing attention to the fact that interviewees are not blank entities but actively try to make sense of the situation. Having formed a hypothesis about the nature of the process the interviewee will decide the stance they are going to take. Consequently interviews are interactional encounters, with the interviewee constructing knowledge around questions and responses. Hence the picture of social reality obtained must have a more tenuous relationship to the world being investigated.

<u>Response</u>

Whilst Cohen *et al* (2002) identify the need for interviewers to monitor comments and actions that may impede the interview, the view that the interview is an unproblematic research instrument is clearly false. It is important to acknowledge that the researcher can never fully overcome these limitations.

Fundamentally, interactions between interviewee and interviewer create a unique social situation (Cohen et al, 2002). The interview is a medium through which both parties create the data that is generated, and the interviewer is implicated in the process. The critical issue is that an attempt is made to understand the impact of these factors and acknowledge that the interview is a dynamic and a social process.

I accept that the interviews did not constitute comparable experiences, however this was never intended, nor is the analysis dependent on such factors. The approach taken within this study is based on principles associated with qualitative methodologies, and the methods of analysis fall loosely within the style associated with "Grounded Theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

What actually constitutes grounded theory is itself contested, and the debate has become more contested in recent years, primarily due to the division between Glaser and Strauss (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Despite a number of differences both approaches have been associated with positivist roots (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), in that there is an assumption of an external, objective reality that is revealed by the process. I acknowledge that within this study, the interviews were unable to generate data that was commensurate with the social world under investigation (Cohen et al, 2002). They are situated activities and the data constitutes a situated accounts.

Consequently, the approach taken was more consistent with what has recently been labeled constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). Within constructivism there is an assumption of multiple social realities, data are generated from the unique interaction that exists between interviewer and interviewee. It claims therefore only to interpret "a reality", as understood by the researchers' experience, the interviewees' portrayal and the interaction between the two.

Research Methodology

The methodological issues connected with a social survey strategy involve consideration of the actual data desired, from whom it is to be collected and the strategy providing the framework within which this happens. The data desired has already been described as being the personal opinions from people who have some knowledge of the subject being investigated, lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers, and information relating to the role. A number of decisions need to be made about whom to approach. It is desirable that rich data be obtained that will give a good picture of what is happening and how that could then have wider implications or be relatable to other situations. A case study methodology (Denscombe, 2003) should support this as it gives the opportunity for in depth analysis of the role of curriculum middle managers using multiple sources and methods of investigation. Furthermore, it is possible to compare and contrast data obtained from one or more case studies to provide a broader range of perceptions held. This can increase the validity of the findings by considering how different groups of people respond to the same questions, and how different data sources generate information in response to the concepts being researched.

It is important to select appropriate cases for study, and the most common justification is that they are typical and similar to others. It would also be possible to select a case that is extreme, or even because it demonstrates something that is considered to be least likely to happen in typical circumstances. However, for the purposes of this study, choosing ones that appear to be typical (in that they are operating under stable conditions) will give outcomes that may be relatable to more situations within the purpose and scope of this research.

As has been described above, the focus of the study is on the role of curriculum middle managers within colleges of Further Education. To address the research questions, it was necessary to examine perspectives at three different levels within the colleges used for the research: (a) principals and senior staff; (b) curriculum middle managers; and (c) teaching staff, and to compare responses from (a), (b) and (c) for similarities and differences.

In order to achieve this aim, the study adopted a mixed-method design involving a (quantitative) college based survey and (qualitative) semi-structured interviews with a small number of senior managers, curriculum middle managers and full and part-time teaching staff. The design is consequently similar to that employed by Bird (1992). It bears a resemblance to Cresswell's (1994) two-phase design to the extent that one approach precedes but informs the other and each are relatively self contained, thus enabling the triangulation of outcomes. There are also features similar to Miles and Huberman's (1994) iterative process in that some aspects of the survey are designed to support and inform the interviews.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1-3) was divided into five sections. In creating the questions to be used it was important that the main focus of the research questions was incorporated. The first two sections were intended to gather data on the actual and

perceived core elements of the role of the curriculum middle managers. The following three sections then went onto explore the actual tasks performed by middle managers, as well as to finally consider the influences over key decisions within their role.

Section One: Description of the role of the curriculum middle manager

The first section explores the core/fundamental aspects of the role of the curriculum middle manager and is designed to gather data to answer the questions:

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- How does their perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

The six questions in this section represent core/fundamental aspects of the curriculum middle managers role as identified in the literature. Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they felt that these were part of the role.

Section Two: Most important element of the curriculum middle manager's role

This section examines what core/fundamental aspects of the curriculum middle managers role the role set consider to be most important. The respondents were asked to identify the most important part of the curriculum middle managers role put forward in section one. This section provides data to answer questions:

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- How does the perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

Section Three: Expectations of curriculum teams/curriculum middle managers/senior managers.

This section aimed to collect data relating to the expectations of curriculum teams, curriculum middle managers and senior managers and examined the differing perception of each. The information collected relates to:

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- How does the perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

Sixteen tasks, identified in the literature as duties commonly undertaken by curriculum middle managers, were listed. Respondents were asked to rank the three "most important" and the three "least important" duties. The tasks in the list were selected from the literature to give a balance of the four areas within the classification being used by the study. The tasks were not grouped according to their area of classification. The four areas of classification were not indicated on the questionnaire and no equal priorities were allowed.

Section Four: Influences over decisions

This section explored the perceived influences over key decisions as perceived by each member of the role set.

- What influences the ways in which curriculum middle managers carry out their responsibilities?

The questions aimed to check the perceived influences with the role set and to assess if different members dominated in particular spheres of responsibility. Eight potentially influential members of the curriculum middle managers role set were offered. Respondents were asked to choose their three most influential groups for each of the four tasks offered. The tasks were chosen as to represent one from each area of the four classification areas.

Section Five: Expectations of curriculum middle managers

This section attempted to collect data relating to the relative importance of tasks performed by curriculum middle managers as perceived by curriculum middle managers themselves. The information collected relates to:

- What tasks do middle managers consider to be part of their role?

- How does the perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

This section provided respondents with twelve tasks identified in the literature as duties commonly undertaken by curriculum middle managers. Respondents were asked to identify the three "most important" and the three "least important" duties. The tasks in the list were selected from the literature to give a balance of the four areas within the classification being used by the study. No equal priorities were allowed.

Interview Design

The purpose of the interview stage of the study was to look at certain aspects raised by the survey data in more detail, to study areas raised by the literature review which could not fully be investigated by the survey and to extend the validity of the research by extending the collection of data through other methods.

Within the survey senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers were asked to prioritize a number of tasks, influences or roles relating to the curriculum middle manager's role. The interview sought to establish the reasons behind the ordering of the priorities. The individual's questionnaire responses were used as the structure for the questions asked during the interview, with interviewees being asked why they had formulated their opinion for each of their responses. Questions to explore their responses were then formulated by the interviewer. The structure of these questions, wherever possible, used open ended questions to allow a breath of response. The interview process assumed that nothing was trivial and that everything had the potential of being a clue to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of curriculum middle managers.

Selection of Colleges

Three colleges of Further Education were chosen in which to conduct the research; one of which is my current employer and one in which I have previously been employed. The colleges all fall within the West Midlands/Staffordshire region and range in size from small to medium. The sample chosen could be classed as one of convenience (Briggs, 2003): three colleges was a manageable number of studies to be undertaken given the researcher's resources and time constraints, and the West Midlands/Staffordshire is an area accessible to the researcher. However, while the sample of colleges selected is not intended to be representative of all colleges within the United Kingdom, I do believe that they provide a good mixture of college types. That is, while all three colleges offer both academic and vocational courses, by the nature of their mission statements and internal culture, they differ in their academic focus and therefore the type of students that they attract. For example, College A mainly attracts students with 4 GCSEs at grade C who undertake a mixture of A level subjects and level 3 vocational courses. College B mainly attracts students with less than 4 GCSEs at grade C who undertake level 2 vocational courses. Whilst College C mainly attracts students with 6 or more GCSEs at grade C or above who wish to undertake 4 or more GCE A level subjects.

The one consistent feature of the three colleges sampled is that according to their individual Ofsted reports, issued in the past three years, they offer stable conditions in which managers can operate. That is, they were not in "special measures" or awarded an

"unsatisfactory" grade for management. Briggs (2003) considered this to be an important factor when choosing the colleges that she sampled. Believing that stable conditions allowed managers to perform in what might be termed their natural environment, rather than the false environment often created when colleges are involved in an Ofsted re-inspection. Certainly, as discussed above, stability was a factor that I took into account when deciding on the three colleges suitable for my sample. For I must agree with Briggs (2003) that failing colleges alter the normal working practices of both teachers and managers and therefore an investigation into role of middle manager at such establishments would not provide an insight into their true role.

Conduct and Selection for the Questionnaire

Quota sampling was used for each category in order to gain opinion from a wide range of staff. Gender, age and experience was not be taken into account as the researcher considered that due to the nature of the research topic the individual's role within the college is far more important than issues relating to other factors. Indeed, it was also felt that if gender, age and experience were taken into consideration in the selection of the sample, then it also must be taken into account when analyzing the data and this would ultimately widen the overall focus research project. However, Table 6 provides details relating to respondent's age, gender and experience were collected and show a representative cross section of staff in relation to age, gender and experience.

Table 6: Profile of Respondents

Staff Group	Age			Gender		Experience		
	Under 30yrs	30yr-45yrs	45yrs+	Male	Female	Under 5yrs	5yrs-15yrs	15yrs+
Lecturers	33% (14)	49% (21)	18% (8)	44% (19)	56% (24)	37% (16)	49% (21)	14% (6)
Curriculum Middle Managers	23% (6)	35% (9)	42% (11)	42% (11)	58% (15)	15% (4)	50% (13)	35% (9)
Senior Managers	0%	20% (2)	80% (8)	60% (6)	40% (4)	0%	0%	100% (10)
Total	25% (20)	41% (32)	34% (27)	46% (36)	54% (43)	25% (20)	43% (34)	32% (25)

Due to the range in size of the three colleges within the sample, it was always intended to vary the numbers within the set quota as detailed below. The only exception to this is in the case of Senior Staff, where due to the smaller numbers it was felt that an equal number across all three colleges should be targeted. Table 7 provides details of target returns against actual returns.

Table 7: Questionnaire Returns.

	College A		College B		College C		Total		Overall % Response
	Target	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	
Senior Staff	5	5	5	3	5	2	15	10	67%
Curriculum Middle Managers	20	15	12	7	9	4	41	26	63%
Teaching Staff	40	24	20	11	15	8	75	43	57%

Staff lists from each college were used to identify relevant staff for each of the role set groups. The lists provided job titles which in most cases provided clear evidence as to which category the potential respondent should be placed. Where evidence from the job title was not absolutely clear, clarification was sought from the relevant college before including the individual in any specific group. Questionnaires were sent to potential respondents via a contact within each college; a covering letter detailing the aim of the study and a stamped addressed envelope for their return were included. The questionnaire itself provided clear instructions as to how each of the questions should be completed; a date for their return was included.

While it was hoped that the number in each staff group to be sampled would be achieved, it was also recognized that due to such things as sickness, workload, or just the general failure of individuals to respond, the intended number of samples may not be achieved. However, as Fogelman (2002) states:

"No researcher will be penalized for having had to accept the inevitable limitations and practical problems which arise in studying real-life situations."(p.106)

Taking this into account, the test of probity for my sample was that put forward by Basset (1999). He contends:

"… that sufficient data are collected for researchers to be able to explore significant features of the case and to put forward interpretations of what is observed." (p.47)

It was also planned that if the number returned from the initial questionnaires was deemed to be insufficient then a smaller second round of questionnaires would be sent out. However, in practice the study achieved a return rate of 60%, which was deemed to be sufficient to meet the objectives of the project.

As part of the commitment to confidentiality, an introductory paragraph within the questionnaire stated that all the questionnaires were to be returned directly to the researcher, that all the responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and that no individual or curriculum area would be named in the thesis or subsequent publications.

Conduct and Selection for the Interviews

The interviewees were chosen using a mixture of purposive and quota sampling. Senior staff were chosen using purposive sampling, with their selection being based on the individual's insight, knowledge or experience as it relates to the topic of the investigation (Denscombe, 1998). The remaining interviewees were chosen using quota sampling. All those interviewed had previously completed the questionnaire. The researcher was acquainted with some of those interviewed personally, through work based in all three colleges. A detailed breakdown of the sample is given in Table 8.

Table 8: Interview Sample

	College A		College B		College C		Total	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Senior Staff	2	2	2	2	2	1	6	5
Curriculum Middle Managers	2	2	2	2	2	2	6	6
Teaching Staff	2	2	2	2	2	2	6	6

The interview process involved the use of semi-structured interviews, each one being conducted on a one-to-one basis and lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted mainly through appointments secured during the college day, and were largely sited in the interviewees' own college. The interviews were taped and then transcribed; an extract of a transcript is provided in Appendix 5. The interviewees had an opportunity to view the final transcript to check the accuracy of what had been recorded.

Pre-interview material was sent to all interviewees, detailing time and place of the interview, together with a copy of the questionnaire (Appendix 1-3) for them to complete and bring to the interview. In order to achieve consistency, an interview schedule (Appendix 4) was used detailing the structure of the interviews. However, in practice the interview centered around the individual responses to each of the questionnaire questions. As previously discussed, these questions were ultimately centered on the research questions, but also reflected both the individual themes identified during the literature review and/or the data from the questionnaires. Indeed, the decision to use semi-structured interviews (in order to allow the interviewee as much freedom to express their views as possible) meant that in each interview there was a degree of freedom to explore the answers given by the interviewees. This led to the interviews covering the intended themes but also in them developing in different directions. However, the researcher believes that this was necessary in order to enhance the richness of the data gained from the interview process.

Legal and ethical aspects of undertaking educational research

"Being clear about the nature of the agreement you have entered into with your research subjects or contacts ... Ethical research involves getting the informed

consent … it involves reaching agreement about the issues of this data and how its analysis will be reported and disseminated. And it is about keeping to such agreements when they have been reached" Blaxter et al. (1996, p.146).

The issues raised by Blaxter (1996) are now reflected and extended by the revised guidelines put forward by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004); guidelines which formed the basis of the research activity in relation to both the questionnaires and interviews undertaken in this research project. For example, in accordance with the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2004) all interviewees were assured that the interview would remain confidential and would only be used within the programme of research detailed to them. Each was also offered the right to withdraw at anytime during the interview. All of those interviewed were very positive and none ruled out any part of the interview schedule, or withdrew at any stage.

All data recordings (voice and text) were stored without names, using unique numbers as identifiers for analysis purposes. As no personal data were to be retained on an electronic data base, or in hard copy, there were no implications under the Data Protection Act 1998 for the data collection, analysis or thesis preparation.

Analyzing the data

"Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of the study." (Yin, 1994, p.105)

Analysis of the data was undertaken using a system of structuring and coding, as recommended by inter alia Watling (2002) and Silverman (2000). This enabled both the interview transcripts and survey data to be put into a manageable format, and allowed preliminary analysis undertaken by the allocation of codes. The actual process is discussed in the sections below.

Questionnaire Data

Each respondent was allocated a unique code that identified both their college and staff group. Each question from the questionnaire was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The response from individuals from each college was entered into a separate section of the spreadsheet in order to provide data relating to each individual college and relevant staff group. Table 9 provides an example of the spreadsheet for lecturers.

Table 9: Example of opening row of lecturers' questionnaire spreadsheet

	Role	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
A	Someone who is a "bridge" or "broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams			
	College A	14/24=58%	7/24=29%	3/24=13%
	College B	6/11=55%	4/11=36%	1/11=9%
	College C	6/8=75%	2/8=25%	N/A

	Total	26/43=61%	13/43=30%	4/43=9%

The data from the three colleges was then amalgamated into a single spreadsheet for all colleges and staff groups for each question (Table 10).

Table 10: Example of opening row of amalgamated questionnaire spreadsheet

	Role	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
A	Someone who is a "bridge" or "broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams			
	SMT	1/10 20%	6/10 60%	3/10 30%
	Middle Managers	15/26 58%	10/26 38%	1/26 4%
	Lecturers	26/43 61%	13/43 30%	4/43 9%
	Total	**42/79 53%**	**29/79 37%**	**8/79 10%**

Prior to computer entry of the data, completed questionnaires were checked to ensure that respondents had complied with instructions for completing each question. Each questionnaire was given a unique serial number for identification purposes.

In order to be able to compare the perceptions of both individual groups and colleges, descriptive statistical analysis was applied to the numerical data entered into the Excel spreadsheets. Bar charts have been produced in order to provide a visual view of perceptions gained from the respondents of the questionnaire stage of the research project. However, as the target numbers involved are relatively low, no further statistical analysis was undertaken. The aim of the analysis of the questionnaires is therefore to highlight and compare the perceptions of staff groups rather than to provide statistically valid statements.

Interview Data

As discussed earlier, analysis of the qualitative data gained from the interviews was undertaken by the use of structuring and coding. Each transcript was divided into small sections that comprise either a question from the interviewer or an answer or part answer from the interviewee. This information was then transferred into Excel to form a spreadsheet detailing collective responses from the three colleges and staff groups.

The concept codes that were used in the above analysis were constructed from the initial readings of the transcripts, together with the various themes identified during the literature review of the role of curriculum middle managers in Further Education and of course the research questions. The codes were attached to individual comments that address or are relevant in some way to the concept. This inclusive approach was taken as it was felt that non-relevant evidence can be discarded at a later stage. Table 11 provides an example of the analysis undertaken for a lecturer transcript.

Table 11: Example of opening rows of lecturer interview analysis

Coll	Lect	Utt	Qu	Text	Role	Notes
A	L1	1		Thank you for agreeing to the interview. The reason for the interview today is to explore the role of curriculum middle managers within Further Education, the information gained will form part of my Ed.D at Birmingham University.		
A	L1	2		Right		

A	L1	3	1A	While information from the interview may be used in my thesis which may be published, individuals and their Colleges taking part in the research will not be named. In the questionnaire you have identified that the most important role of a curriculum middle manager is leading, managing and motivating the team. Why is that? Why is it so important?		
A	L1	4	1A	I think, particularly since I have been education, it's a department thing. If we all work together then the department, when it is buzzing, we can get a lot more out of it. As a lead role it's important to lead the teacher but let the teachers get on with teaching. You haven't got to understand the subject areas of the teachers or have to specialist knowledge to operate a department effectively.	5.1 3.2	Leadership Dual Role

In order to be able to compare the perceptions of both individual groups and colleges, descriptive statistical analysis was applied to data entered into the Excel spreadsheets for each code. Bar charts were produced in order to provide a visual view of perceptions gained from the respondents. However, as the target numbers involved are low, no further statistical analysis was undertaken. The aim of the analysis of the interview data was therefore to highlight and compare the perceptions of staff groups, rather than to provide statistically valid statements. Indeed, one of the fundamental aims of the use of interviews was to provide supporting statements from those interviewed. It was felt that these statements would highlight, support or contradict the perceptions flowing from the questionnaire data, but would ultimately add depth to the finding of the research project.

Issues of validity and reliability

Since validity and reliability are such important issues for any investigation, it is important to explain briefly how they have been addressed in the design and conduct of the research as a whole.

The concepts of validity and reliability were originally developed in the context of quantitative studies in the social sciences (Kirk and Miller, 1986) which sought to use highly controlled and standardized procedures and precise quantification of variables, following the positivist tradition of the natural and physical sciences (Cohen *et al*, 2002).

There has therefore been some reluctance to apply these ideas to research that does not fit the exacting requirements of the positivist model. Nonetheless, they provide a useful discipline prompting investigators to ensure that research is designed and undertaken in a systematic, logical and rigorous way, so that errors and misjudgments are as far as possible avoided or reduced, at all stages of the research. As Yin (1994) points out, research should be conducted as if "someone was always looking over your shoulder" (p.3), constantly questioning the rationale and procedures of the investigation.

Various strategies have been used in the study to try to ensure that it provides a valid picture of the topic of enquiry. The exploratory stage was important, involving the piloting of the research instrument. This enabled the researcher to ensure that the main issues, that is, issues relating to the fundamental role of the curriculum middle manager, were included in the data collection instruments. Anything less may have failed to give

an accurate picture of the role of curriculum middle managers in colleges of Further Education, but instead may have given a portrayal imposed by the researcher.

Other validity concerns were also important in designing the questionnaire and interview schedules. The researcher attempted to assess their content validity by asking researchers with experience in the field of enquiry to evaluate them. Construct validity is concerned with developing appropriate operational measures of the concepts being studied. This issue was addressed in a number of ways:

(I)   By specifying as clearly as possible the research aims and questions prior to designing the research instruments;

(II)   By drawing on design advice from researcher colleagues;

(III)   By considering approaches used in similar studies

Another important strategy as mentioned earlier, was the use of triangulation, described by Woods (1994, p. 67) as "the major means of validating ... qualitative work". As Hammersley and Atkinson (1989, p. 199) suggest:

"what is involved in triangulation is not the combination of different kinds of data per se, but rather an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis" (p.199).

In accepting Hammersley and Atkinson's view I acknowledge that in trying to establish a valid or accurate picture of the role of curriculum middle managers in colleges of Further Education there is a perceived need to crosscheck the perspectives given by the questionnaire with those given in the interviews. Using different sources of data clearly enables the researcher to corroborate data from a particular source by comparing them with results from another source - if the findings are mutually consistent, this would increases our confidence that a valid picture has been achieved, and vice versa. However, in the case of my research, the fundamental aim is to consider the views of a reasonably large number of individuals working in Further Education and, as such, will inevitably lead to multiple perspectives e.g senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers. That said, where the data from the questionnaires suggested a particular aspect of the role of curriculum middle managers was an issue, then further questions in pursuit of validity were asked in the interviews.

In order to ensure that the questionnaire functioned as successfully as possible in the field, a small pilot survey was undertaken and the information gained from this was used to design the final questionnaire.

For checking external reliability a test-the-test approach is often recommended (Coolican, 1990). That is, asking the same respondents to complete the questionnaire on two occasions. However, due to the time that this would involve and the burden it would impose on the staff of the colleges being reviewed, this idea was discarded.

Another important strategy for increasing the reliability of a research study was to approach fieldwork in a systematic way, so that it could be replicated by another researcher. Systematic arrangements for fieldwork at each college were therefore developed and implemented. Particular concern was to ensure that a random sample of staff was selected within each college, and to establish a protocol (Yin, 1994) for the administration of questionnaires.

Conclusion

All research requires difficult choices about areas of focus and appropriate methods of enquiry. In making these choices, the researcher needs to weigh up the advantages and drawbacks of adopting a particular focus or method against what is lost by not selecting alternative areas of focus or strategies for investigation (Cohen *et al*, 2002). Thus for example large-scale surveys provide breadth of coverage, but may give a rather superficial picture of the issues explored. Conversely, in-depth case studies provide a detailed view but cannot be generalized to other cases.

This research project used multiple methods of enquiry and analysis of documentation: a reasonable sized survey together with a smaller scale interview study. Such a strategy has a number of advantages, as noted earlier. However, given my limited time and resources, it may have hindered the extensive use of each of the methods employed. In particular, I have concerns over how much time was given to exploring issues raised from the analysis of the survey during the interview stage of the research project. A second drawback concerns its time scale. The study was conducted at a point in time and thus provided a picture of the role of curriculum middle managers as seen at that particular time. Due to the nature of Further Education the time of year can have an influence on the views of the respondents. A longitudinal research design may have enabled exploration of how curriculum middle managers are viewed throughout the year and therefore give a more accurate view of their true role, but time does not allow me to undertake such a study.

Triangulation of data was achieved through the complementary activities of interviews and the use of questionnaires, and the ethical and legal issues associated with this research have been commented on. I believe that this research has a good level of authenticity as the research aims are firmly based on existing published work and discussed with members of the EdD course team, fellow students and professional colleagues. The data analysis techniques have been outlined and support the decision to use the data collection methods of interviews and questionnaires.

Whether the methods used are appropriate, and necessary, for future research in this area is best judged by the quality of the information in Chapter Four and Five, to which the study now turns. In the next two chapters the research findings are reported and analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that a person's beliefs, ideas and preferences are individually constructed, being shaped by the social networks and cultural traditions that they inhabit. This construction influences how people perceive and interpret events. Through a complex amalgam of personal beliefs, experiences, and expectations of those who they interact with when carrying out their job, curriculum middle managers construct their own perception of what their role should be and act accordingly. It is these perceptions that are at the heart of this research.

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire, comparing responses from lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers and looking for themes across the three groups. Descriptive statistics were used to show any emerging differences between the three groups. Key issues that emerged from the analysis for each of the sections of the questionnaire have been identified and followed-up in the interview part of the study. Data from the interviews is used in the analysis, illustrated by the use of selected quotations to provide a deeper insight into the key findings of the research. I am aware that in selecting these quotations I have effectively decided what to include and foreground (Edwards 2002). However, I have, wherever possible, used a wide range of quotations from different members of the role set.

In the text the interviewees are referred to by a two part alpha/numeric code. The first part of the code identifies the interviewee. For example,

L1(A) = Lecturer 1, College A.
M2(B) = Curriculum Middle Manager 2, College B.
SM(C) = Senior Manager 3, College C.

The second part of the code identifies the relevant part of the interview transcript from which the quote was taken. Thus L1(A)Utt4 refers to Lecturer 1, College A, utterance 4 in the interview transcript.

The chapter begins by considering how curriculum middle managers and each of the immediate members of role set describe the role of the curriculum middle manager. The second section of the chapter considers the expectations of curriculum middle managers and their role set, reviewing which tasks curriculum middle managers, senior managers and lecturers consider being both the most and least important. The third section of the chapter reviews the influences on middle managers when making a number of key decisions, considering the top three influences. The final section of the chapter considers the actual expectations that curriculum middle managers have of themselves and reviews

how they perceive the importance of a number of key tasks previously identified in the literature.

At the end of each section there is a summary of the issues discussed and at the end of the chapter I have sought to provide a synthesis and interpretation of the overall data in the form of key themes that have emerged.

Role of the Curriculum Middle Manager

<u>Introduction</u>

The information contained in this section is relevant to the following research questions:

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Research Questions:

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- How does their perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

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As has been discussed earlier the curriculum middle manager's role is complex and multifaceted. Briggs (2003) in her typology of the middle manager's role identified six tasks that "are useful in examining and defining manager activities" (p.141). The literature review supported and further developed the idea of key tasks that had been put forward by Briggs (2003).

This section therefore presents six aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role as perceived by curriculum middle managers and their role set; that is, data that explores the views of lecturers and senior managers, as well as curriculum middle managers themselves. It draws on data from both the questionnaires and interviews to investigate six key aspects of the role identified and discussed in the literature. The six aspects considered are detailed below:

- Bridge or Broker   The manager acts as a 'Bridge' or 'Broker' between senior managers and lecturers.

- Leader   Involves focusing on both contingent and transformational aspects of leadership. The role-holder interacts with their teams to effect implementation.

- Manager   Involves making things happen, is largely enacted mechanically, using the homogeneous systems of the college in order to carry out a particular college function.

- Subject Expert knowledge   Involves being a source of curriculum expertise and information for subjects within the managers area of responsibility.

- Quality of Teaching   Involves the manager ensuring that the quality of teaching which the curriculum area is meeting the standard required by the college.

- Administrator   Involves ensuring completion of relevant administration within the curriculum area.

It is accepted that these six aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role are not mutually exclusive and individual comments made in the interviews often indicated awareness of the overlapping nature of more than one activity.

In this section respondents were presented, both in the questionnaire and the interviews, with six statements linked to the six aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role. Respondents were asked to indicate in relation to each statement whether they considered "strongly, on the whole or not really" that these statements were part of a curriculum middle manager's role.

(A)   Bridge or Broker

The review of the literature revealed that a developing area within the curriculum middle manager's role was acting as an 'intermediary' between members of their immediate role set. Respondents were therefore asked to consider whether the role of the curriculum middle manager included being a bridge or broker between the two main members of the curriculum middle managers role set; that is, senior managers and lecturers.

Figure 3: Bridge or Broker
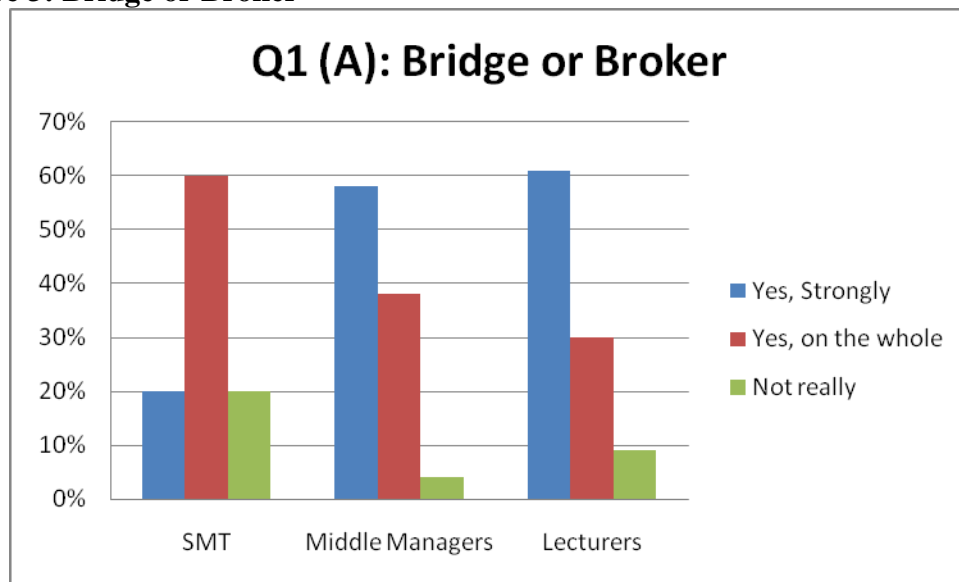
Table 12: Bridge or Broker

Would you describe the role of a Curriculum Middle Manager as?	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
Someone who is a "bridge" or "broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams			
SMT	20%	60%	20%
Middle Managers	58%	38%	4%
Lecturers	61%	30%	9%

Table 12/Figure 3 suggests that overall, the majority of respondents within this section considered that being a "Bridge" or "Broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams was an aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role. The overall profile of responses from curriculum middle managers and lecturers not only supported this view but were to some degree similar. Reponses from senior managers indicate a significant difference of opinion. For while over half, 58 per cent (n= 15) and 61 per cent (n=26) respectively, of curriculum middle managers and lecturers responded "yes, strongly" to this question, only 20 per cent (n=2) of senior managers did the same. This, together with the high number (80 per cent, n=8) of senior managers who responded "not really", or "yes, on the whole", to this section seems to suggest that they are not as certain as lecturers or curriculum middle managers. One interpretation of this is that senior managers may not see curriculum middle managers as having the authority or power to "Bridge" or "Broker" decisions.

(B)   Leader

It was noted in the review of the literature that curriculum middle managers are often reluctant to consider themselves as leaders. Respondents were asked whether the role of curriculum middle managers included "motivating, managing and leading their team".

Figure 4: Leader
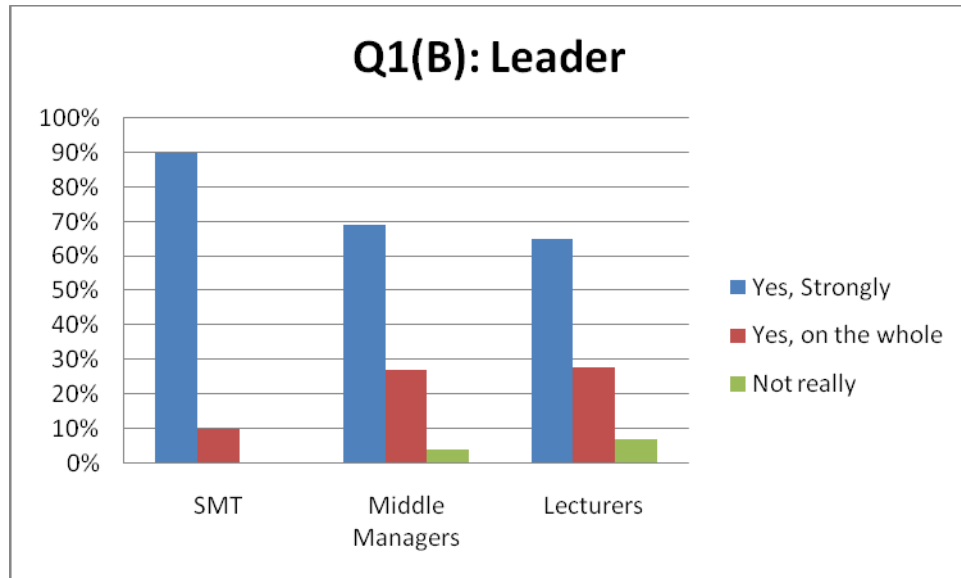
Table 13: Leader

Would you describe the role of a Curriculum Middle Manager as?	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
Someone who leads, motivates and manages a team			
SMT	90%	10%	N/A
Middle Managers	69%	27%	4%
Lecturers	65%	28%	7%

Table 13/Figure 4 suggests that in answering this question both curriculum middle managers and their role set responded positively that the role of the curriculum middle manager included leading, motivating and managing a team. However, while 4 per cent (n=1) and 7 per cent (n=3) of curriculum middle managers and lecturers respectively responded "not really", none of the senior manager respondents had any doubt that this was part of the curriculum middle managers role. Indeed, 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers responded "yes, strongly" to the question, compared to 69 per cent (n=18) of curriculum middle managers and 65 per cent (n=28) of lecturers.

Overall, this would appear to suggest that senior managers view this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role more highly than that of other members of the role set. One interpretation of this is that senior managers may, due to the nature of their own role, identify with this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role more than the curriculum middle managers or lecturers.

(C)   Manager

Management activities were identified within the literature review as a controversial task among curriculum middle managers. Each of the three groups of respondents was asked if a curriculum middle manager's role included interpreting the college vision and college policy and implementing it within the curriculum area.

Figure 5: Manager

Q1(C): Manager
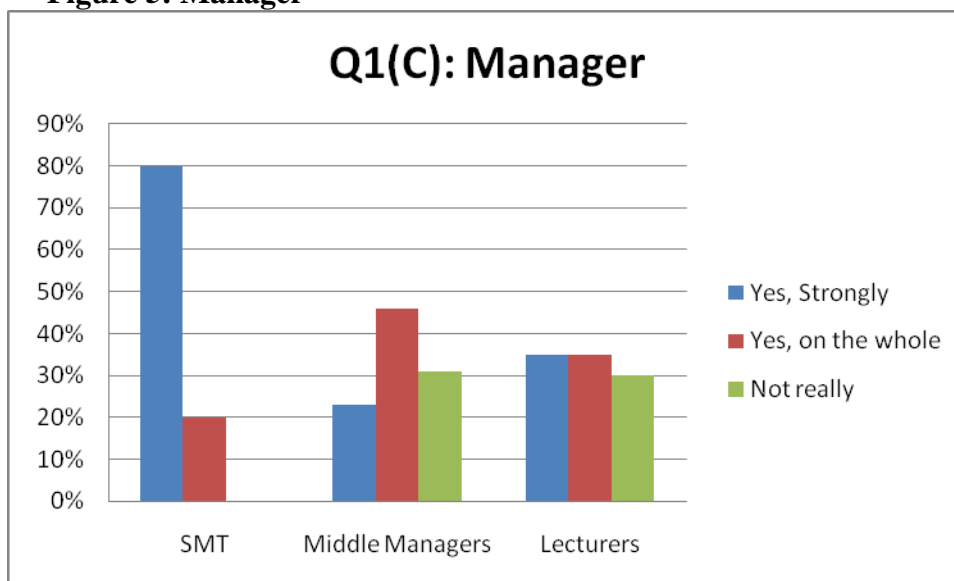
Table 14: Manager

Would you describe the role of a Curriculum Middle Manager as?	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
Someone who interprets the college vision and college policy and implements it within the curriculum area			
SMT	80%	20%	N/A
Middle Managers	23%	46%	31%
Lecturers	35%	35%	30%

The majority of respondents (see Table 14/Figure 5) responded either "yes, strongly" or "yes, on the whole" that interpreting and implementing college policy into the curriculum area was an aspect of the curriculum middle managers role. However, only 23 per cent (n=6) and 35 per cent (n=15) of curriculum middle manager's and lecturers respectively responded "yes, strongly", compared with 80 per cent (n=8) of senior managers. Indeed, none of the senior managers responded "not really" to the question, compared to 31 per cent (n=8) for curriculum middle managers and 30 per cent (n=13) for lecturers.

Overall, this would appear to indicate that senior managers view this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role more highly than the other groups. One interpretation of this is that senior managers may believe that curriculum middle managers are central to the implementation of policy that they, as members of the college's senior management team, prescribe.

(D)   Subject Expert

The review of the literature revealed that traditionally curriculum middle managers were seen by both themselves and their immediate role set as a subject expert. Respondents were asked if the role of curriculum middle managers was someone who is a source of specialist expertise.

Figure 6: Subject Expert
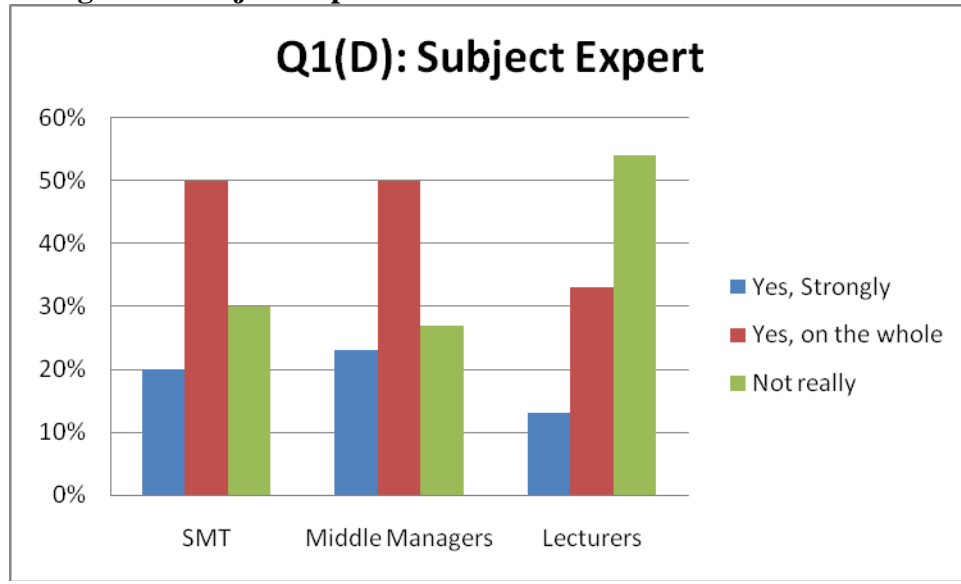
Table 15: Subject Expert

Would you describe the role of a Curriculum Middle Manager as?	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
Someone who is a source of specialist expertise			
SMT	20%	50%	30%
Middle Managers	23%	50%	27%
Lecturers	13%	33%	54%

Table 15/Figure 6 details that the profile of responses from senior managers and curriculum middle managers were closely aligned with each other. However, lecturers indicated that they viewed this aspect of the curriculum middle managers role differently. With 54 per cent (n=23) considering that this was "not really" part of the role; compared with 27 per cent (n=7) of curriculum middle managers and 30 per cent (n=3) of senior managers. When this difference was explored in the interviews there was a general agreement between lecturer interviewees that being a 'subject expert' was no longer possible due to the increasing range and diversity of curriculum middle managers' areas of responsibility. Their views were illustrated by the comments of two lecturers who stated that:

"They [curriculum middle managers] might be a source of expertise in a limited field within their area, but as areas become bigger and more diverse it's impossible for them to
be a source of expertise to everyone." L1(C)Utt4

"I suppose lots of things came into my mind in terms of curriculum middle managers, but they are not there for specialist subject knowledge as there are too many subjects underneath them and they rely on the knowledge of their lecturers for these subjects." L2(A)Utt3

However, it should be noted that both lecturers also commented that they felt it was important that curriculum middle managers were teachers or had been teachers within the last few years.

Overall, the responses may suggest a limited acknowledgement of this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role by curriculum middle managers and their immediate role set. The majority of senior and curriculum middle managers accept that "yes, on the whole" this is part of the role, the percentage of "yes, strongly" responses, and "not really" response from both groups, suggests a degree of uncertainty.

(E)   Quality of Teaching

One of the key tasks of the curriculum middle manager's role identified in the review of the literature was that of ensuring the quality of teaching in their area. Respondents were asked if the curriculum middle manager's role included ensuring the quality of teaching within the curriculum area.

Figure 7: Quality of Teaching
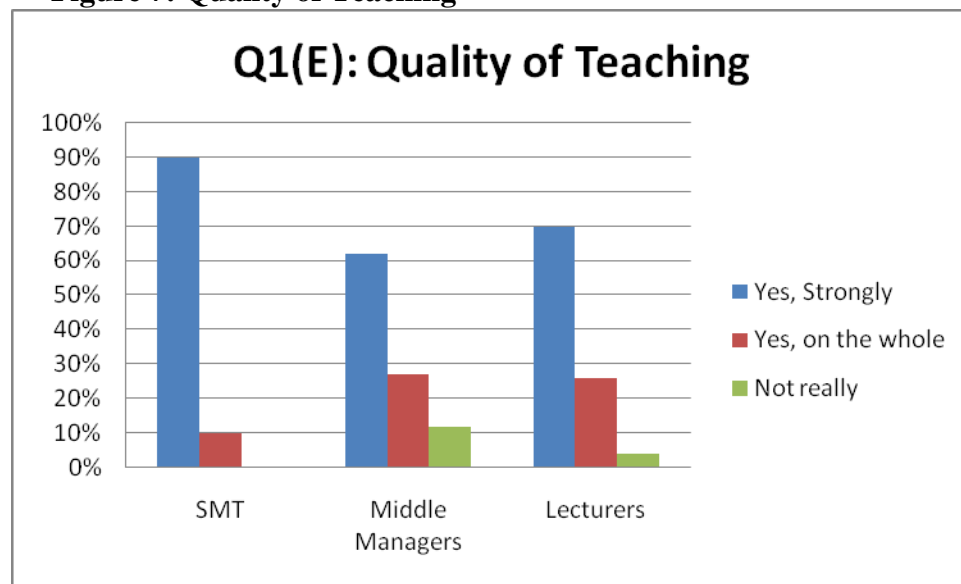
Table 16: Quality of Teaching

Would you describe the role of a Curriculum Middle Manager as?	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
Someone who ensures the quality of teaching within the curriculum area			
SMT	90%	10%	N/A
Middle Managers	62%	27%	12%
Lecturers	70%	26%	4%

Table 16/Figure 7 appears to indicate that both curriculum middle managers and their role set acknowledge that ensuring the quality of teaching within their curriculum area is a key aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role.

However, within the three groups, 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers responded "yes, strongly" compared with 62 per cent (n=16) for curriculum middle managers and 70 per cent (n-30) for lecturers. In addition, no senior managers considered that this was "not really" an aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role, compared with 12 per cent (n=3) of curriculum middle managers and 4 per cent (n=2) of lecturers. While the distribution of responses would suggest an overall acceptance of this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role it may also suggest a degree of reluctance by both curriculum middle managers and lecturers to fully accept that the issue of the quality of teaching within curriculum areas was a high priority for the curriculum middle manager.

(F)   Administrator

The review of the literature highlighted the increasing importance of 'administrative' tasks within the curriculum middle manager's role. Respondents were asked if the curriculum middle manager's role includes ensuring that administration within the curriculum area is completed.

Figure 8: Administrator
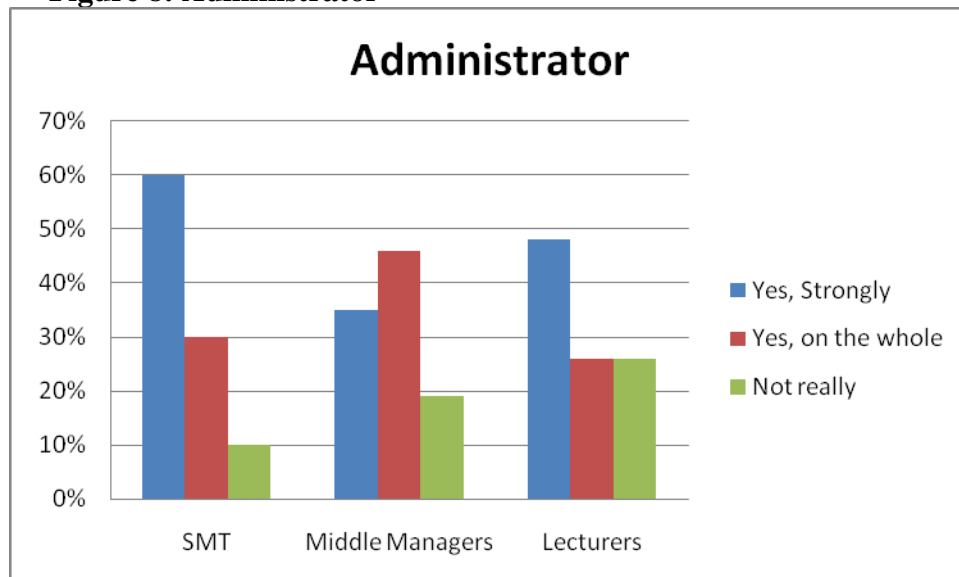
Table 17: Administrator

Would you describe the role of a Curriculum Middle Manager as?	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
Someone who ensures that administration within the curriculum area is completed			
SMT	60%	30%	10%
Middle Managers	35%	46%	19%
Lecturers	48%	26%	26%

All three groups responded positively that the role of the curriculum middle manager included ensuring that administration within the curriculum area is completed (see Table17/Figure 8). In particular, 60 per cent (n=6) of senior managers responded "yes, strongly", compared to only 35 per cent (n=9) of curriculum middle managers and 48 per cent (n=21) of lecturers. In addition, while only 10 per cent (n=1) of senior managers

responded "not really" to this question, 19 per cent (n=5) and 26 per cent (n=11) of curriculum middle managers and lecturers respectively responded the same.

Overall, this would appear to indicate that senior managers view this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role more highly than that of other members of the role set. One interpretation of this is that senior managers, due to the nature of their own role, tend to be more involved in the administrative side of education.

Summary

The responses from senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers indicate some different perspectives on the curriculum middle manager's role. However, the most relevant difference in perception seems to be that between,on the one hand, senior managers and, on the other, curriculum middle managers and lecturers; with possible different perceptions being recorded in five of the six aspects of the role provided in question one.

In the "yes, strongly" category senior manager responses appear to focus upon aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role that relate to college targets, college structures and systems, the handling of administration and the implementation of quality procedures. Whereas the "yes, mainly" responses from curriculum middle managers and lecturers in this category were generally lower and focused on aspects of the role that are linked to the quality of teaching, managing a team and "brokering" of senior management decisions.

A statistical test, chi square, was undertaken to compare the responses from the curriculum middle manager's and their role set. However, due to the small number of senior manager responses within the study the analysis was not possible.

Overall, the strong senior manager responses may suggest a concern with the more instrumental aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role, compared with the more organic concerns of curriculum middle managers and lecturers.

The Most Important Aspect of the Role

The information contained in this section is relevant to the following research questions:

Research Questions:

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- How does the perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

In this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to identify the most important aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role from the same six aspects provided to them in the previous section. This section aims to not only provide an insight into the true importance attached to each aspect of the role but also to allow for a more in-depth view to be gained at the interview stage. The responses have been collated and are presented below.

Figure 9: Q2 - Most Important
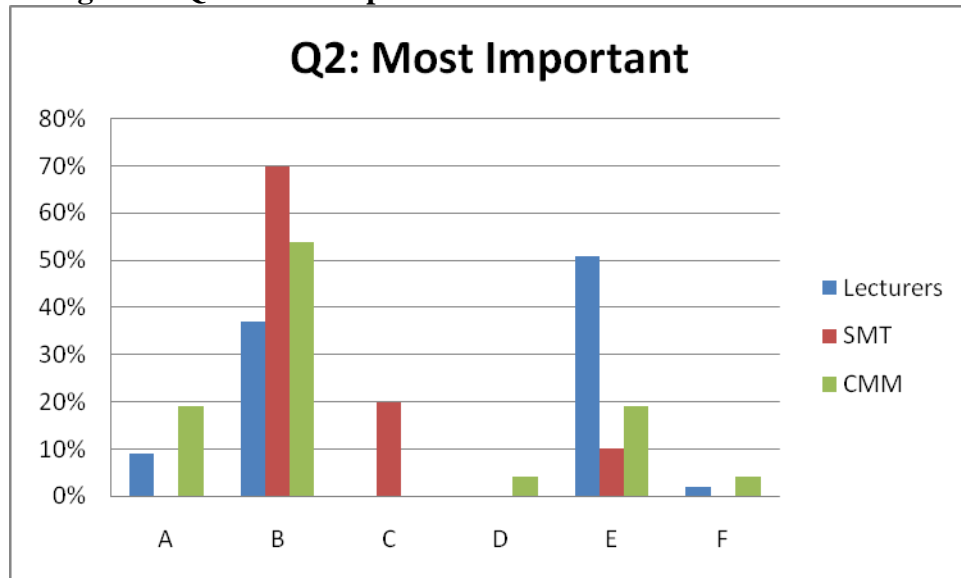
Table 18: Most Important

Which one of the above do you feel is the most important part of a curriculum middle managers role?						
	A Bridge or Broker	B Leader	C Manager	D Subject Expert	E Quality of Teaching	F Administrator
Lecturers	9%	37%	0%	0%	51%	2%
SMT	0%	70%	20%	0%	10%	0%
Middle Managers	19%	54%	0%	4%	19%	4%

Table 18/Figure 9 suggests that overall, respondents considered that the most important aspect of a curriculum middle manager's role was (B) leading, motivating and managing a team. However, there are some interesting differences between the three group's responses. For example, while 70 per cent (n=7) of senior managers and 54 per cent (n=14) of curriculum middle manager's identified this as the most important aspect, only 37 per cent (n=16) of lecturers agreed; making this their second most important aspect of a curriculum middle manager's role.

When this aspect of the role was explored in the interviews senior managers made it clear that they considered this to be a "core" function of the role. With two senior manager's stating that:

"In simple terms, it is the core function of the role. A curriculum manager must be able to lead and manage their team" SM2(C)Utt8.

"All of my curriculum managers understand that managing their curriculum area is their priority. Nothing else is as important as ensuring that both quality and financial targets are met and to do this they must be managers first. Ensuring that their teams are doing what has been agreed" SM1(C)Utt11.

The importance of this aspect of the role is also reflected, albeit in less forceful language, in the comments of curriculum middle managers.

"I think if you can show leadership qualities and motivate people then the role is made so much easier. I believe in team-work, so this fits nicely into my way of working" CM1(A)Utt2.

"If you don't lead and motivate your team then its all going to fall apart, it's not going to work" CM2(B)Utt5.

However, it is noteworthy that the importance of this aspect of the role does not appear to be shared by the lecturer interviewees, with only one of the six interviewed considering this to be the "most important" aspect. Indeed, while the responses from senior and curriculum middle managers clearly related to managing and leading the curriculum team, the comments from the lecturer are based on motivation and support.

"As a teacher, a lecturer, your first port of call if you have curriculum issues is your curriculum leader. Everyone in education is under a lot of pressure and you sometimes need someone to motivate you – someone who cares and understands what you are doing. Someone who you can be honest with and will be supportive. It's so easy to become disengaged from your work and you just need that support and motivation to help you get back on track" L2(A)Utt6.

The lecturer is highlighting their desire for a supportive team leader who understands the demands of the changing workload of lecturers within Further Education; a function linked to the aspect of the curriculum middle managers teaching rather than management role.

Significantly, 51 per cent of lecturers (n=22) considered that (E) ensuring the quality of teaching was the most important aspect of a curriculum middle manager's role. There was a noticeable difference between the level of responses between the other groups; senior managers 10 per cent (n=1) and curriculum middle manager's 19 per cent (n=5). This would appear to indicate a significant difference in how the three groups see the key focus of the curriculum middle manager's role; two focusing on leadership and management and the third on teaching.

Indeed, the importance of this aspect of the role was made very clear by all six of the lecturers during the interviews, with two expressing a strong belief that the curriculum

middle manager's role should be centred on teaching rather than any other aspect. One lecturer commented that:

"It's got to be about the quality of teaching and learning and if the curriculum manager doesn't know what's going on then who does? L1(C)Utt11.

Other lecturers made similar points, linking the idea that curriculum middle managers were still teachers albeit with management responsibilities, one stating that:
"The main reason that we are here is to teach and so checking the quality of teaching has got to be a priority. After all, we are all teachers and we know how important it is to get it right" L2(B)Utt7.

The second lecturer also reinforced the idea that curriculum middle managers were still employed as teachers and as such knew that they needed to make tasks linked to teaching a priority. However, they also highlighted that the checking of learning was now within their area of responsibility. The lecturer stated that:

"I think that is what they were appointed to do, they are teachers above all and will want to make sure that everyone is teaching as they should be" L1(C)Utt7.

In respect of (A) being a "Bridge" or "Broker", 19 per cent (n=5) of curriculum middle manager's and 9 per cent (n=4) of lecturers placed this as the most important aspect of a curriculum middle manager's role; ranking it third out of the six aspects of the role being reviewed. However, there are some variations in responses from the role set; with no senior managers ranking this as the most important aspect of the role. This may indicate a difference in perception of this aspect of the role, with those involved in the strategic management of the college viewing this differently from those involved in the day to day running of the college.

Only 20 per cent (n=2) of the senior managers considered that (C), someone who interprets the college vision and policy and implements it within the curriculum, was the most important aspect of the role. One interpretation of this is that senior managers view the role of curriculum middle managers as key in actually implementing college policies, rather than making or influencing policy.

In considering (F), very few respondents agreed that the most important aspect of a curriculum middle manager's role was ensuring that administration within the curriculum area was completed. The distribution of responses within the three group was that no senior managers responded positively, 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers and 2 per cent (n=1) of lecturers.

Again, very few respondents considered that (E), being a source of specialist expertise, was the most important aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role. Indeed, there were no positive responses from either senior managers or lecturers; with only 4 per cent

(n=1) curriculum middle manager identifying this as the most important aspect of the role.

Summary

Overall, the perception of the 17 people who participated in the interview element of the study reflected the findings from the analysis the questionnaire. In both parts for senior managers and curriculum middle managers, "leading, motivating and managing a team" was identified as the overall "most important" aspect of a curriculum middle manager's role. However, while the interview data appears to reflect the opinion of both senior and middle managers, it does not reflect that of the majority of the lecturer interviewees. Indeed, both the comments gained during the interviews with lecturers and the number of lecturer respondents in the questionnaire placing (E) "ensuring the quality of teaching within the curriculum area" as their "most important" aspect would appear to indicate a significant difference in how the three groups see the key focus of the curriculum middle managers role; two believing that the focus of the role should be on leadership and management, while the third on teaching. This maybe seen as a recipe for role conflict and strain.
Expectations of the Role

Introduction

The information contained in this section is relevant to the following research questions:

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Research Questions:

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

- How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

- How does the perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

</div>

As discussed earlier in the review of the literature, the expectations and perceptions of members of the curriculum middle managers role set, that is, the people whom they interact with when they carry out their job, have a great influence on the actual role of the curriculum middle manager that is finally enacted. Indeed, understanding such expectations and perceptions is central to the consideration of such issues as 'role strain' or 'role conflict'.

While individual curriculum middle manager's own experiences, values and beliefs clearly influence their role, it is contended that to fully understand the issues surrounding role then all of the influences need to be considered. The questionnaire and interviews therefore attempt to gather information on the expectations of the other members of the role set members. Respondents were provided with identical lists of tasks which had been identified in the literature review as commonly carried out by curriculum middle managers. In this list they were asked to identify the top/bottom three tasks that they expect curriculum middle manager to take responsibility for.

Data from the questionnaire and interviews responses is grouped according to the classification developed by Wise (1999) and discussed earlier in the review of the literature. The data is presented under the four headings used by Wise (1999):

- Academic
- Educational
- Managerial
- Administrative

Tasks within the questionnaire were not grouped according to this classification, but were mixed with no reference to the classification.

Academic Tasks

The tasks placed in this category are generally not contentious and are accepted by most writers and curriculum middle managers as being part of an academic middle manager's role and directly support the learning process (Wise, 1999). The four academic tasks below represent a range of tasks within the academic category.

Figure 10: Academic Tasks - Top Three

Academic Tasks - Top Three
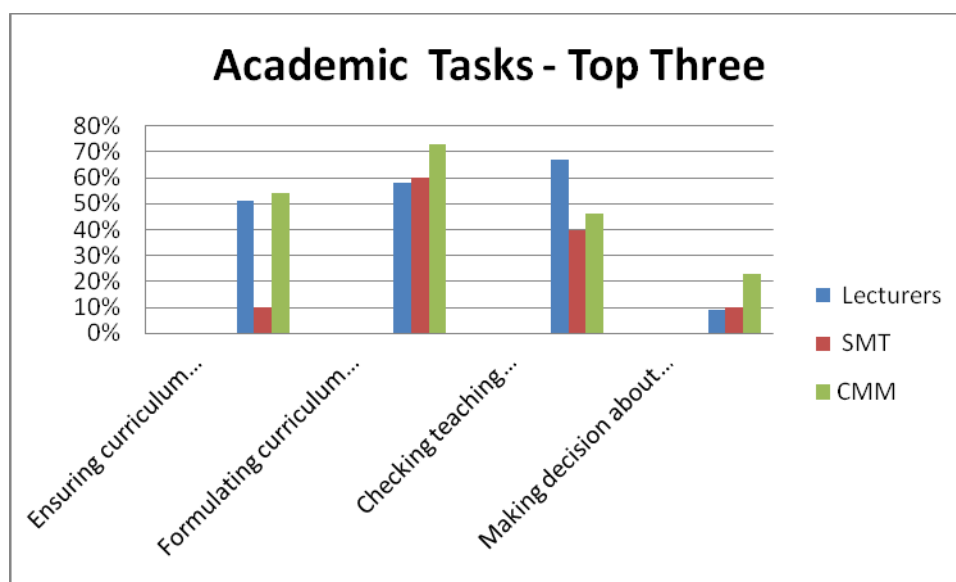
Table 19: Academic Tasks – Top Three

Academic Tasks	Percentage of responses – Top 3		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Ensuring curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities	51%	10%	54%
Formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content	58%	60%	73%
Checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies	67%	40%	46%
Making decision about teaching resources to buy	9%	10%	23%

Table 19/Figure 10 suggests that the overall profile of responses from senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers indicated that they view the four individual aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role within this category differently; with the closest alignment of responses, in two of the four tasks presented in the questionnaire, being recorded between senior managers and lecturers.

In respect of ensuring curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities 54 per cent of curriculum middle manager's (n=14) and 51 per cent (n=22) of lecturers identified this to be one of the top three aspects of a curriculum middle manager's role. Significantly, only 10 per cent of senior managers (n=1) placed this in their top three. This would appear to indicate that senior managers do not view this particular aspect of curriculum development as being as significant as curriculum middle managers or lecturers.

The importance attached to this aspect of the role by both curriculum middle managers and lecturers is reflected in the comments made during the interviews. With interviewees from both groups commenting that this particular aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role is becoming increasingly important. Two lecturers summed up this view, stating that:

"… in this college it can be seen that it is important that all curriculum areas offer
all three levels – level 1, 2, 3 and in some cases even level 4. It's incredibly important
that the curriculum manager makes sure that students have an opportunity to study
whatever they want to at the right level for their capability. If we haven't got the right
courses at the right levels then we can't offer students progression and we will never
meet our targets" L2(B)Utt14.

"Because of the way the LSC are set-up the college has to provide services for what
the community want – meeting local needs and all that. But it's also about money. The
senior management team looks at its budget at the start of the year and then look at what
areas it physically needs to move into to raise the required money. The implementation of
this plan is left on the shoulders of curriculum middle manager. They are ones going to
have to get involved in recruiting teachers and buying resources to run the courses"
L1(A)Utt16.

Both lecturers highlight the importance of this aspect of the curriculum middle managers
role, linking it to providing an effective curriculum for local needs. However, the
comments of L1(A) also highlights the importance of this aspect of the role in relation to
the generation of the colleges income. Indeed, this point is made by a number of
curriculum middle managers, with one commenting that:

"Every year it becomes more and more important that we offer courses for students of
all abilities. Not only from an educational point of view but because Ofsted measure us
on   how inclusive we are and the LSC are always changing their funding priorities. Level
1 and 2 courses were the priority a few years ago – now it's all long level 3, with the bulk
of funding following it. If we don't offer the full range of courses we will never meet our
 funding target" CM2(B)Utt11.

While both the lecturer and curriculum middle managers relate the importance of this
aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role to financial as well as educational
performance, no senior managers highlighted the same factors.

In relation to formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content 73 per cent (n=19) of
curriculum middle managers considered this to be one of the top three aspects of the
curriculum middle managers role; compared with 60 per cent of senior managers (n=6)
and 58 per cent (n=24) of lecturers. Overall, the response rates from all three groups
suggest that they consider this to be a key aspect of the curriculum middle manager role,
something which was confirmed when this aspect of the curriculum middle managers role
was explored during the interviewees. The following two statements were indicative of
the views of all three groups:

"The reality of the job is to set-up courses and ensure that they are meeting what the
curriculum teams have said that they are going to do. In effect it's overseeing,
managing and implementing curriculum plans" L1(B)Utt8.

"I think its deciding what we as a department actually do. What we deliver, what we
should be delivering, what's out there for us to deliver and the way we move forward
… err … I think that's the curriculum middle managers role – deciding the way forward"
L2(A)Utt14.

In relation to checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies,
67 per cent (n=29) of lecturers placed this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role
in their top three; compared to only 40 per cent (n=4) of senior managers and 46 per cent
(n=12) of curriculum middle managers.

The comments made by the lecturer interviewees during the interviews reflect the
importance of this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role, with lecturers linking
the need to check the quality of teaching within their area with the need to continually
improve the teaching on their courses. One lecturer commented that:

"We are told every year that we have got to improve the quality of our teaching. But if
we don't know how we are doing then how are we going to improve? It is an important
part of their [curriculum middle manager] role to let us know how we are doing and what
we need to do to improve – without this information we cannot move forward"
L2(C)Utt16.

Lecturers also recognised that curriculum middle managers were under pressure from
senior managers to undertake this aspect of their role. As one lecturer commented:

"I think sometimes – I shouldn't really say this – but in my opinion I think sometimes
senior management can become very detached from what it can be like day to
day teaching. Senior management can be driven by facts and figures, making sure
targets are met, policies implemented and insist that curriculum managers check how the
teaching is in their areas. It is important that they check the teaching, not only to keep
senior management happy, but also so that we know that our teaching is ok"
L1(B)Utt23.

Curriculum middle manager interviewees also stressed the importance of this aspect of
the role. However, their comments tended to be centred on the perception that senior
managers expected them to check the teaching within their area. Their comments failed to
stress the importance of this task in relation to improving the quality of teaching within
their area, but merely indicated the importance of being seen to undertake the task. As
one curriculum middle manager stated:

"I think it's seen as a vastly important task by higher middle and senior managers.
People in senior manager roles can't be there every day checking the teaching in an area
so it's down to the curriculum managers to make sure that the teaching in their area is
good.

Senior managers have therefore got to be sure that the colleges teaching policies are being implemented properly, because as you know when people come around checking we are only as good as our documentation. I know that sounds sad but its true. If the paperwork shows that the teaching is regularly checked then senior managers are happy, if not, then we have the quality team in doing lesson observations" CM2(C)Utt17.

The importance of this aspect of the role does not appear to be shared by the senior manager interviewees, with only one of the five interviewed considering this aspect to be the "most important". Indeed, while the senior manager placed this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role in their top three, it would appear that their view of the importance of this aspect is centred on the need to accurately report the quality of teaching in an area rather than improving it. With the task of improving the quality of teaching resting with the colleges quality team rather than the curriculum middle manager.

> "It is the responsibility of curriculum managers to ensure that the standard of teaching in their area of responsibility is and continues to be satisfactory. The task of checking the teaching enables them to not only monitor how the teaching is developing in their area but also to liase with the Quality Improvement Team to ensure that any unsatisfactory teaching is addressed" SM1(A)Utt19

In considering the question of making decisions about which teaching resources to buy, 23 per cent (n=6) of curriculum middle managers placed this aspect of their role in their top three; compared to only 10 per cent (n=1) of senior managers and 9 per cent (n=4) of lecturers.

When this aspect of the role was explored in the interviews only one of the seventeen interviewees (a curriculum middle manager) placed this in their top three aspects of a curriculum middle manager's role.

Figure 11: Academic - Bottom Three
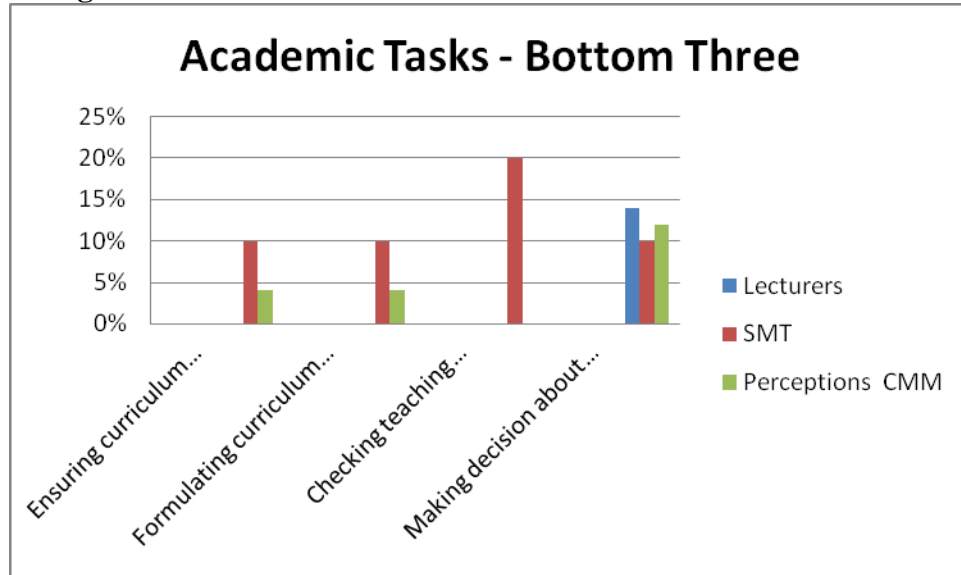
Table 20: Academic Tasks – Bottom Three

Academic Tasks	Percentage of responses – Bottom Three		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Ensuring curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities	0%	10%	4%
Formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content	0%	10%	4%
Checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies	0%	20%	0%
Making decision about teaching resources to buy	14%	10%	12%

Table 20/Figure 11 details that overall, only a small number of respondents placed any of the four academic tasks presented in the questionnaire in their bottom three. With all three groups responding similarly in three of the four aspects of the curriculum middle manager's role presented in this section. The only notable exception to this was in relation to "checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies". When considering this aspect of the role 20 per cent (n=2) of senior managers placed this in their bottom three compared to 0 per cent of both curriculum middle managers and lecturers.

An insight into this difference in perception of the groups was gained during the interviews. For while no curriculum middle managers or lecturers placed this aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role in their bottom three during the interviews, two senior managers did. Both senior managers considered that ensuring the quality of teaching within a college is the direct responsibility of the Quality Manager together with the relevant senior manager. As one senior manager commented:

"Raising the quality of teaching within the college is a priority of the senior management team. We need a system that can not only check the teaching in all areas of the college,   but one that can also put systems in place to deal with any problems that we find .Curriculum managers are just not best placed to undertake this task. That's why we have a Quality Manager who reports directly to the Vice Principal" SM1(C)Utt23.

One interpretation of this is that since Incorporation in 1992 more and more government policies and initiatives have focused on improving the quality of teaching within the Further Education sector. Senior managers, with their close interaction with such bodies as the LSC and Ofsted, recognise the need to have in-depth quality systems in place to improve the quality of teaching within their colleges, whereas curriculum middle managers and lecturers retain the belief that issues relating to the quality of teaching still rest within their own areas.

Summary

Overall, the responses from the three groups within this section of the questionnaire indicated a degree of agreement as to the expectations of curriculum middle managers in relation to the requirement to perform "academic" tasks. However, in relation to individual tasks within this category, significant differences were recorded; often with one member of the role set (mainly senior managers) indicating a significant difference in opinion as to the significance of the individual task being reviewed.

Educational Tasks

As discussed in the review of the literature the tasks placed in this category are generally regarded as being fundamental to the role of the curriculum middle manager in that they directly support the teaching process. However, it was also noted that while curriculum middle managers often accept these as fundamental tasks within their role (Briggs, 2003) they also tend to avoid these tasks as they often find them "an embarrassing activity" (Wise, 1999). The four tasks below represent a range of tasks within the educational category.

Figure 12: Educational Tasks - Top Three
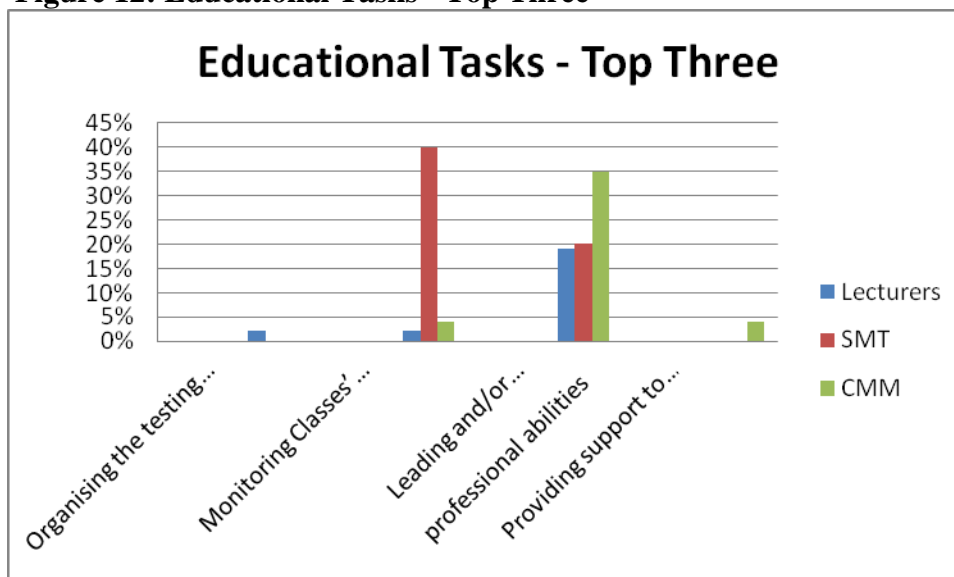
Table 21: Educational Tasks – Top Three

Educational Tasks	Percentage of responses – Top Three		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Organising the testing of student attainment	2%	0%	0%
Monitoring Classes' progress through schemes of work	2%	40%	4%
Leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities	19%	20%	35%
Providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work	0%	0%	4%

The overall profile of responses from senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers (Table 21/Figure 12) indicated some differences of opinion as to value of the tasks within this category. However, when individual questions within this section were considered, it can be seen that the differences between the perceptions of the three groups related mainly to two of the four individual tasks within this category. With very few respondents placing either "organising the testing of student attainment" or "providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work" in their top three.

In relation to "monitoring classes' progress through schemes of work", 40 per cent (n=4) senior managers placed this in their top three tasks; compared to only 2 per cent (n=1) of lecturers and 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers.

The importance attached to this aspect of the role by senior managers was also reflected in the comments made during the interviews. With two of the three senior managers interviewed commenting that this particular aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role is becoming more and more important as course success rates become the focal point

of measuring a college's performance. One senior manager summed up this view, stating that:

"As success rates become the main performance indicator used by both the LSC and Ofsted to measure how we are performing, it is of major importance that managers ensure that courses are being monitored. We cannot afford for courses not to perform. Managers have to ensure that course content is being delivered effectively" SM2(B)Utt21.

This, as discussed previously, suggests that senior managers, with their close interaction with such bodies as the LSC and Ofsted, recognise the need to quickly adjust their priorities in relation to new government priorities. Curriculum middle managers and lecturers, often with no direct access to this key information, appear not to be making such changes and therefore their view of this aspect of the curriculum middle managers may be based on different priorities to that of senior managers.

When the task "leading and/or promoting the development of the areas staff's professional abilities" was considered 35 per cent (n=9) of curriculum middle managers placed this in their top three; compared to 19 per cent (n=50 of lecturers and 20 per cent (n=2) senior managers.

This aspect of the role was explored in the interviews, with a number of curriculum middle managers suggesting that they considered this aspect of their role to be important because of the expectations of senior managers. One curriculum middle manager commented that:

"Senior managers expect that I ensure all of my staff undertakes the required number of CPD hours. If they don't then it's me who ends up in front of the assistant principal explaining why" CM2(C)Utt25.

Surprisingly, none of the curriculum middle managers linked this aspect of their role to improving the actual skills of their staff or the impact that staff development may have on the quality of teaching within their area of responsibility. However, the comments of both senior managers and lecturers during the interviews were linked to this point; with one lecturer stating that:

"The college teaching profile is only as good as the staff in it. The college employ staff to do a job, if they don't do it then they try to get rid of them – it's as simple as that to be honest with you. Good people you don't have to worry about, the better the people you employ the less you have to worry about. Good management is therefore picking the right person for the job and then developing their strengths and weaknesses. But when the person you pick is weak and you can't get rid of them then you have to develop them or it affects the teaching. We try to help out but it's up to the curriculum manager to sort this out. That is, organise support and extra training" L2(C)Utt21.

This view was supported by the two senior managers who placed this in their top three during the interviews. One senior manager commented that:

"Not only is staff development now a legal requirement but in my opinion it is at the heart of improving quality within the college. Staff need to freshen up their skills and curriculum managers are an integral part of making this happen" SM1(A)Utt17.

Figure 13: Educational Tasks - Bottom Three
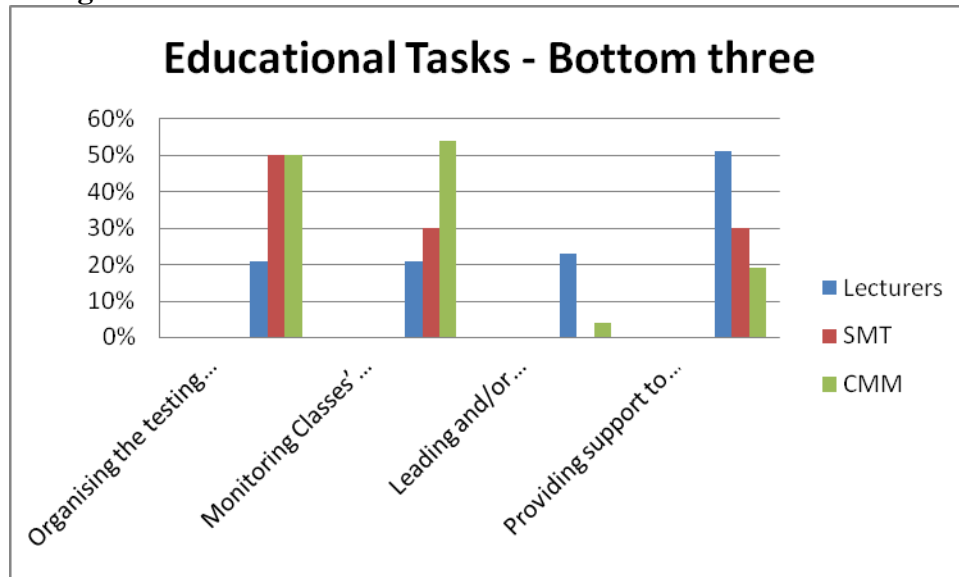
Table 22: Educational Tasks – Bottom Three

Educational Tasks	Percentage of responses – Bottom Three		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Organising the testing of student attainment	21%	50%	50%
Monitoring Classes' progress through schemes of work	21%	30%	54%
Leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities	23%	0%	4%
Providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work	51%	30%	19%

Overall, the profile of responses from all three groups (Table 22/Figure 13) indicated some differences of opinion as to the value of the tasks within this category. Indeed, when the responses for each of the individual questions were considered, it was evident that there was little agreement as to the value of each of the tasks; with noteworthy differences being recorded in all four tasks within this category.

In relation to the question "organising the testing of student attainment", 50 per cent (n=5) of senior managers and 50 per cent (n=13) of curriculum middle managers placed this in their bottom three tasks; compared with only 21 per cent (n=9) of lecturers.

One reason for this difference in expectation was gained during the interviews. For when this task was explored it became evident that the difference in expectations between lecturer respondents and those of senior and curriculum middle manager respondents was closely linked to the basic understanding of what the task actually entails. With lecturers taking a wider view of who is responsible for this task than either senior or curriculum middle managers. Their understanding of the task is reflected in the following two quotations:

"Yes, it might be something curriculum managers organise but I just saw it as something exams did. After all that's why we have an exams department, what else do they do? " L1(B)Utt16.

I think curriculum managers do get involved with organising exams and other assessment, especially if there is a problem and the exams department can't fix it. But I don't think that it's a major part of their job" L2(A)Utt12.

It would appear that lecturers link this task with both curriculum middle managers and, more specifically, colleges exams department. However, senior and curriculum middle managers take a more narrow view of whose responsibility organising student assessment is, clearly linking the task to curriculum teams. As one curriculum middle manager commented:

"This might have been part of my role 15yrs ago but in this college organising student assessment is now firmly part of the curriculum team's responsibility. Exams will help with the paperwork and other bits and pieces but it's up to the curriculum team to make sure that they have organised all the assessment needed for their course. If they have got problems then I am here to help but its not part of my role to organise it any more" CM2(A)Utt14.

Senior managers appear to take a similar view, linking the changes in the way students are assessed to the need for curriculum teams to take responsibility for organising student attainment. One senior manager stated that:

"I simply do not think that it is part of their role anymore. When most of our students were enrolled on courses leading to exams then it was an important part of the curriculum manager's job to make sure exams were organised. But times have changed and they are no longer best placed to organise the testing of student attainment. As more and more of our students undertake courses requiring a range of different assessment methods it becomes vitally important that curriculum teams are at the centre of organising this. While curriculum managers will have to oversee this task and ultimately be held accountable if it is not done, it is the curriculum teams who need to effectively ensure students are assessed in accordance with the awarding bodies' requirements" SM2(B)Utt17.

The differences between the expectations of lecturers, senior managers and curriculum middle managers continued when the task "monitoring classes' progress through schemes

of work" was considered. In this case, the responses from lecturers and senior managers were similar. With 21 per cent (n=9) of lecturers and 30 per cent (n=3) of senior managers placing this task in their bottom three; compared to 54 per cent (n=14) of curriculum middle managers.

However, while this suggests a difference of opinion between lecturer and senior manager respondents and that of curriculum middle manager respondents, when this aspect of the role was explored in the interviews all three groups gave similar reasons for placing this task in their bottom three. All three groups expressed the view that while curriculum middle managers should sample schemes of work for quality purposes it was unrealistic, due to the increasingly large curriculum areas that they manage, to expect them to monitor each individual course via its scheme of work. As one curriculum middle manager stated:

"It would be impossible for me to monitor every course in my area though their scheme of work, there are just too many courses in my area. When I do a lesson observation I do check how the lecturer is progressing though the scheme of work but the rest of the time it's up to the course leader to make sure the course is progress as it should be" CM2(B)Utt17.

In relation to the question "leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities" 23 per cent (n=6) of lecturers placed this in their bottom three tasks. This expectation was noteworthy when compared to the perception of the two other groups; with 0 per cent of senior managers and only 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers placing this task in their bottom three. When this was raised during the interviews there was a general consensus among the lecturers that the task of leading or promoting staff development lay with the college as a whole rather than their individual curriculum middle managers. Their views were summed up by the comments of two lecturers who stated that:

"I'm not even sure that its part of their role. We have staff development events two or three times a year that are organised by the College. If I want to attend a training event outside of college I just fill in a form and let the colleges staff development manager have it. My line-manager [curriculum middle manager] has to agree it but it's really down to the college if I go or not" L1(C)Utt19.

"The CPD manager organises all our staff development. She does ask the curriculum manager if there is anything he wants her to cover but really it tends to be what senior management have asked her to cover" L2(B)Utt15.

None of the senior or curriculum middle manager interviewed placed "leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities" in their bottom three tasks.

A similar position was reported when the task "providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work" was considered. In this case, 51 per cent (n=22) of lecturers placed this task in their bottom three. However, this view was not reflected in the perception of the other two groups; with 30 per cent (n=3) of senior managers and only 19 per cent (n=5) of curriculum middle managers placing this task in their bottom three.

When this aspect of the role was discussed in the interviews lecturers made it clear that they did not consider this to be an aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role, with two lecturers stating:

"That's the personal tutor's role – not really a job for curriculum managers" L2(C)Utt18.

"Unless they are a group tutor, curriculum managers just don't have the time to support students with problems. They do get involved with student disciplinary meetings but helping students with their problems is down to the tutor" L2(A)Utt15.

This view was also supported by the comments of curriculum middle managers, with the majority of those interviewed noting that this was once an aspect of their role, but due to the increase in their workload it was not a task they now had time to undertake. One curriculum middle manager commented that:

"I wish I had the time to support students. I used to work a lot more with the students when I first started the job, but now most of my time is spend in meetings or looking at whether we have met all our targets. But we have a really good tutorial system here so I don't worry about students not getting the help that they need" CM1(A)Utt19.

This changing aspect of the role was also reinforced by the comments made by the senior managers. With one senior manager stating that:

"When I was a curriculum manager supporting students was an incredible important part of my job. But the whole role of curriculum managers has changed. Whereas my focus was clearly on teaching, my curriculum managers now have to focus on a much wider range of issues. Supporting students is just something they have not got time for" SM2(B)Utt15.

It would appear that all three groups identify the lack of time as the reason why they have placed this particular aspect of the curriculum middle managers role in their bottom three. Interestingly, both curriculum middle and senior managers also recognised the changing nature of the role. With curriculum middle managers and lecturers also highlighting the development of the tutor's role.

Summary

Overall, the responses from the three groups within this section of the questionnaire indicated a degree of disagreement as to the expectations of curriculum middle managers in relation to the requirement to perform "educational" tasks. Indeed, in relation to individual tasks within this category, a number of noteworthy differences were recorded; often with all members of the role set indicating a degree of difference in opinion as to the significance of the individual task. However, when these differences were explored during the interviews the comments made by all three groups often indicated an agreement as to the reasons why the task had been placed in their top/bottom three.

Managerial Tasks

A number of writers agree that a large proportion of the tasks under this heading relate to the leading and managing of a team of professional colleagues (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999; Bennett, 1995). They also suggest that the breath of those tasks is ever increasing, with a greater emphasis being placed on monitoring teachers work. However, as highlighted in the review of the literature there appears to be a general unwillingness by curriculum middle managers to undertake the monitoring tasks associated with this area of the model. The four tasks below represent a range of tasks within the managerial category.

Figure 14: Managerial Tasks - Top Three
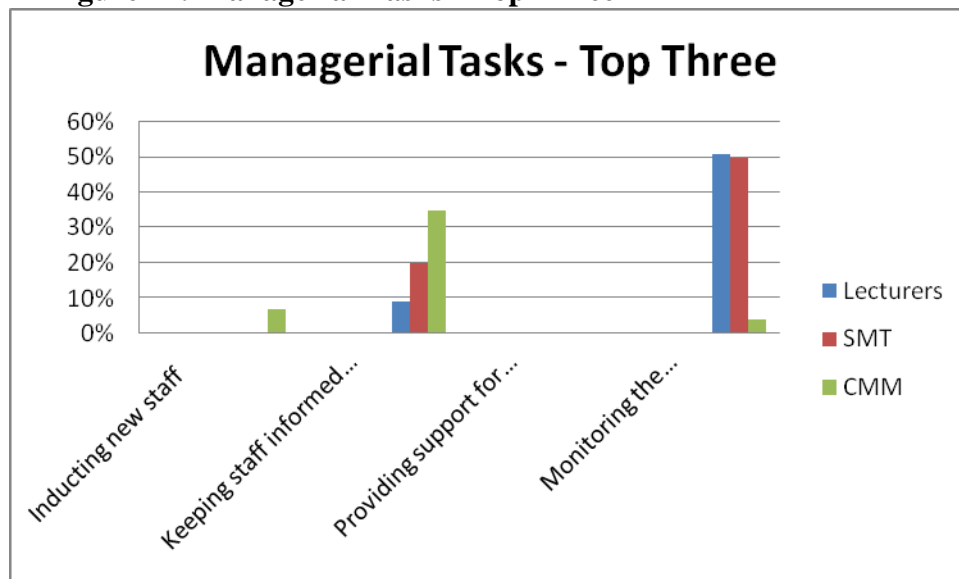
Table 23: Managerial Tasks – Top Three

Managerial Tasks	Percentage of responses – Top Three		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Inducting new staff	0%	0%	7%
Keeping staff informed of whole college matters and encouraging debate	9%	20%	35%
Providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching	0%	0%	0%

Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff	51%	50%	4%

Table 23/Figure 14 suggested that the overall profile of responses from senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers indicated some differences of perception as to value of the tasks within this category. However, when individual questions within this section were considered, it can be seen that the differences between the perceptions of the three groups mainly related to two of the four individual tasks within this category; with very few respondents placing either "inducting new staff" or "providing support to colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching" in their top three.

In relation to the question "keeping staff informed of whole college matters and encouraging debate", only 9 per cent (n=2) of lecturers actually placed this in their top three tasks; compared to 20 per cent (n=2) of senior managers and 35 per cent (n=9) of curriculum middle managers.

When this was raised during the interviews there was a general consensus among senior and curriculum middle managers that curriculum middle managers were an important resource in ensuring that lecturers were aware of the college goals. Their views were illustrated by the comments of one curriculum middle manager who stated that:

"I'm not sure about encouraging debate but without me sharing what I know from the meetings that I attend, lecturers would not know what the college was up too" CM2(B)Utt8.

The issue regarding encouraging debate was also picked-up by a number of other curriculum middle managers; all of whom suggested that this was something that did not happen in reality. This was particularly evident in the comments of one curriculum middle manager who stated that:

"I nearly didn't put this in my top three because I really do not believe that the college wants us to encourage debate over what I see as strategic decisions. Keeping lecturers informed about what is happening is one thing. But to debate whether the direction that senior management has decided to take the college is another" CM1(C)Utt9.

No senior manager raised this as an issue during the interviews. Both senior managers who placed this aspect of the role in their top three simply felt that curriculum middle managers were best placed to undertake this task.

In relation to the task "monitoring the teaching of departmental staff", 51 per cent (n=22) of lecturers and 50 per cent (n=5) of senior managers placed this in their top three tasks; compared to only 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers.

When this aspect of the role was explored during the interviews both senior managers and lecturers made it clear that they considered this to be a "core" function of the curriculum middle manager's role. The following two quotations reflect the views of both groups:

"This is an important aspect of the curriculum manager's role. As their areas of responsibility increase then it's a simple fact that they haven't got the time to check the teaching of all their staff. They need to monitor the reports provided by the lesson observation team and then take action where they need too. I know that this does not sit well with a lot of my curriculum managers but it is simply something that they have got to get used too - they need to monitor then take action to fix problems" SM1(C)Utt13.

"I suppose that it's a case that the buck stops with them. If the college has an Ofsted inspection and the area is graded a 4 then senior management will look to the curriculum manager for answers. Consistently and effectively monitoring the teaching, as well as dealing with any issues discovered in the teaching promptly, is the only sure way of avoiding problems" L1(B)Utt10.

Surprisingly, none of the curriculum middle manager interviewed placed this aspect of their role in their top three tasks.

Figure 15: Managerial Tasks - Bottom Three
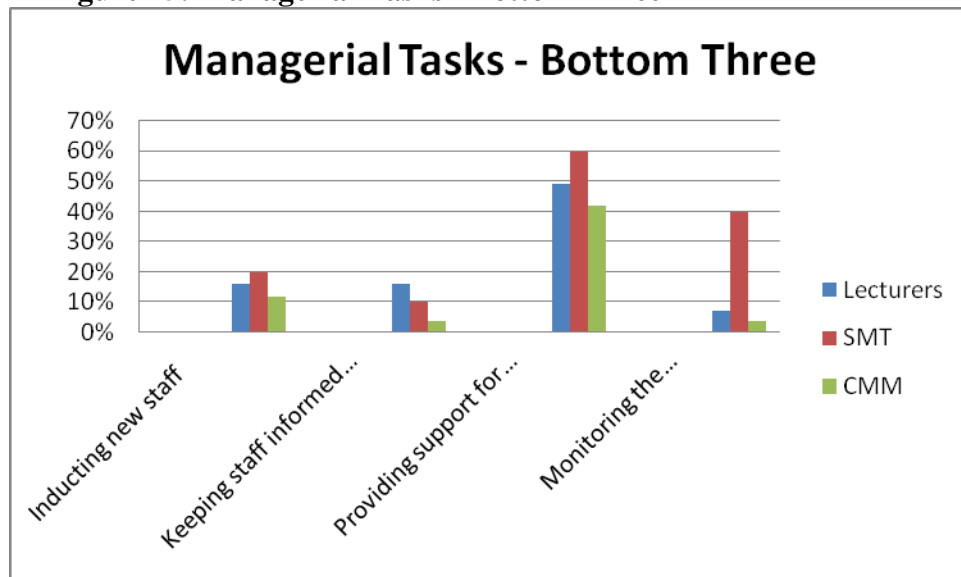
Table 24: Managerial Tasks – Bottom Three

Managerial Tasks	Percentage of responses – Bottom Three		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Inducting new staff	16%	20%	12%
Keeping staff informed of whole college matters and encouraging debate	16%	10%	4%
Providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching	49%	60%	42%
Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff	7%	40%	4%

Overall, only relatively small differences were noted between the responses of the three groups in relation to all four tasks within this category (Table 24/Figure 15). However, these differences were only relevant in relation to two of the four tasks; with only a small number of respondents placing either "inducting new staff" or "keeping staff informed of whole college matters and encouraging debate" in their bottom three.

Forty-nine per cent (n=21) of lecturers, 60 per cent (n=6) of senior managers and 42 per cent (n=11) of curriculum middle manager respondents placed "providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching" in their bottom three.
When this aspect of the role was explored during the interviews all three groups made it clear that they did not consider this to be a task that curriculum middle managers could in reality complete. All three groups highlighted what they saw as a conflict between being part of the college's disciplinary process and being able to support the lecturer. The view of the three groups is reflected in the following comments:

"I think it's a contradiction in the curriculum manager's role. It's a conflict if you have to support people but are also responsible for taking disciplinary action against them. I think supporting them is a role for the union" L2(A)Utt24.

"I would always support my staff where I can, but I am also accountable for the quality of teaching in my area. Sometimes I have to take action against staff whose teaching is a real concern. I can't do this and at the same time support them. I think that's up to their union representative or colleagues to do this" CM2(A)Utt20.

"Under the college's disciplinary procedures curriculum managers have an integral role in dealing with under performing staff. I really cannot see them being able to do this and support the staff member. That's best left to the union or one of the college mentors" SM2(B)Utt19.

When the task "monitoring the teaching of departmental staff" was considered, only 7 per cent (n=3) of lecturers and 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers placed this task in their bottom three; compared to 40 per cent (n=4) of senior manager respondents.

When this aspect of the role was explored in the interviews the senior manager interviewees commented that as the quality processes within their colleges had developed, then the need for curriculum middle managers to monitor the teaching of their staff had reduced. With specialist quality teams and/or quality managers now undertaking this task in association with a supervising member of the senior management team. As one senior manager commented:

"As a college we have to ensure that the quality of our teaching is good. We cannot just rely on individual curriculum managers to monitor what is happening in the classrooms, we have to have specialist staff in place ensuing that we are raising the standard of teaching throughout the college and that includes monitoring teaching

grades. While curriculum are part of the monitoring process, its not an important aspect of their role" SM2(A)Utt24.

It would appear that the government's drive to improve teaching standards within Further Education is bringing about changes within the quality processes of certain colleges. This in turn seems to have a practical impact on the tasks that senior managers perceive to be important for curriculum middle managers to perform.

Summary

Overall, the responses from the three groups within this section of the questionnaire indicated only a minor degree of disagreement as to the expectations of curriculum middle managers in relation to the requirement to perform "managerial" tasks. Indeed, in relation to individual tasks within this category, there was only a small number of differences recorded; often with all members of the role set indicating a degree of difference in opinion as to the significance of the individual task. This position was also reflected in the comments made by all three groups during the interviews.

Administrative Tasks

The literature review suggested that tasks within this category can be contentious, with both role-holders and writers often disagreeing as to whether or not they are an integral part of a curriculum middle managers role (Wise, 1999; Bullock, 1988; Lambert, 1972). The four tasks below represent a range of tasks within the administrative category.

Figure 16: Administrative Tasks - Top Three
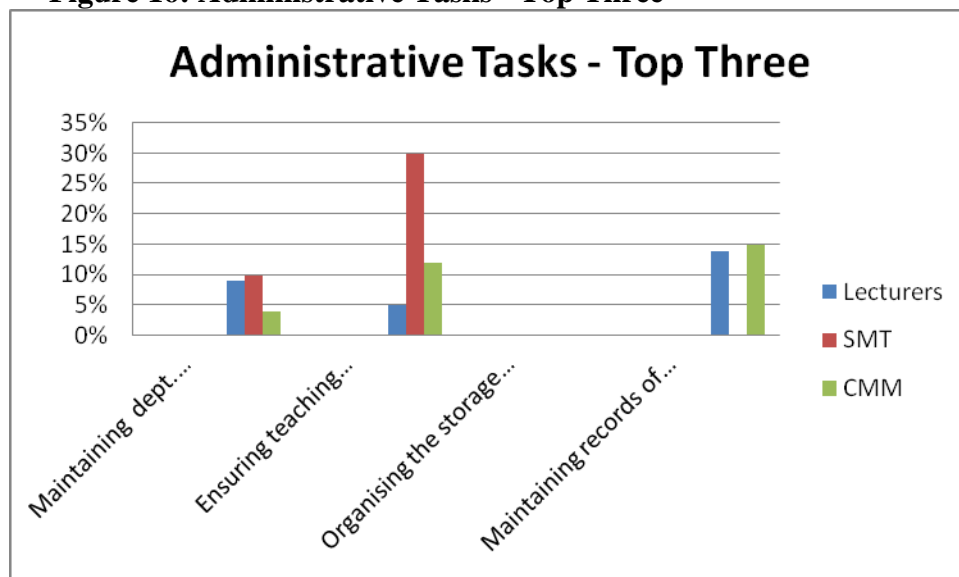
Table 25: Administrative Tasks – Top Three

Administrative Tasks	Percentage of responses – Top Three		
	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Maintaining dept. records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings	9%	10%	4%
Ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources	5%	30%	12%
Organising the storage of departmental resources	0%	0%	0%
Maintaining records of classroom observations	14%	0%	15%

Overall, only a small number of senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers placed an "administrative" task in their top three (Table 25/Figure 16); with limited differences of opinion as to value of the individual tasks within this category being recorded between the three groups. Indeed, when individual questions within this section were considered, it can be seen that the differences between the perceptions of the three groups related mainly to one of the four individual tasks within this category; with very few respondents placing, "maintaining department records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings", "organising the storage of departmental resources" or "maintaining records of classroom observations" in their top three.

When the task "ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources" was considered 30 per cent (n=3) of senior managers placed this in their top three; compared to only 5 per cent (n=2) of lecturers and 12 per cent (n=3) of curriculum middle managers.

Senior managers in discussing this aspect of the role during the interviews stressed that they considered that the importance of this task lay in the link between ensuring that teaching rooms were fit for purpose and adequately resourced, and the learner's overall perception of the quality of teaching being offered by the college. One senior manager stated that:

"We know from student surveys and Ofsted reports that it is important that teaching rooms
are checked and monitored to ensure that they meet the needs of our learners. If we don't,
then we end up with issues. Curriculum managers are best placed to do this as they can
often solve any problems that they find" SM2(B)Utt29.

None of the curriculum middle managers or lecturers interviewed either placed this aspect of their role in their top three tasks or made the link between this task and the quality of teaching.

Figure 17: Administrative Tasks - Bottom Three
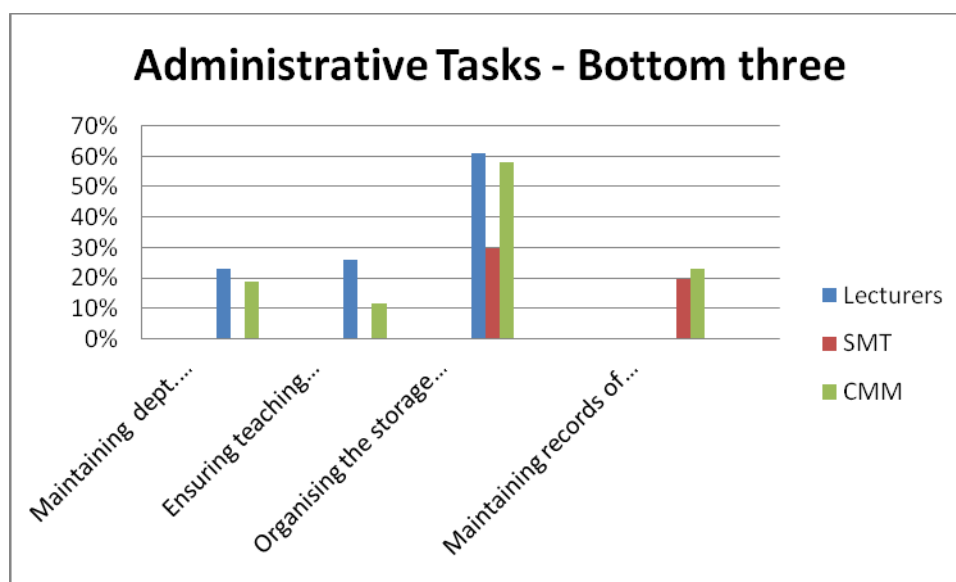
Table 26: Administrative Tasks – Bottom Three

	Percentage of responses – Bottom Three		
Administrative Tasks	Lecturers	SMT	CMM
Maintaining dept. records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings	23%	0%	19%
Ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources	26%	0%	12%
Organising the storage of departmental resources	61%	30%	58%
Maintaining records of classroom observations	0%	20%	23%

Overall, a number of senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers placed an "administrative" task in their top three (Table26/Figure 17); with differences of opinion as to the value of the individual tasks within this category being recorded between the three groups.

In relation to the question "maintaining department records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings" 23 per cent (n=10) of lecturers and 19 per cent (n=5) of curriculum middle managers placed this in their bottom three tasks; compared to 0 per cent of senior managers.

When this aspect of the role was explored during the interviews both lecturers and curriculum middle managers made it clear that they did not consider this to be a task that curriculum middle managers could in practice complete. With one lecturer stating that:

   "I put this in my bottom three because I just don't see how they could do it. We just have too many courses and meetings for my manager to keep all that paperwork. They need to ,make sure that records are kept but that's different to keeping records themselves" L2(C)Utt25.

This difference in perception between curriculum middle managers and lecturers and that of senior managers continued when the task "ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources" was considered. In this case 26 per cent of lecturers (n=11) and 12 per cent (n=3) of curriculum middle managers placed this task in their bottom three; compared to 0 per cent of senior managers.

During the interviews both the lecturer and curriculum middle manager interviewees who placed this task in their bottom three considered that rooming should be dealt with centrally by the college. The general view of both groups is reflected in the comments of a lecturer interviewee who stated that:

"Rooms should be sorted out by a central person who deals with these types of problems. I am sure SMT think curriculum middle managers have better thing to do than sort rooms out" L1(A)Utt34.

No senior manager interviewed placed this aspect of the curriculum middle managers role in their bottom three tasks.

In relation to the question "organising the storage of departmental resources", 61 per cent of lecturers (n=26) and 58 per cent (n=15) of curriculum middle managers placed this in their bottom three tasks; compared to only 30 per cent (n=3) of senior managers.

When this aspect of the role was explored during the interviews both curriculum middle managers and lecturers stressed that they did not consider this to be a task that curriculum middle managers need to undertake.

"We don't really have many resources and not much room to put anything so I don't think it's a major issue for managers" L2(A)Utt22.

"I should have put that as number one maybe As long as there is some space some where it's not up to the curriculum manager to sort it out" L1(B)Utt13.

"We have support people in the college who help me to do this, so I did not see this as one of the most important tasks. Don't get me wrong, resources need to be organised but it's not one the priorities of my job – as long as I am involved in the process somewhere along the line then that's enough" CM1(A)Utt14.

The two senior managers who placed this in their bottom three tasks during the interviews recognised the practical problems of undertaking this aspect of the role but also stressed the importance for curriculum middle managers to effectively organise the storage of resources.

"Not many curriculum managers would place this at the top of their list of jobs to do. But if they do not organise the storage of their areas resources then who will? I placed this in the least important category because it is clearly not one of the most important

tasks that they perform. But it is something which they need to do to ensure that their areas teaching resources are used to their best advantage" SM1(C)Utt21.

Apparent differences between the three groups were also reported when the task "maintaining records of classroom observations" was considered. In this case, 0 per cent of lecturers placed this task in their bottom three. However, this position was not reflected in the perception of the other two groups; with 20 per cent (n=2) of senior managers and 23 per cent (n=6) of curriculum middle managers placing this task in their bottom three.

When this aspect of the role was discussed during the interviews both the senior managers and curriculum middle managers interviewed indicated that they did not consider this task to be important due to evolving role of their college's quality department.

"It's this thing about having a quality control department, if it's an issue then fair enough I need to get involved, otherwise let them earn their money" CM2(C)Utt23.

"My curriculum managers need to have a clear understanding of the quality of the teaching in their curriculum areas. But as far as maintaining records of the individual teaching grades is concerned I think that this is a task for the quality manager and his team" SM1(C)Utt19.

None of the lecturers interviewed either placed this aspect of their role in their bottom three tasks or commented on the role of the quality department.

Summary

Overall, the responses from the three groups within this section of the questionnaire indicated a degree of agreement as to the expectations of curriculum middle managers in relation to the requirement to perform "administrative" tasks. However, in relation to individual tasks within this category, a number of apparent differences were recorded; often with senior managers indicating a difference in opinion as to the significance of the individual task being reviewed. This position was reflected in the comments made in the interviews by all three groups.

Influences

The information contained in this section is relevant to the following research questions:

Research Question:

- Who influences the ways in which curriculum middle managers carry out their responsibilities?

The curriculum middle manager's role is complex, with a varied and wide range of tasks to complete. In undertaking their role a number of groups influence the decisions that they make. The fifth section of the questionnaire aimed to consider which are the most influential groups when curriculum middle managers are making decisions in four key areas of their responsibility; one from each of the quadrants in the classification discussed earlier. The four areas considered were:

- Change of Curriculum – Academic Quadrant
- Purchase of new resources to support a new course – Administrative Quadrant
- Professional development plan for development of staff or team – Managerial Quadrant
- Discipline of a pupil being difficult – Educational Quadrant

The groups identified for consideration as being "influential" were:

- Departmental Staff
- Ofsted Staff
- Parents/Guardians
- Senior Management
- Subject Lecturers
- Governors
- Students
- Other Teaching

Each respondent was asked to identify the "most influential", together with the top three "most influential" groups.

Change of Curriculum

Figure 18: Change of Curriculum - Overview
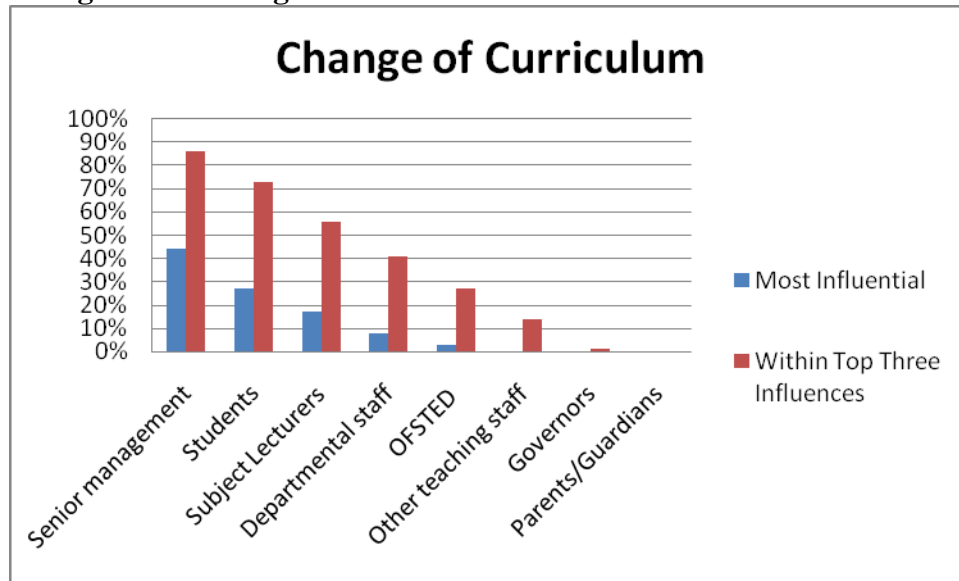
Table 27: Change of Curriculum - Overview

Change of curriculum	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Senior management		
Total	**44%**	**86%**
Students		
Total	**27%**	**73%**
Subject Lecturers		
Total	**17%**	**56%**
Departmental staff		
Total	**8%**	**41%**
OFSTED		
Total	**3%**	**27%**
Other teaching staff		
Total	**0%**	**14%**
Governors		
Total	**0%**	**1%**
Parents/Guardians		
Total	**0%**	**0%**

Table 27/Figure 18 detail the issue of changing the curriculum, with 44 per cent (n=35) of all respondents identifing senior managers as the most influential member of the curriculum middle managers extended role set. This compared to a response rate of 27 per cent (n=21) for students, 17 per cent (n=13) for subject lecturers, 8 per cent (n=6) for departmental staff and 3 per cent (n=2) for Ofsted. "Other teaching staff", "Governors" and "Parents/Guardians" received no positive responses from the curriculum middle managers or their extended role set.

When the senior mananager, curriculum middle manager and lecturer respondents considered the top three influences in relation to changing the curriculum within a

curriculum middle manager's area, senior managers with 86 per cent (n= 68) were again the most influencial. However, proportionately the response rate for students (73 per cent, n=58), subject lecturers (56 per cent, n=44), departmental staff (41 per cent, n=32), Ofsted (27 per cent, n=21) and other teaching staff (14 per cent, n=11) were all more relevant. Only Governors (1 per cent, n=1) and Parents (0 per cent) were not considered to be influencial within this area of responsibility.

Figure 19: Change of Curriculum - Individual Responses
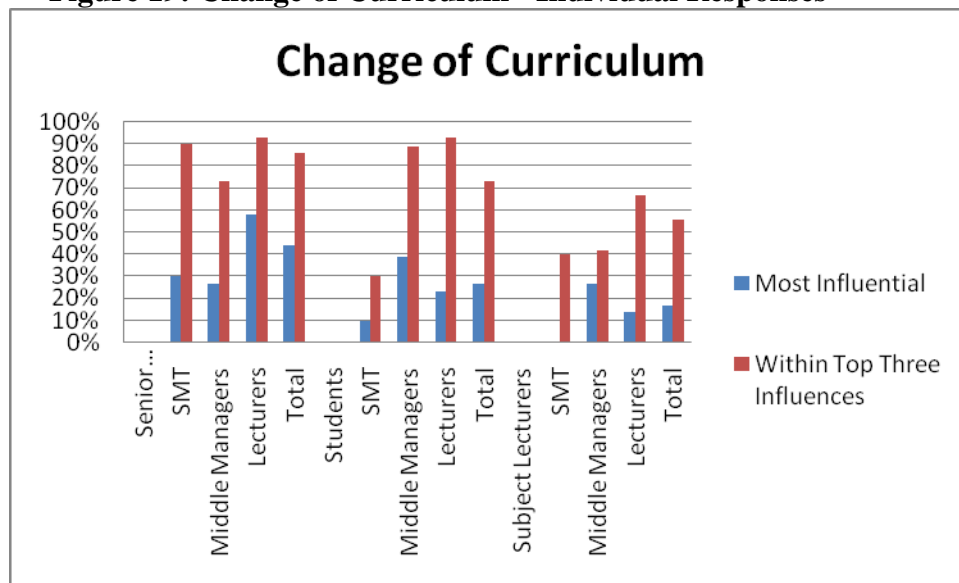
Table 28: Change of Curriculum - Individual Responses

Change of curriculum	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Senior management		
SMT	30%	90%
Middle Managers	27%	73%
Lecturers	58%	93%
Total	**44%**	**86%**
Students		
SMT	10%	30%
Middle Managers	39%	89%
Lecturers	23%	93%
Total	**27%**	**73%**
Subject Lecturers		
SMT	0%	40%
Middle Managers	27%	42%
Lecturers	14%	67%
Total	**17%**	**56%**

When the three most influential members of the extended role set were reviewed in relation to the individual returns from senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers a number of differences were evident (Table 28/Figure 19). For while senior managers were identified as the most influential group relating to this decision, individual returns from within the three groups varied by up to 31 per cent; lecturers 58 per cent

(n=25), senior managers 30 per cent (n=3) and curriculum middle managers 27 per cent (n=7). However, the difference between the three groups was not so great when the top three influences were considered; with 93 per cent (n=40) of lecturers, 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers and 73 per cent (n=19) of curriculum middle managers placing senior managers in their top three influences.

The second most influential group identified by the three groups, with 27 per cent (n=21), were students. However, only 10 per cent (n=1) of senior managers considered students to be the most influential group. This compares to 23 per cent (n=10) of lecturers and 39 per cent (n=10) of curriculum middle managers. Indeed, the difference between the three groups continued when the top three influences were considered. With 93 per cent (n=32) of lecturers, 90 per cent (n=23) of curriculum middle managers but only 30 per cent (n=3) senior managers placing them in their top three influences.

17 per cent (n=13) of the three groups identified subject lecturers as the third most influential group within this category. However, just as with the first two most influential groups identified differences between the three groups were reported, with 27 per cent (n=7) of curriculum middle managers, 14 per cent (n=6) of lecturers, but 0 per cent of senior managers placing students within their top priority. Indeed, despite an increase in senior managers placing students in their top three influential group category differences were recorded between senior manager (40 per cent, n=4), curriculum middle manager (42 per cent, n=11) and lecturer respondents (67 per cent, n=29).

The question of the "most influential" group in relation to this aspect of change was explored during the interviews; with the overall responses from all three groups reflecting the findings detailed in the questionnaire. Both lecturers and curriculum middle managers clearly indicated that they considered senior managers to be the most influential; linking their influence to the power of their position.

"I think at the end of August when the results are out if they are bad then senior managers decide if courses are running or not. They roll-up their sleeves and make decisions that affect the curriculum. Are we running A'levels? Are we not? This is down to senior managers rather than anyone else" L1(A)Utt31.

"I don't think that curriculum change is always about what students want. It's often what we can deliver within the curriculum team. Sometimes we put on what is convenient for us rather than looking at what is needed. But at the end of the day it's up to senior managers as to what we can finally offer" L2(C)Utt27.

"I wanted to put students as the most influential because ultimately they are our customers our life blood. You can go though all the problems of changing the curriculum only to find that no one wants to take the course. If the students don't want it then what's the point in offering it? But in the real world senior managers are the ones that tell us that the curriculum needs to change, or that we cannot offer a particular course" CM2(A)Utt30.

"SMT need to decide if they want to go down that road or not – as I said before, is it financially worth running the course or not? Does it match what the LSC want from the college? All questions which only SMT can answer" CM2(B)Utt22.

Senior managers took a similar view, linking their influence to their role within their individual college's strategic planning process. As one senior manager commented:

"We [senior managers] have to be at the centre of any curriculum change because we need to ensure that such changes are in-line with the college's strategic plan" SM1(C)Utt31.

This view supports that of the lecturer and curriculum middle manager interviewees and provides a degree of explanation as to why senior managers are seen as taking the final decision on curriculum change.

Purchase of New Resources to Support a New Course

Figure 20: Purchase of New Resources - Overview
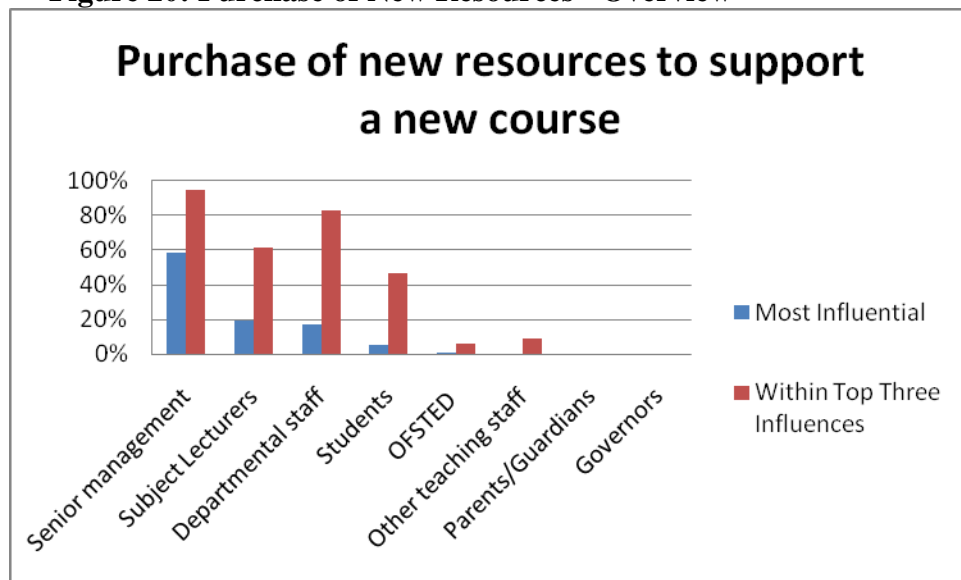
Table 29: Purchase of New Resources - Overview

Purchase of new resources to support a new course	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Senior management		
Total	**58%**	**94%**
Subject Lecturers		
Total	**19%**	**61%**
Departmental staff		
Total	**17%**	**82%**
Students		
Total	**5%**	**46%**
OFSTED		
Total	**1%**	**6%**
Other teaching staff		
Total	**0%**	**9%**
Parents/Guardians		
Total	**0%**	**0%**
Governors		
Total	**0%**	**0%**

When the issue of the purchase of new resources to support a new course was reviewed 58 per cent (n=46) of respondents identified senior managers as the most influential member of the curriculum middle manager's extended role set (Table 29/Figure 20). This compared to only 19 per cent (n=15) for subject lecturers, 17 per cent (n=13) for departmental staff, 5 per cent (n=4) for students and 1 per cent (n=1) for Ofsted. However, yet again "other teaching staff", "Governors" and "Parents/Guardians" received no positive responses from the three groups.

In considering the top three influences in relation to the purchase of new resources to support a new course, 94 per cent (n=74) of respondents placed senior managers in their top three. This compared to 82 per cent (n=65) for departmental staff, 61 per cent (n=48) for subject lecturers, 46 per cent (n=36) for students, 9 per cent (n=7) for other teaching staff and 6 per cent (n=5) for Ofsted. Governors and Parents/Guardens were again not considered to be influencial within this area of responsibility.

Figure 21: Purchase of New Resources - Individual Responses
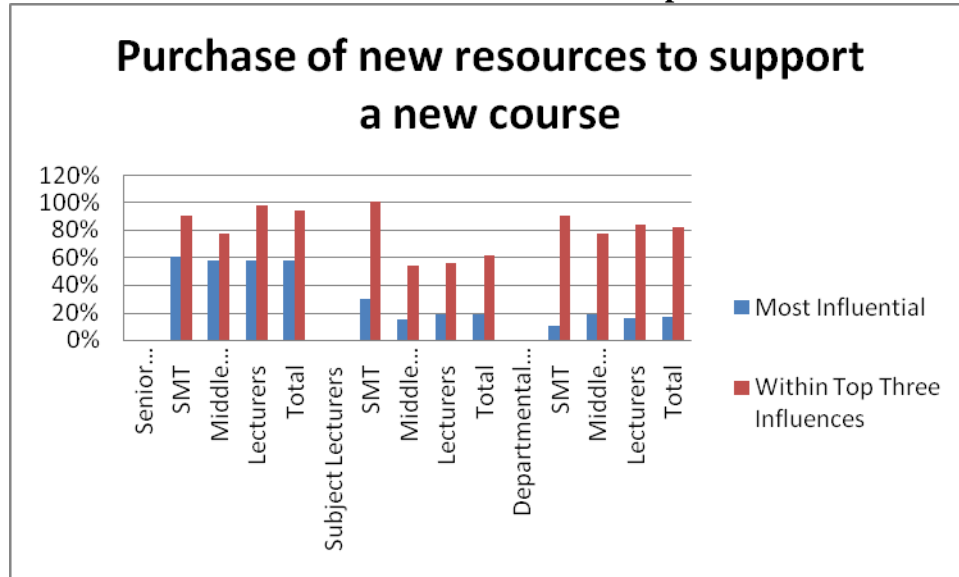
Table 30: Purchase of New Resources - Individual Responses

Purchase of new resources to support a new course	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Senior management		
SMT	60%	90%
Middle Managers	58%	77%
Lecturers	58%	98%
Total	**58%**	**94%**
Subject Lecturers		
SMT	30%	100%
Middle Managers	15%	54%
Lecturers	19%	56%
Total	**19%**	**61%**
Departmental staff		
SMT	10%	90%
Middle Managers	19%	77%
Lecturers	16%	84%
Total	**17%**	**82%**

When the responses from the three individual groups were considered (Table 30/Figure 21), there was only a difference of 2 per cent; senior managers 60 per cent (n=6), curriculum middle managers 58 per cent (n=15) and lecturers 58 per cent (n=25). However, the difference between the three groups was more when the top three influences were considered, with 98 per cent (n=42) of lecturers, 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers but only 77 per cent (n=23) of curriculum middle managers placing senior managers in their top three influences.

The second most influential group identified by the role set, with 19 per cent (n=15), was subject lecturers; with 30 per cent (n=3) of senior managers considering subject lecturers to be the most influential group; compared to only 15 per cent (n=4) of curriculum middle managers and 19 per cent (n=8) of lecturers. The difference between the three groups' responses is more evident when the top three influences are considered. With 100 per cent (n=10) of senior managers, but only 54 per cent (n=14) of curriculum middle managers and 56 per cent (n=24) of lecturers, placing them in their top three influences.

Departmental staff, with 17 per cent (n=13) of responses, was identified as the third most influential group within this category. In reaching this decision, 19 per cent (n=5) of curriculum middle managers, 16 per cent (n=7) of lecturers, but only 10 per cent (n=1) of senior managers placed departmental staff within their top priority. However, an increase in each of the three groups responses was recorded when they considered their top three influential groups; with 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers, 84 per cent (n=36) of lecturers and 77 per cent (n=20) of curriculum middle managers placing them in their top three influences.

When the question of the "most influential" group in relation to the purchase of new resources was explored during the interviews, all three groups supported the view that senior managers were the most influential group. Indeed, all three groups linked the influence of senior managers to the need for the college to assess the cost of the purposed resources to set up a new course against college budgets and the overall strategic plan.

"They [senior managers] hold the purse strings. Simple as that really - they must have some vision as to how they want to spend it and it maybe a either or situation" L1(A)Utt42.

"Well I think that at the end of the day if you want to do something different then senior managers have got to agree it. Especially, if it's going to cost a substantial amount of money – they are going to want to know that they are going to get a return on their investment. At the end of the day everything in Further Education comes down to whethe its going to make money or not. If it is then you stand a good chance of getting the capital needed to start a new course – if not then even if there are students who want to do the course there's little chance in getting the money to set it up" CM1(A)Utt35.

"The final decision to fund the resources of a new course must lay with the senior management team. My curriculum managers have an overview of their own areas, but are often unaware of what is happening in other areas of the college. The senior management team have an overview of the curriculum development of the whole college and are therefore best placed to make these decisions" SM1(C)Utt33.

Overall, the comments made the three groups during the interviews supported the findings of the questionnaire.

Professional development Plan for Departmental Staff or Team

Figure 22: Professional Development Plan - Overview
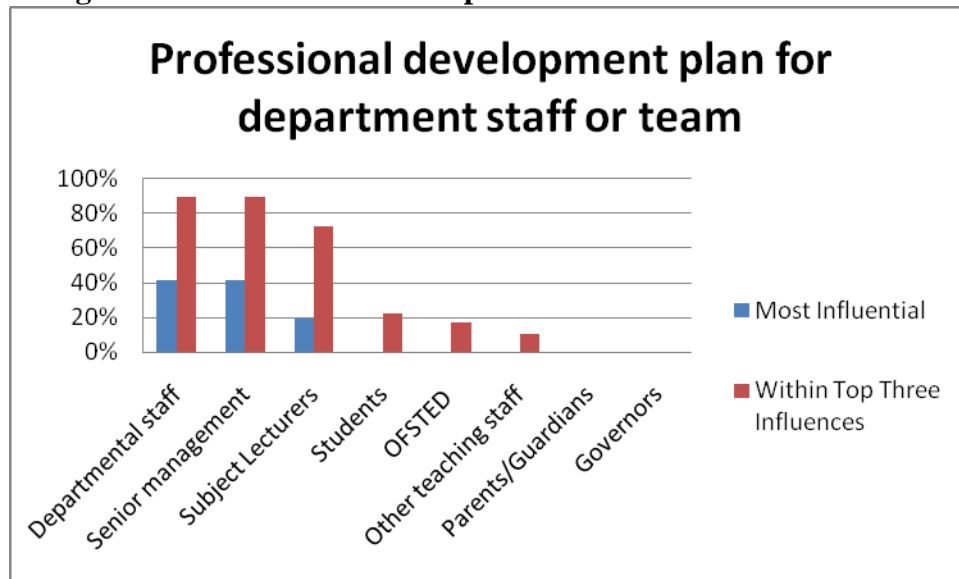
Table 31: Professional Development Plan - Overview

Professional development plan for departmental staff or team	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Departmental staff		
Total	41%	89%
Senior management		
Total	41%	89%
Subject Lecturers		
Total	19%	72%
Students		
Total	0%	22%
OFSTED		
Total	0%	17%
Other teaching staff		
Total	0%	10%
Parents/Guardians		
Total	0%	N/A
Governors		
Total	0%	N/A

In reviewing the task of developing a staff development plan for department staff or team (Table 31/Figure 22) 41 per cent (n=32) of all respondents identified senior managers and departmental staff as the most influential members of the curriculum middle managers extended role set; compared to only 19 per cent (n=15) for subject lecturers. However, no other member of the extended role set received a positive response.

When the three groups considered the top three influences in relation to developing a professional development plan for departmental staff or team, senior managers and departmental staff with 89 per cent (n=70) were again the most influential. However,

there was an increase in the positive responses for subject lecturers (72 per cent, n=57), students (22 per cent, n=17), Ofsted (17 per cent, n=13) and other teaching staff (10 per cent, n=8). Yet again Governors (0 per cent) and Parents/Guardens (0 per cent) were not considered to be influencial within this area of responsibility.

Figure 23: Professional Development Plan - Individual Responses
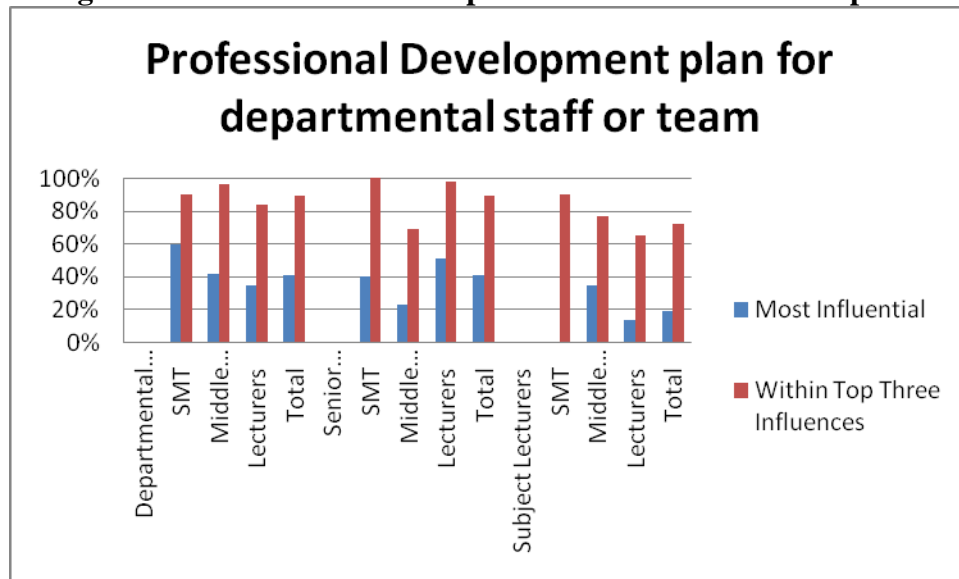
Table 32: Professional Development Plan - Individual Responses

Professional development plan for departmental staff or team	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Departmental staff		
SMT	60%	90%
Middle Managers	42%	96%
Lecturers	35%	84%
Total	**41%**	**89%**
Senior management		
SMT	40%	100%
Middle Managers	23%	69%
Lecturers	51%	98%
Total	**41%**	**89%**
Subject Lecturers		
SMT	0%	90%
Middle Managers	35%	77%
Lecturers	14%	65%
Total	**19%**	**72%**

In considering the individual returns from the three groups significant differences were evident (Table 32/Figure 23). Departmental staff was identified jointly with senior managers as the most influential groups relating to this decision. However, individual returns from within the three groups varied by up to 25 per cent; senior managers 60 per cent (n=6), curriculum middle managers 42 per cent (n=11) and lecturers 35 per cent (n=15). However, the differences were not as great when the top three influences were considered, with 96 per cent (n=25) of curriculum middle managers, 90 per cent (n=9) of

senior managers and 84 per cent (n=36) of lecturers placing departmental staff in their top three influences.

The difference between the perceptions of the three groups was also evident when the individual returns relating to senior managers were considered. While 41 per cent (n=32) of the three groups considered them to be the joint most influential group, the differences between the three groups varied by up to 28 per cent; with 51 per cent (n=22) of lecturers, 40 per cent (n=4) senior managers but only 23 per cent (n=10) of lecturers considering them to be the most influential group. This difference between the responses of the three groups is more evident when the top three influences were considered. With 100 per cent (n=10) of senior managers, 98 per cent (n=42) of lecturers but only 69 per cent (n=18) of curriculum middle managers placing them in their top three influences.

19 per cent (n=15) of the three groups identified subject lecturers as the third most influential group within this category. In reaching this decision, 35 per cent (n=9) of curriculum middle managers, 14 per cent (n=6) of lecturers, but 0 per cent of senior managers placed departmental staff within their top priority. However, an increase in each of the three groups responses was recorded when they considered their top three influential groups; with 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers, 77 per cent (n=20) of curriculum middle managers and 65 per cent (n=28) of lecturers placing them in their top three influences.

When the question of the "most influential" group in relation to developing a professional development plan for departmental staff or team was explored during the interviews, the majority of all three groups supported the view that departmental staff is the most influential group. Indeed, senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers linked the influence of departmental staff to the idea that they are best placed to know what development they actually needed.

"I think once you are into what we are going to teach then we are into a specialist area. The people on the ground know what development they need to move their courses on They and their team, it's nothing to do with SMT or middle managers, know what they need to do to improve things" L2(C)Utt38.

"The teaching staff in my area meet at least once a month in their curriculum teams to discuss the progress of their courses. This includes discussing any staff development needs that they may have. Senior managers then use this information to plan staff development activities" CM1(B)Utt33.

"While the senior management team have the final say as to whether or not staff development events will be funded. It is the needs analysis of the individual staff members that initially influences the actual development plan" SM1(C)1Utt36.

Four of the eight curriculum middle managers interviewed also commented on the funding of staff development; considering that senior managers were the most influential due to the simple fact that they have the final say as to whether staff development plans will be funded.

"Well, I think they [senior managers] hold the budget for staff development and we need their agreement to put a plan together. They influence whether or not the plan is going to happen" CM2(A)Utt33.

"They [senior managers] tend to put together development days – they decide what the agenda for the day is going to be. It all depends on how much money is available" CM2(C)Utt31.

Overall, the comments made during the interviews supported the findings of the questionnaire, with both senior managers and departmental staff being considered the most influential.

Discipline of a Pupil Being Difficult

Figure 24: Discipline of a Pupil - Overview
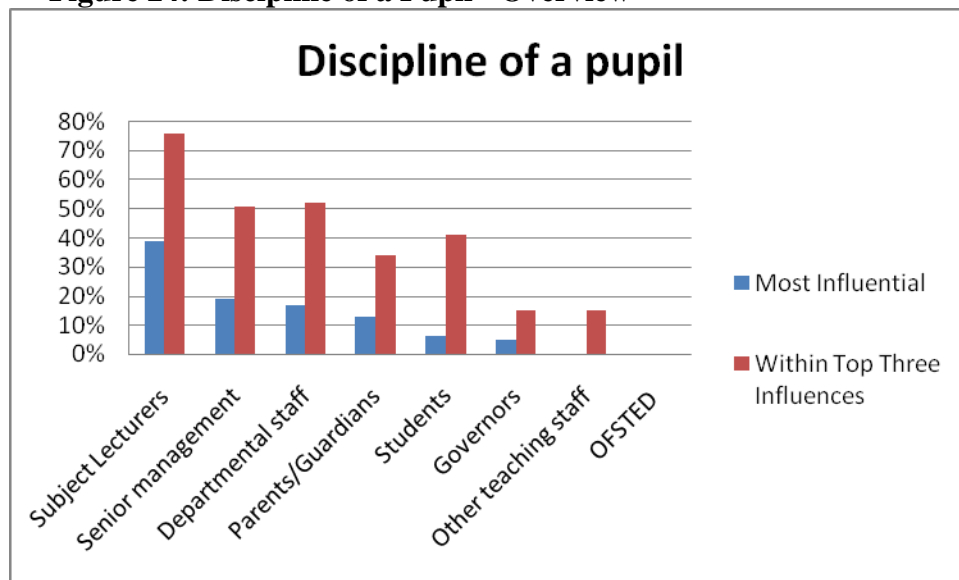
Table 33: Discipline of a Pupil - Overview

Discipline of a pupil being difficult with your area of responsibility	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Subject Lecturers		
Total	39%	76%
Senior management		
Total	19%	51%
Departmental staff		
Total	17%	52%
Parents/Guardians		
Total	13%	34%
Students		
Total	6%	41%
Governors		
Total	5%	15%
Other teaching staff		
Total	0%	15%
OFSTED		
Total	0%	0%

When the three groups reviewed the task disciplining a pupil being difficult 39 per cent (n=31) of respondents identified subject lecturers as the most influential members of the curriculum middle managers extended role set (Table 33/Figure 24). This compared to a response rate of only 19 per cent (n=15) for senior managers, 17 per cent (n=13) for departmental staff, 13 per cent (n=13) for parents/guardians, 6 per cent (n=5) for students and 5 per cent (n=5) for governors. Other teaching staff and Ofsted failed to receive any positive responses.

When the three groups considered the top three influences in relation to this task, subject lecturers with 76 per cent (n=60) were again the most influencial. However, there was an increase in the response rate for other members of the extended role set; departmental staff (52 per cent, n=41), senior managers (51 per cent, n=40), students (41 per cent, n=32), parents/guardians (34 per cent, n=27), governors (15 per cent, n=12) and other teaching staff (15 per cent, n=12). Ofsted (0 per cent) were not considered to be influencial within this area of responsibility.

Figure 25: Discipline of a Pupil - Individual Responses
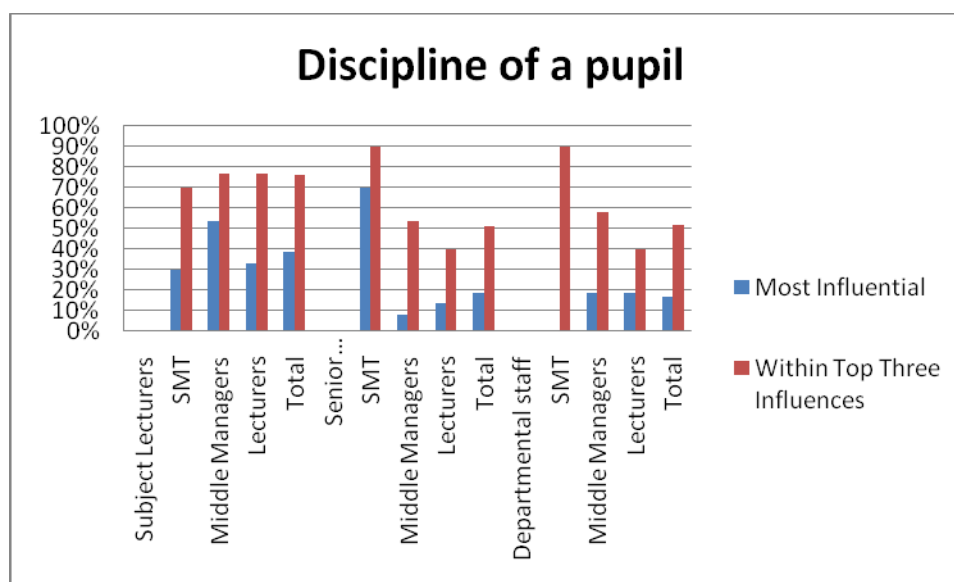
Table 34: Discipline of a Pupil - Individual Responses

Discipline of a pupil being difficult with your area of responsibility	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Subject Lecturers		
SMT	30%	70%
Middle Managers	54%	77%
Lecturers	33%	77%
Total	**39%**	**76%**
Senior management		
SMT	70%	90%
Middle Managers	8%	54%
Lecturers	14%	40%
Total	**19%**	**51%**
Departmental staff		
SMT	0%	90%
Middle Managers	19%	58%
Lecturers	19%	40%
Total	**17%**	**52%**

When the individual responses from senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers were reviewed, differences were evident (Table 34/Figure 25). Subject lecturers were identified as the most influential group relating to this decision (39 per cent, n=31). However, individual returns from the three groups varied by up to 24 per cent; curriculum middle managers (54 per cent, n=14), lecturers' (33 per cent, n=14) and senior managers (30 per cent, n=3). However, the differences between the three groups was not as great when the top three influences were considered, with 70 per cent (n=7) of senior managers, 77 per cent (n=20) of curriculum middle managers, and 77 per cent (n=33) of lecturers placing subject lecturers in their top three influences.

This difference between the perceptions of the three groups was more significant when the individual returns relating to senior managers were considered. While overall 19 per cent (n=15) of the three groups considered them as the second most influential group, the difference between the three groups varied by up to 56 per cent; with 70 per cent (n=7) of senior managers, 14 per cent (n=6) of lecturers but only 8 per cent (n=2) of curriculum middle managers considering them to be the most influential group. This difference between the responses of the three groups continued when the top three influences were considered. With 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers, 54 per cent (n=14) of curriculum middle managers but only 40 per cent (n=4) of lecturers placing them in their top three influences.

With 17 per cent (n=13) departmental staff was identified as the third most influential group within this category. In reaching this decision, 19 per cent (n=5) of curriculum middle managers, 19 per cent (n=8) of lecturers, but 0 per cent of senior managers placed departmental staff within their top priority. However, an increase in each of the three groups responses was recorded when they considered their top three influential groups; with 90 per cent (n=9) of senior managers, 54 per cent (n=14) of curriculum middle managers and 40 per cent (n=4) of lecturers placing them in their top three influences.

When the question of the "most influential" group in relation to the discipline of pupil was explored during the interviews, both curriculum middle managers and lecturers supported the view that subject lecturers were the most influential group. Indeed, both groups linked their influence to the close working relationship that lecturers often develop with their students.

"Ultimately, it is only the student who can change their behaviour – but others, such as their tutor, can help by ensuring that the college discipline procedures are followed. They spend more time with the student than anyone else and often know when to take action"L2(B)Utt36.

"Lecturers are teaching the students every day and have certain expectations of the students – if they don't live up to that expectation they are often the driving force behind disciplining the student" CM2(A)Utt35.

However, this view was not shared by the senior manager's who were interviewed. With 4 of the 5 senior managers indicating that they were the most influential group because they were responsible for developing the college's student disciplinary policy. One senior manager commented that: "Senior managers are at the centre of student discipline. We have to constantly review the college's policy and ensure that it is effective in dealing with current issues that staff are encountering. This influences how staff then deal with their students" SM1(B)Utt41.

Overall, the comments made by all three groups during the interviews reflected the findings of the questionnaire.

Figure 26: Influences - Summary
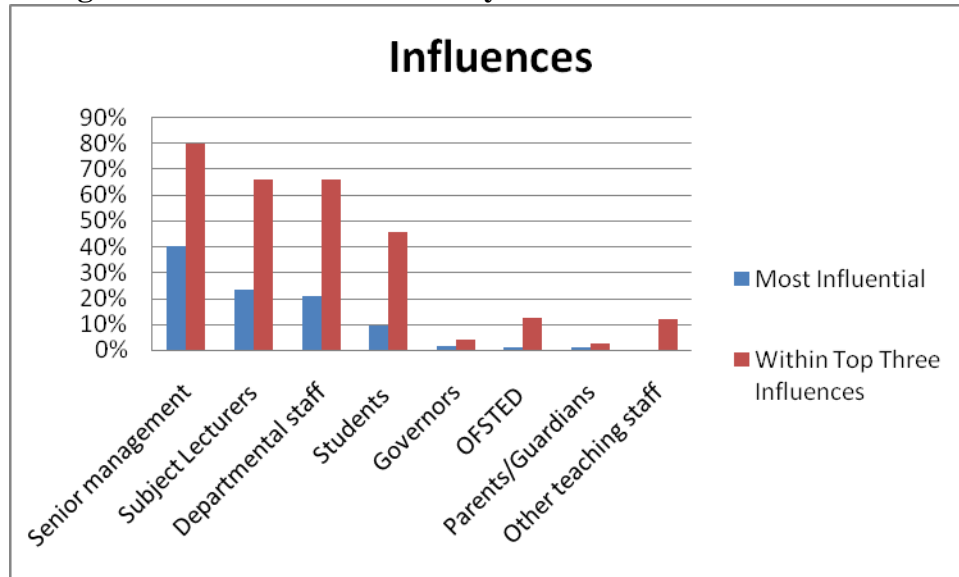
Table 35: Influences - Summary

Summary	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Senior management	**40.5%**	**80%**
Subject Lecturers	**23.5%**	**66.25%**
Departmental staff	**20.75%**	**66%**
Students	**9.5%**	**45.5%**
Governors	**1.25%**	**4%**
OFSTED	**1%**	**12.5%**
Parents/Guardians	**1%**	**2.5%**
Other teaching staff	**0%**	**12%**

It is clear from the Table 35/Figure 26 that "senior managers" with 40.5 per cent are perceived by the majority of the three groups as the most influential group across the range of decisions considered in the questionnaire. Subject lecturers with 23.5 per cent and departmental staff with 20.75 per cent are the second and third most influential groups but other groups within the extended role set vary in their influence widely depending on the area of decision making being considered. However, Ofsted, Governors, parents/guardians and other teaching staff were not perceived as being very influential members of the curriculum middle managers role set.

A similar position was recorded when the top three influences over key decisions was considered, with a high 80 per cent of the three groups placing senior managers in their top three. This was followed by subject lecturers with 66.25 per cent, departmental staff with 66 per cent and students with 45.5 per cent. However, again other groups within the extended role set varied in their influence depending on the area of decision-making being considered. Parents/guardians and Governors are not perceived as being very influential members of the curriculum middle managers role set.

Expectations of Self

The information contained in this section is relevant to the following research questions:

Research Questions:

- What tasks do middle managers consider to be part of their role?

- How does the perception of their role compare with insights drawn from the literature?

- Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

Curriculum middle managers were asked to place twelve tasks in order of priority, indicating whether they considered each task to be "most important", "within their top three", "least important" or "within their bottom three". Their responses are first considered in order of the percentage of curriculum middle managers who selected the task as their top priority, least priority and then followed by how their responses break down into the individual areas of classification.

Most Important

Table 36: Summary - Most Important

Rank	Area	Task	Most	Top Three
1	Acad	Developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies.	50%	85%
2	Man	Collaborating in cross-college planning.	19%	54%
3	Edu	Teaching your subject.	12%	42%
4	Acad	Implementing college policy.	12%	31%
5	Edu	Co-ordinating and overseeing course assessment in line with college policies.	4%	31%
6	Man	Devising and leading staff development within your curriculum area.	4%	12%
7	Man	Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through.	0%	27%
8	Acad	Liaising with outside agencies.	0%	12%
9	Edu	Devising and monitoring student records.	0%	4%
10	Admin	Monitoring and controlling the use of stock and other resources.	0%	4%
11	Admin	Being in charge of funds for the curriculum area.	0%	0%
12	Admin	Overseeing or assisting with the maintenance of the fabric and facilities including Health & Safety duties.	0%	0%

In respect of the most important task (Table 36), 50 per cent (n=13) of curriculum middle managers placed "developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies" as their most important task; with "collaborating in cross-college planning" with 19 per

cent (n=5), "teaching your subject" with 12 per cent (n=3) and "implementing college policy" with 12 per cent (n=3) being placed in second, third and fourth place respectively. Two of the top four tasks fell into the "academic" category. Other tasks failed to gain significant responses.

Least Important

Table 37: Summary - Least Important

Rank	Area	Task	Least	Bottom Three
1	Admin	Overseeing or assisting with the maintenance of the fabric and facilities including Health & Safety duties.	42%	65%
2	Admin	Monitoring and controlling the use of stock and other resources.	27%	73%
3	Edu	Devising and monitoring student records.	12%	35%
4	Admin	Being in charge of funds for the curriculum area.	4%	42%
5	Man	Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through.	4%	23%
6	Edu	Co-ordinating and overseeing course assessment in line with college policies.	4%	12%
7	Acad	Implementing college policy.	4%	4%
8	Acad	Liasing with outside agencies.	0%	33%
9	Man	Devising and leading staff development within your curriculum area.	0%	12%
10	Man	Collaborating in cross-college planning.	0%	0%
11	Acad	Developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies.	0%	0%
12	Edu	Teaching your subject.	0%	0%

In respect of the least important task (Table 37), 42 per cent (n=11) of curriculum middle managers placed "overseeing or assisting with the maintenance of the fabric and facilities including Health & Safety duties" as their least important task; with "monitoring and controlling the use of stock and other resources" with 27 per cent (n=7) being placed in second place and "devising and monitoring student records" with 12 per cent (n=3) being placed in third place. Three of the top four tasks fell into the "academic" category. Other tasks failed to gain above 4 per cent of the responses.

Education Category

Figure 27: Education Category
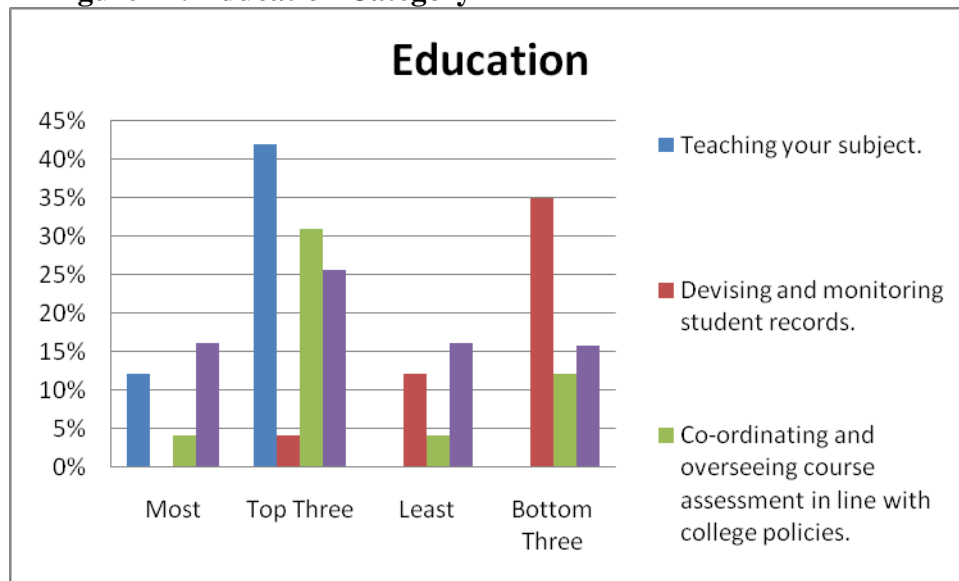
Table 38: Education Category

Area	Task	Most	Top Three	Least	Bottom Three
Edu	Teaching your subject.	12%	42%	0%	0%
Edu	Co-ordinating and overseeing course assessment in line with college policies.	4%	31%	4%	12%
Edu	Devising and monitoring student records.	0%	4%	12%	35%
Edu	Total (percentage of respondents)	16%	25.6%	16%	15.7%

Table 38/Figure 27 details that overall, 16 per cent of curriculum middle managers placed one of the tasks situated in the "education" category as their most important, with 25.6 per cent placing one in their top three. In addition, 16 per cent of the group indicated that they considered one of these tasks in this category to be their least important, with 15.7 per cent placing a task within their bottom three.

In relation to the individual tasks within this category, 12 per cent (n=3) of respondents placed "teaching your subject" as their most important task and 42 per cent (n=11) within their top three. Nome of the group considered this to be either their least important task or placed it in their bottom three. This response was higher than the task "co-ordinating and overseeing course assessment in line with college polices" with only 4 per cent (n=1) of the group considering this to be the most important task and 31 per cent (n=8) placing it in their top three. 4 per cent (n=1) considered this to be their least important task and 12 per cent (n=3) placed it in their bottom three. The task "devising and monitoring student records" received the lowest score with 0 per cent placing the task in their most important category and only 4 per cent (n=1) in their top three; 12 per cent (n=3) of the group placed this task in their least important and 35 per cent (n=9) within their bottom three.

Figure 28: Academic
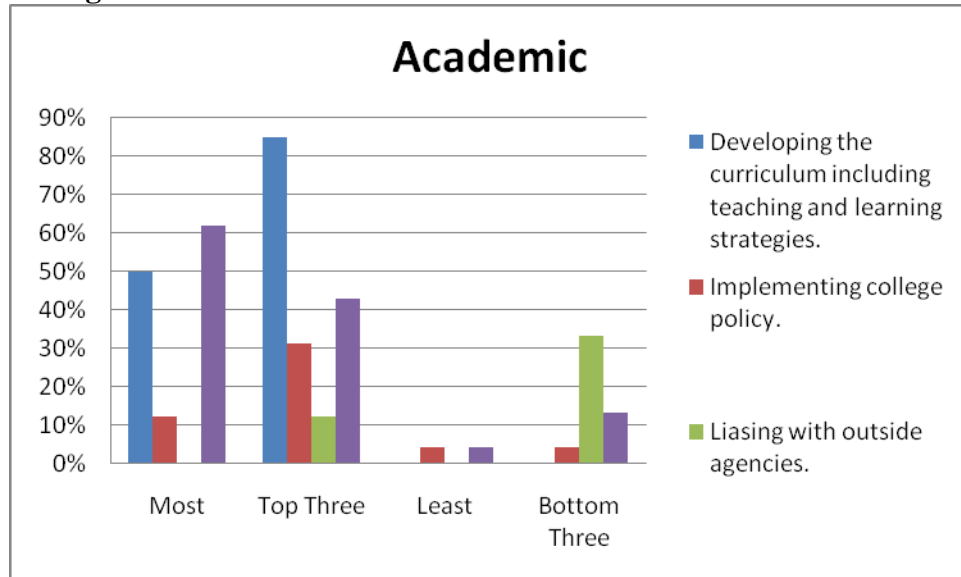
Table 39: Academic

Area	Task	Most	Top Three	Least	Bottom Three
Acad	Developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies.	50%	85%	0%	0%
Acad	Implementing college policy.	12%	31%	4%	4%
Acad	Liasing with outside agencies.	0%	12%	0%	33%
Acad	Total (percentage of respondents)	62%	42.7%	4%	13%

Table 39/Figure 28 indicates that 62 per cent of curriculum middle managers considered one of the "academic" tasks to be their most important and 42.7 per cent in their top three. Only 4 per cent of respondents indicated that they considered one of these tasks in this category to be their least important. However, 13 per cent placed an "academic" task within their bottom three.

In relation to the individual tasks within this category, 50 per cent (n=13) of the group placed "developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies" as their most important task and 85 per cent (n=22) placed it within their top three. None of the group considered this to be either their least important task or in their bottom three.

When the task "implementing college policy" was considered, 12 per cent (n=3) of curriculum middle managers considered this to be the most important task, with 31 per cent (n=8) placing it in their top three.

The task "liasing with outside agencies" received the lowest score within this category with no one placing it in their most important category and only 12 per cent (n=3) placing it in their top three. Interestingly, none of the group placed this task in their least important category but 33 per cent (n=8) within their bottom three.

Management Category

Figure 29: Management
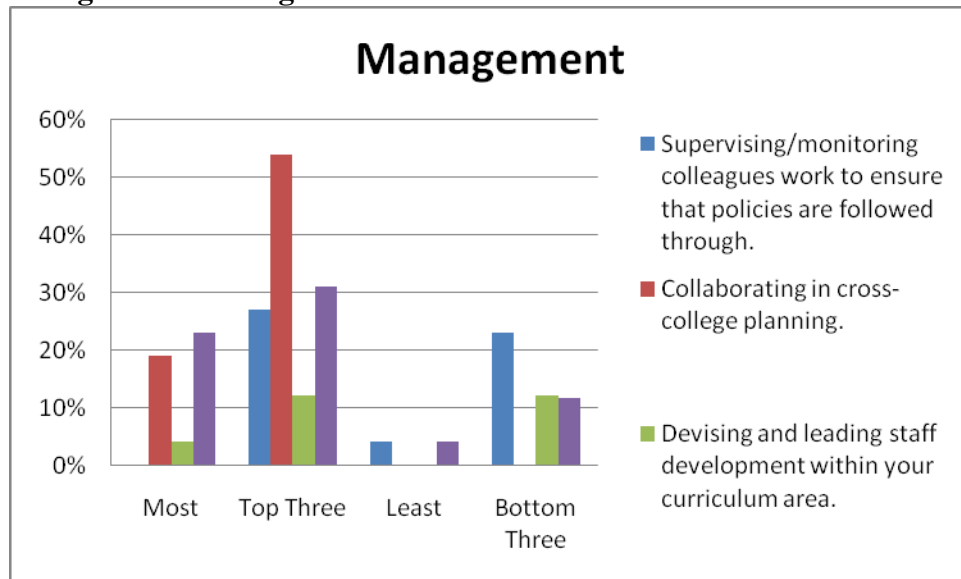
Table 40: Management

Area	Task	Most	Top Three	Least	Bottom Three
Man	Collaborating in cross-college planning.	19%	54%	0%	0%
Man	Devising and leading staff development within your curriculum area.	4%	12%	0%	12%
Man	Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through.	0%	27%	4%	23%
Man	Total (percentage of respondents)	23%	31%	4%	11.7%

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of the group placed one of the tasks within the "management" category as their most important; with 31 per cent placing one in their top three tasks 11.7 per cent of the group placed a "management" task within their bottom three (Table 40/Figure 29).

In relation to the individual tasks, a noteworthy response rate was recorded for the task "collaborating in cross college planning" with 19 per cent (n=5) of respondents considering this to be the most important task and 54 per cent (n=14) placing it in their top three. 0 per cent of respondents considered this to be their least important task or placed it in their bottom three.

Considering the task "devising and leading staff development within a curriculum area" 4 per cent (n=1) of respondents placed the task in their most important category and 12 per cent (n=3) in their top three. 0 per cent of respondents placed this task as their least important and only 12 per cent (n=3) within their bottom three.

0 per cent of respondents placed "supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through" as their most important task but 27 per cent (n=7) within their top three. Only 4 per cent (n=1) considered this to be their least important task and 23 per cent (n=6) placed it in their bottom three.

Administration Category

Figure 30: Administration
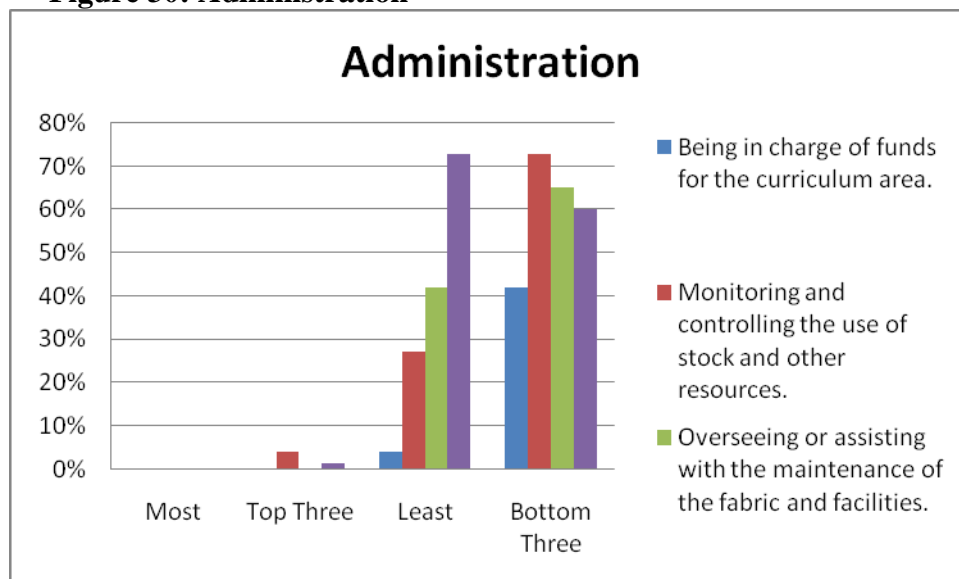
Table 41: Administration

Area	Task	Most	Top Three	Least	Bottom Three
Admin	Monitoring and controlling the use of stock and other resources.	0%	4%	27%	73%
Admin	Overseeing or assisting with the maintenance of the fabric and facilities including Health & Safety duties.	0%	0%	42%	65%
Admin	Being in charge of funds for the curriculum area.	0%	0%	4%	42%
Admin	Total (percentage of respondents)	0%	1.3%	73%	60%

Table 41/Figure 30 details that 0 per cent of curriculum middle managers considered one of the "administration" tasks to be their most important and only 1.3 per cent placed them in their top three. 73 per cent indicated that they considered one of these tasks in this category to be their least important, but 60 per cent placed them in their bottom three.

In relation to the individual tasks within this category, 0 per cent of respondents placed "monitoring and controlling the use of stock and other resources" as their most important task and only 4 per cent (n=1) within their top three. 27 per cent (n=7) considered this to be their least important task but 73 per cent (n=19) placed it in their bottom three.

When the task "overseeing or assisting with the maintenance of the fabric and facilities including Health & Safety duties" was considered 0 per cent of respondents placed this as their most important task or placed it in their top three. However, 42 per cent (n=11) of respondents considered this to be their least important task and 65 per cent (n=17) placed it in their top three.

In considering the task "being in charge of funds for a curriculum area" 0 per cent of respondents considered this to be either their most important task or placed it in their top three. Only 4 per cent (n=1) of respondents placed this task as their least important but 42 per cent (n=11) placed it within their bottom three.

Summary

Figure 31: Summary
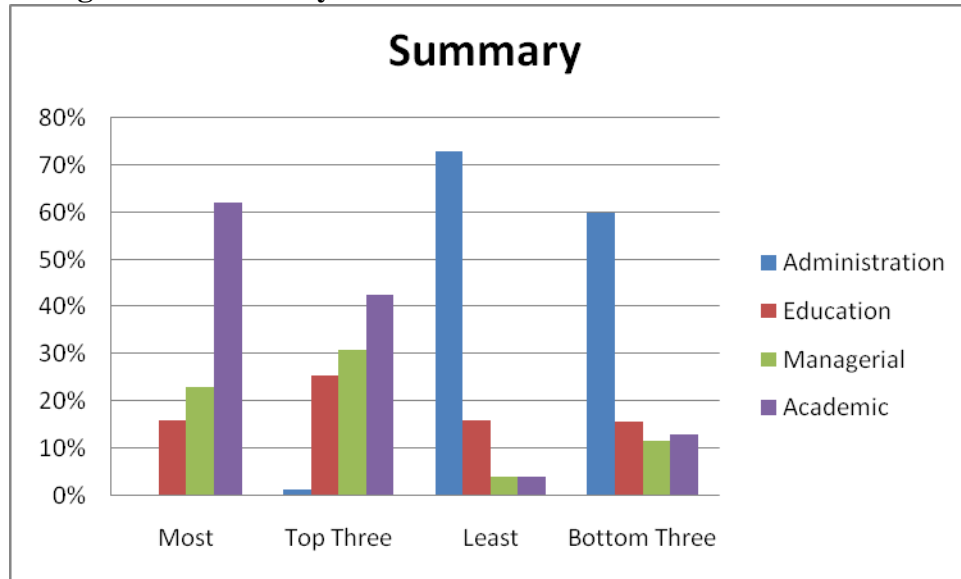
Table 42: Summary

Category	Most	Top Three	Least	Bottom Three
Academic	62%	42.7%	4%	13%
Managerial	23%	31%	4%	11.7%
Education	16%	25.6%	16%	15.7%
Administration	0%	1.3%	73%	60%

The highest ranked area within this part of the questionnaire, with 62 per cent of curriculum middle managers indicating this as their "most important" category and 42.7 per cent placing it in their "top three", was the academic category (Table 42/Figure 31).

The managerial category fell into second place with 23 per cent of respondents placing this in their "most important" category and 31 per cent placing it in their "top three; 39 per cent and 11.7 per cent below the academic category respectively.

The "educational" category with 16 per cent of respondents placing tasks within this area as their most important and 25.6 per cent within their "top three" was placed in third place.
The lowest ranked area was "administration" with no curriculum middle managers considering this to be their "most important" category and only 1.3 per cent placing it in their "top three".

The importance of each of the category of tasks contained in the questionnaire is confirmed when the "least important" and "bottom three" categories are considered; with the "administration" category being placed as the least important category, followed by the "educational", "managerial" and "academic" categories. Indeed, with 73 per cent of curriculum middle managers placing the "administration" tasks as their "least important

and 60 per cent within their "bottom three" category of tasks, it is would suggest that these are very low on their list of priorities.

The same percentage of curriculum middle managers (16 per cent) considered the "educational" category of tasks to be their "least important" as placed them in their "most important" category; 15.7 per cent placed tasks in this category in their "bottom three".

Only 4 per cent of curriculum middle managers considered the "managerial" and "academic" categories to be their "least important"; with 11.7 placing the "managerial" category in their "bottom three" and 13 per cent the "academic" category.

Overall Summary

A number of key themes have emerged from this research with regards to the clarity of role definition, the breadth, range and importance of duties undertaken by curriculum middle managers, as well as the main role set influences over key decisions made in the course of their duties. These themes are reviewed and discussed in more depth in the Analysis Chapter but are highlighted here under the appropriate section headings.

Most important aspect of the role

The increase in responsibilities assigned to the curriculum middle manager has resulted in the need for them to take on a number of activities, such as leadership, that were previously perceived as being the main responsibility of senior managers. Indeed, the results from this research suggest that these "new activities" are perceived by senior managers and curriculum middle managers as being as important as some of the more tradition tasks, such as ensuring the quality of teaching, that are performed by curriculum middle managers.

There is also evidence that senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers need to not only communicate their individual expectations of the role, but also the individual tasks that they expect performed by curriculum middle managers to all colleagues to ensure that they all have similar expectations. Evidence from this research suggests that in relation to some tasks there are significant differences between the expectations of the three groups.

This section of the research also indicated a divide between the expectations of teaching staff and curriculum middle managers and those who hold senior management responsibilities. There appears to be a move by senior managers to develop the curriculum middle manager's role more in line with that of their own; with the result that the expectations of senior managers are at times now opposite to that of the other two groups. This also impacts on the process of defining the role of the curriculum middle manager as it is key that all members of the role set have a clear understanding of what the role holder is responsible for.

Overall, this section of the research has demonstrated that curriculum middle managers in colleges of Further Education have very wide ranging responsibilities that have developed because of the changing nature of Further Education. Clearly, curriculum middle managers need to be supported by senior managers as well as being clearly understood and recognised by the teaching staff in order for the role to work effectively. No longer is it sufficient to act out a role with a particular title in a standard way; the increasing tasks allocated to the role of curriculum middle managers, together with the changes in accountability and activity in Further Education generally increases the need for all members of the role set to fully understand the role.

Expectations/Perceptions of the role

This section of the research highlights the differences in the expectations of the various members of the curriculum middle manager's role set. The research findings identify a number of important variations between the expectations and perception of role set members in relation to a number of the task classifications. While these are discussed in more detail, and also in relation to the existing literature, in the next chapter, it is important to identify the key points at this time.

- Overall, there seems to be agreement among the role set as to the importance of academic tasks. However, the importance of individual academic tasks within the curriculum middle manager's role varies significantly between role set members. In particular, differences were recorded between the expectations/perceptions of senior managers and those of curriculum middle managers and lecturers.
- Generally, there seems to be agreement among the role set as to the least important tasks within the academic category.
- Overall, it would appear that there is some disagreement between the three groups as to the importance of educational tasks.
- Significant differences were recorded between the expectations/perceptions of senior managers and that of curriculum middle managers and lecturers in relation to the least important tasks within the educational category.
- Only small differences were recorded in relation to the expectations/perceptions of the three groups when considering the "bottom three" tasks in the managerial category.
- Differences were recorded between perceptions of curriculum middle managers and the expectations of senior managers when considered the "most important" and "top three" tasks in the managerial category.
- Overall, there seems to be agreement among the role set as to the importance of administrative tasks. However, a small number of differences were recorded between the expectations/perceptions of senior managers and those of curriculum middle managers and lecturers.

<u>Influences</u>

It would appear that the strongest influence over decisions across all four of the quadrants of the classification is that of senior managers. However, significant differences between the responses of the three groups were recorded within each of the four questions, with no strong alignment being found between any of the individual role set members. Ofsted, Governors, parents/guardians and other teaching staff were not perceived as being very influential members of the curriculum middle managers extended role set.

<u>Expectations of self</u>

The two areas which claimed the highest priorities overall, "Academic" and "Managerial", are both areas where curriculum middle managers have showed strong alignment with the expectations of senior managers in other areas of the questionnaire.

In contrast, the "Administrative" area of tasks appears to have been given a very low priority by curriculum middle managers. This low response rate is reflected in other areas of the questionnaire and has also been highlighted as an area of conflict between the perceptions and expectations of the curriculum middle managers and their role set.

The final area, "Educational", showed some ambiguity with as many curriculum middle managers considering tasks within this area to be their highest priority as those considering them to be their lowest. This would seem to be an area where curriculum middle managers are appearing to be aligning their views with those of senior managers. For while they may be sympathetic with the concerns and disagreements lecturers may have with college policy and practice, they accept that it is part of their role to implement such policies.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of the findings identified in the preceding chapter. Each of the research questions are addressed with the intention of responding to the substantive, theoretical and methodological issues identified in previous chapters.

Question one and two are addressed under the subheading 'Role and its Definition'; question three under 'The Tasks Required of a Curriculum Middle Manager'; question four under 'Professional Leader or Leading Professional', and, finally, research question five is addressed under 'Role Set Influence'.

While the findings from these research questions are important in themselves, given the lack of previous research, by answering them I hope to reflect the new knowledge gained in addressing the research questions and to outline how this research can potentially contribute to the deeper understanding of the role of curriculum middle managers within colleges of Further Education.

Role and its Definition

Research Question One and Two:

- ➢ How does the perception of the role compare with insights drawn from the literature?
- ➢ How do the perceptions of the role and responsibilities of curriculum middle managers differ between staff groups?

It was noted in the literature review that several writers (Briggs, 2003; Wise, 1999; Armstrong et al, 1993; John, 1980) believe that it is important for role incumbents to fully understand their role and its expectations. Indeed, Brydson (1983, p.7) argues that a curriculum middle manager's role "must be widely and universally understood" and that evaluation of the role incumbent must be in respect of what they ought to be doing rather than what they are actually doing.

The "Framework for the Inspection of Colleges" (2007), the OFSTED publication used to guide its inspection of colleges does not give details of its expectations of curriculum middle managers but makes it clear that they do expect them to understand their role. Indeed, such writers as Gleeson and Shain (1999) argue that curriculum middle managers need to know what is expected and the associated performance criteria so that they can judge their effectiveness and plan strategies for growth in effectiveness.

The communication of expectations was investigated within the interviews with several respondents referring to the job description as a source of the fundamental tasks involved in the role. However, the general consensus from all three groups interviewed was that there were a number of unwritten expectations that new curriculum middle managers would find out about as they settled into their role; something that was highlighted in previous studies (Briggs, 2005; Wise, 1999) and appears to remain an issue for new curriculum middle managers.

In the wider context, such writers as Gleeson and Knights (2008), Briggs (2003) and Bennett et al (2003) stress the need for curriculum middle managers to know how his or her role relates to the remainder of their college and the relationships involved. Several curriculum middle manager interviewees did not know how all aspects of their role were communicated to them or indeed how they knew what their role was. Indeed, one curriculum middle manager commented that:

"What my job description says and what I do in reality are two very different things. I have lost count of the number of times a senior manager has told me that something was part of my job and it was the first I had heard of it. Sometimes the job just seems to evolve as we go though the academic year " CM1(C)Utt19.

This may account for some of the ambiguity and differences in expectations and priorities attached to tasks discussed later. Indeed, this lack of understanding of the role is at odds with a number of previous studies (Leader, 2004; Briggs, 2003; Bennett, 2003) who state that expectations, parameters and authority need to be defined so that everyone within the role set is clear about the boundaries of the role. It is important that curriculum middle managers are able to define clearly how their role contributes to the core business of the college if they are to be accepted in these roles by their colleagues. However, this need has to be situated in the context of the ever-changing nature of the curriculum middle managers role, not only in relation to the new tasks being performed, but also in relation to any cross-boundary function now being performed.

What is role?

The definition of role is more than simply a list of tasks or responsibilities (John, 1980). It is necessary to place it within the context of the whole college and its way of working. Thus it includes the relationships with other positions within the organisation in the definition and often taken to include the behaviours expected (Hannagan et al, 2007; Briggs, 2003). Role is dynamic because its definition is dependent on relationships so, as associations develop and change, so does the role.

The evidence from the three groups within this study indicates that curriculum middle managers carry out their role in a number of different ways. For it is evident from both the questionnaires and interviews that curriculum middle managers regularly act out more than one role. For example, 96 per cent (n=25) of curriculum middle managers stated that

they acted as a "bridge or broker" between senior managers and lecturers, 96 per cent (n=25) considered themselves to be a "leader", 73 per cent (n=19) as a subject expert and 69 per cent (n=18) felt that they were an "interpreter of college policy". This view supports that of Briggs (2003) who argues that a middle manager regularly occupies, sometimes simultaneously, a number of key roles. Indeed, Briggs (2003) goes on to recognise that there are often different expectations of these roles amongst fellow curriculum middle managers as well as the various members of their role set, something that was highlighted in both the questionnaire and interview responses of the three groups when they were asked to describe the role of a curriculum middle manager. As one senior manager argued:

> "I think that we all recognise that the role of the curriculum middle manager is ever changing. I think that we all have to accept that this is the case and it is unlikely to change. I know that this frustrates my managers but as the needs of the college change then adjustments to what we expect of them have to be made. At times, this does cause problems as they are unsure whether or not something sits within their area of responsibility. But this is a short lived issue and they soon adjust SM1(C)Utt14."

The evidence from this research therefore supports the need for clarity of definition, highlighting the need for the definition to provide a coherent picture of the overall remit of the role.

Who defines role?

Handy (1993) states that the role is defined by the individual's personal attributes and skills as well as the situation they are working in. The situation is bound by the role expectations of the members of the role set who could be defined as the group of people with whom the role incumbent interacts in some non-trivial way. In relation to curriculum middle managers, their extended role set might include not only the lecturers within their own department but also fellow curriculum middle managers, senior managers, governors, parents and of course students.

The findings from the questionnaire gave an indication of which groups within the middle managers' extended role set were the most influential. Within all four areas of decision making, one taken from each of the four quadrants of the classification (see p.63), 'senior managers' were rated as the most influential, with 'subject lecturers' and 'departmental staff' as the second and third highest influence. This highlights a possible change in influence, with both Bennett (2003) and Wise (1999) previously reporting 'subject lecturers' as the 'most influential' member of the middle managers role set. In practical terms, this change in influence may affect the activities priotized by curriculum middle managers, including changes in practice towards teaching and learning; something that has the potential to create conflict between the teaching staff and college management.

The concept of role as a dynamic entity (Briggs, 2003) is supported by the finding that 'senior managers' were noted as potentially most influential to curriculum middle

managers in the management quadrant, when considering the professional development plan for their staff or area, and, 'subject lecturers' were considered to be a much stronger influence in relation to the academic quadrant, when considering decisions regarding the disciplining of students. This would suggest that as well as occupying a number of distinctly different roles, such as manager, leader, administrator, the curriculum middle manager may in practice have different role sets or accept different members as having legitimate influence for different parts of their role. The constant mediation of the perceived expectations of different groups within the role set along with consideration of their perceived legitimacy makes role a very fluid reality. Not only does this correlate with the findings of Briggs (2003) but also echoes the sentiments of Hannagan et al (2007). Both not only report on the many dilemmas facing curriculum middle managers in Further Education, but it also details the tensions that result from such a diverse role.

The differential expectations perceived by curriculum middle managers, senior managers and lecturers in both the questionnaire and interviews provide a useful guide as to how the curriculum middle manager's role is actually shaped. When considering the most important tasks within the 'Academic' quadrant of the classification the curriculum middle managers were generally in-line in their perceptions of the importance of tasks within this category with senior managers; something which is at odds with the findings of Wise (1999) who found that middle managers in schools tended to align themselves with the teaching staff. This change in focus would appear to be consistent with the changing nature of the curriculum middle manager role and supports the view that their priorities are increasingly being linked to that of senior managers. However, in practical terms any change in focus away from teaching and learning towards more management tasks is at odds with the national move towards greater accountability for teaching and learning outcomes and the demands for increased levels of student achievement.

As in Briggs' (2003) study, not all of the curriculum middle managers role set accepted the importance of these tasks; with lecturers indicating a significant difference of opinion between both curriculum middle managers and senior managers. This is an example of how the role incumbent might sometimes either ignore the role expectations sent by members of their role set or indeed not understand what is expected of them by the role set members. However, in the case of the least important tasks within this category the perception of curriculum middle managers were closely related to the expectations of both lecturers and senior managers, providing some evidence of agreement and communication.

Within the "Educational" quadrant the curriculum middle managers aligned their own expectations with those of lecturers. However, there were indications of perceived role conflict by curriculum middle managers themselves; something also found in Briggs' (2003) study. As an example, when curriculum middle managers were ask to consider their own expectations of the role 16 per cent (n=4) placed an "Educational" task in their most important category. However, 16 per cent (n=4) also placed an "Educational" task in their least important category.

In practice, this indicates that as many curriculum middle managers are prioritising such tasks as are not. It is possible that the role communication is not clear. Indeed, a number of lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers interviewed indicated that a number of tasks within the "educational" category are not expected of their curriculum middle managers, believing instead that lecturers, in the form of their curriculum teams, should take responsibility for such tasks. This helps to validate both Leaders (2004) and Briggs (2003) opinion that curriculum teams are taking on more and more educational tasks as curriculum middle managers take on more managerial tasks. This would appear to blur the traditional view of the tasks performed by college lecturers and may warrant further study in its own right.

However, this view was not shared by all curriculum middle manager and senior manager interviewees, with a small number considering that such tasks were either the responsibility of the curriculum middle manager or some other specialist manager. This, as in Briggs (2003) study, could be evidence of weak communication of role expectations leading to potential role ambiguity. Indeed, this would seem to be an area where curriculum middle managers are again aligning their views with those of senior managers. For while they may be sympathetic with the concerns and disagreements lecturers may have with College policy and practice, they appear to accept that it is part of their role to implement such policies.

The difference between the expectations and priorities communicated and those perceived as legitimate by curriculum middle managers was clear from both the questionnaire and interviews. However, the curriculum middle managers interviewed were not of the same mind about how such matters were communicated or indeed what influenced their priorities. In addition, from the interviews it appears that many curriculum middle managers are aware of the expectations of their senior managers but that in some cases these expectations are seen as being unreasonable or not legitimate. This emphasises the place of the role incumbent in shaping their role, despite, in some cases, the best efforts of their role set to influence them. There is some logic in this approach as it is the curriculum middle manager who is accountable for the work of their area and in theory is most aware of what is needed to effectively support its development. However, in practice this is likely to cause role conflict between curriculum middle managers and senior managers as it is clear that the senior managers within this research expect their priorities to be followed.

How much does the role incumbent influence their own role?

A number of writers (Ribbins, 1988; Morris and Dennison, 1982) argue that individuals do not simply accept the role as it is given; they interact with the situation and adjust their response accordingly. So 'role sender' exerts pressure on the role incumbent in line with their expectations and the role incumbent considers their response before action. As well as communicating those tasks which are expected, the role set will convey the relative priorities which, in their opinion, should be applied to the tasks. It would appear that a number of middle managers are either unaware of this, do not consider the role set's opinion legitimate or have role sets which do not communicate priorities, because five of

the six curriculum middle managers interviewed (CM1(A), CM2(A), CM2(B), CM1(C), CM2(C)) stated that the priorities they had given to the tasks in the questionnaire were drawn from their own personal beliefs but these may be subtly influenced by the role set. One curriculum middle manager (CM1(B)) commented that their personal views were in line with the priorities communicated by senior managers. However, four of the six curriculum middle managers interviewed (CM1(A), CM2(B), CM1(C), CM2(C)) commented that their priorities were a mixture of their own beliefs and those communicated by senior managers; clearly demonstrating the principle of role adjustment.

It might be a case that the expectations are in conflict with other roles that the incumbent holds so the responses might not be exactly what the role sender desired. They might adjust their expectations or make their message clearer and so the cycle goes on. Gleeson and Knights (2008) argue that in practice role incumbents influence the expectations of their role sets; they create opportunities to shape role expectations. They detail circumstances and situations that affect the ability of the role incumbent to successfully shape role expectations.

Hannagan *et al* (2007) suggest that this ability is limited for professionals working within formal organisations; often with tense relationships developing between the role incumbent and the formalised structure of role expectations. However, it was clear from the interviews that communication of formalised role expectations is sometimes weak and, whilst it is accepted that there are details of role expectations in official college documentation, there is a difference between these details and the actual role enacted by the curriculum middle managers; leading to possible role conflict. Bennett et al (2003) noted very similar situations in their research. Briggs (2003) found that, despite the best efforts of senior managers, the groups that make up the role set have a strong influence on the incumbent. The curriculum middle manager respondents to the survey indicated that different role set members were the most influential according to the nature of the decision being made. However, senior managers indicated that they were the most influential group in three of the four areas of decision making considered in the study; something that was also reflected by the comments made in the interviews. This inconsistency may lead to role conflict as curriculum middle managers fail to respond to the influence of each of their role set. Indeed, both their percieved and actual effectiveness, and through them the effectiveness of the college, often depends on how well they understand what is required by the role.

Is the fulfilment of role straightforward?
Role fulfilment can be difficult if different members of the role set have conflicting expectations, if their expectations are in conflict with the incumbent's personal beliefs or the different roles of the individual are in conflict with each other. Some of the differential expectations found during the research were discussed in the previous section "Who defines role?"

The definition of an individual's role within a particular situation at a given time is potentially problematic; the different perceptions of the role and how it should be fulfilled are likely to cause stress. Handy (1993) suggests there are three main types of

role stress. Role ambiguity is caused by uncertainty on the part of the individual or the role set as to what the role should be. It is caused by differential perceptions of the role within the role set. This research suggests that in relation to a number of tasks there are significant differences between the expectations of curriculum middle managers and their role set; overall indicating a divide between the expectations of teaching staff and those who hold management responsibilities. This can lead to tensions and pressures over the value of particular aspects of the role, which may cause curriculum middle managers to be overloaded with different expectations; leading to the need for them to reconcile opposing views and agendas and may create a strained working relationship with role set members if a satisfactory solution cannot be found.

In the Academic and Managerial areas of the classification the curriculum middle managers tended toward the perceived expectations of their senior managers and a high number indicated tasks in this area as their responsibility; something which Briggs (2003) believed would happen in the years following her study. In the Administrative area of the classification the curriculum middle managers mainly behaved in accordance with their team members and few indicated tasks within this area as being an important element of their role. In the fourth area, the Educational, the different perceptions of the three groups were not reconciled, with differences being recorded in relation to most of the tasks with this area. This may result in tensions between the ideals of managerialism and professionalism, which can significantly affect the role as such tensions not only erode manager's time but also affect working relationships as role set members may lack confidence in the curriculum middle manager role.

Role conflict is where the individual has to act out more than one role in a given situation and the roles are incompatible. Earley and Flectcher-Campbell (1989) refer to this type of conflict as "role overload". All of the curriculum middle managers interviewed voiced concerns about their lack of time. They did not feel they had sufficient time to complete both their teaching role and their management role satisfactory. There were also times where the management role required them to leave their own classes and they were concerned about the impact on student learning. Wise (1999) found that lack of time appeared to leave a situation where heads of department had role conflict built into their role and that they often felt a "conflict of loyalty" between their allegiance to their head and their department.

The Tasks Required of a Curriculum Middle Manager

Research Question Three:

> ➢ Which tasks carried out by curriculum middle managers are seen as having the highest priority?

Briggs (2003) argues that there are a large number of books available for both the aspiring and practising head of department or area which often lists the tasks likely to be expected of such post holders. However, bland acceptance of such lists can be limiting

and certainly Lambert (1972) thought it better to think out role-definitions in relation to objectives.

Bennett (1995) finds a clear culture in job descriptions that heads of department are in charge of delivering what is laid down by those in higher positions within the management hierarchy and not further developing what is to be done. OFSTED (2007) indicate their wish to see middle managers more actively involved in devising policies and improving the work of their subject areas.

A number of writers (Briggs, 2003; Bennett 2003; Wise, 1999) have proposed models which offer outlines of the tasks that are expected of curriculum middle managers. Some models are based on lists gathered from observations of middle managers whilst others are drawn from a more theoretical base. In a similar way some of the models merely group tasks together, whilst others attempt a more analytical approach.

A number of these models and classifications, together with individual tasks contained in these models, were considered in the Literature Review and a classification was selected that encompassed all the areas highlighted by earlier writers.

A classification of tasks for curriculum middle managers

There is evidence (Bennett, 2003) that a classification divided into Academic, Administrative, Managerial and Educational where the model is based upon the fundamental constructs of a continuum, between people and tasks as one dimension, has some grounding in theory. A model based on the fundamentals of the management tasks can more easily be applied to the growing number of cross-curricular co-ordinators as well as to curriculum middle managers.

The non-personnel aspects of the role are gathered into the two instrumental areas in the classification, the 'Administrative' and 'Academic'. Both areas are to do with organisational paperwork, with the 'Academic' tasks being those which are directly supportive of the learning of the students within the subject, while the 'administrative' tasks are concerned with the whole college aspects of the role.

The two expressive areas within the model, 'Managerial' and 'Educational', are both 'people-centred'. The whole college aspects in the Managerial area are about the monitoring and development of staff as the subject's contribution to institutional aims. The Educational area is about the monitoring of work, and the progress and development of students as individuals.

Consideration of the various lists of tasks, that writers deem to be the responsibility of the curriculum middle manager, was completed in the Literature Review. A normative list was developed based on the four areas of the classification.

The highest placed quadrant, the 'Academic', has its tasks given a high priority, being placed first, fourth and eighth out of the twelve tasks present to the curriculum middle

managers in the questionnaire. Indeed, the task "developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies" was considered by far the most important of the twelve tasks; with 50 per cent (n=13) of curriculum middle managers considering it to be their most important task and 85 per cent (n=22) placing it in their top three tasks. This high ranking was expected as a number of writers (Briggs, 2003, Bennett, 2003, Wise, 1999) suggested that these tasks are not contentious. The high ranking is therefore indicative of curriculum middle managers' acceptance of this aspect of their role. However, a 'Managerial' quadrant task, 'collaborating in cross-college planning', fell into second place. This, as in Leaders' (2004), Briggs' (2003) and Wises' (1999) studies, suggests that managerial tasks are now perceived by curriculum middle managers as being more important than some of the more traditional tasks linked to ensuring the quality of teaching within their area of responsibility. This may have consequences in relation to the quality of teaching and learning within colleges and appears to be inconsistent with the government's drive to significantly improve this key area of performance.

The lowest placed quadrant, the 'Administrative', has its tasks clearly given a low priority, being placed tenth, eleventh, and twelfth out of the twelve tasks by the curriculum middle managers; with 73 per cent (n=19) placing an administrative task as their least important. This low ranking is to some degree unexpected as Briggs (2003) and Bennett *et al* (2003) both found that administrative tasks were often done in preference to other tasks because they were most easily noticed if they were not done. However, Wise (1999) in her study noticed middle managers shifting their emphasis from teaching and routine administration towards management and would appear to reflect the findings of this research project. This may suggest that it is no longer sufficient to act out a role with a particular title in a standard way, the increasing student numbers and changes in accountability and activity in Further Education have resulted in local interpretation and implementation by the post holder and senior managers in order to meet local business needs. These local requirements often include the transfer of responsibilities from senior managers to the curriculum middle manager so that they can be freed up to undertake more appropriate activities.

Indeed, by considering the overall responses of lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers it can be seen that the priorities indicated by each of the three groups is at times very different. However, there are a number of areas where the members of the individual groups agree; often in relation to unexpected tasks. For example, there was much less emphasis on teaching and much more emphasis on supervising and monitoring from both curriculum middle managers and lecturers. This is an area that middle managers had in previous studies considered not be expected of them by their teams (Bennett et al, 2003; Wise, 1999) and may suggest that staff within colleges are becoming more used to the changing focus of the curriculum middle manager role.

The traditional role of developing the curriculum was also ranked highly by both curriculum middle managers and their role set; indicating that there may have been an expansion of the expectations of the role set since Briggs (2003) study to include some supervision and monitoring alongside, but not replacing, the traditional elements.

The fact that the curriculum middle managers' priorities are at times different to both senior managers and lecturers may be an indication of the weak communication of role expectations or of curriculum middle managers not adjusting their role expectations in line with the communicated priorities. Bennett *et al* (2003) found that there were some role expectations that ineffective department heads were unwilling to accept because they were not seen as legitimate. Their lack of acceptance of these aspects of their role meant their department did not improve as rapidly as they might. Unlike Bennett *et al* (2003), none of the curriculum middle managers in this study appeared to indicate that managerial tasks were not part of their role. However, it is not possible to say whether in practice these tasks were actually completed; although there was some evidence gained from the interviews that curriculum middle managers did not always see all of these tasks as a priority.

Professional Leader or Leading Professional

Research Question Four:

> ➢ What tasks do middle managers consider to be part of their role?

A number of writers define middle managers as being the tier of management between the senior managers and those classroom teachers who have no post of responsibility (Briggs, 2003; Bennett et al, 2003; Wise 1999). They are responsible for the co-ordination of the day- to-day work of their subject or curriculum area within college policies and for the two-way communication between senior managers and those lecturers working within their area (Bennett, 2003). They are, in practice, responsible for the application of the vision of their senior managers; something that was evident from the comments made by curriculum middle managers during the interviews and echoed by Hannagan et al (2007), Briggs (2003) and Leathwood (2000).

The role of the curriculum middle manager following Incorporation

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, FE colleges became legally independent incorporated bodies (with charity status), free of local authority control. The principal is chief executive, with overall responsibility for executive management and day-to-day running of the college. Simkins and Lumby (2002) argue that the effects of Incorporation have impacted on the leadership and management of college of Further Education greatly. If time invested is an indicator of the importance and value attributed to areas of activity, then the shifts in the use of time shows that middle and senior levels have experienced a shift where more of their time is given to management activities. Senior managers have experienced the most noticeable shift in the amount of time given, particularly to financial management (Briggs, 2003; Gleeson and Shain, 1999). However, the role and tasks undertaken by curriculum middle managers as a result of these changes has had to change to take into account the need to undertake some of the tasks once completed by senior managers; suggesting that they are now not only at the centre of curriculum development but also at the centre of the day to day management of colleges. This not only raises the question of whether they are adequately prepared for this aspect

of their role but also highlights the fundamental nature of the change in the curriculum middle manager's role.

Recognition of this management role by curriculum middle managers is apparent from both the questionnaire and interviews and would appear to validate Leader's (2004) view that there has been an actual shift in the tasks undertaken by senior and middle managers.

Within the questionnaire, curriculum middle managers ranked "Collaborating in cross-college planning" second overall. However, it must be noted that a number of curriculum middle managers did not place this task in their top three; a possible indication that not all curriculum middle managers have accepted their role at the centre of college management and this may lead to role conflict. Indeed, no curriculum middle manager placed the management task "Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through" as their most important task; with only 27 per cent (n=7) placing it in their top three; reflecting the findings of Wise (1999), who found that academic middle managers disliked this aspect of their role and often failed to carry out this task.

Hannagan *et al* (2007) notes that as the number and complexity of management tasks increase, and with senior managers increasingly being involved in executive functions, the day to day management activities fall to curriculum middle managers. Indeed, Knight (1989) suggests that middle managers within education have been given greater and greater control of their own budgets. However, it is difficult to judge from the research data whether curriculum middle managers in Further Education have fully grasped their responsibilities in this area. For while "Being in charge of funds for the curriculum area" was only ranked eleventh out of twelve in the list of priorities by curriculum middle managers, there is a significant difference between this task and the higher order budgeting that Knight (1989) refers to.

Manager or teacher

Several writers (Wise, 1999; Adey, 1988; Ribbins, 1986) comment on the need for a department head or subject co-ordinator to be a good teacher. They note that this is expected not only by the heads of department themselves but also by other heads of department, senior teachers and classroom teachers.

When curriculum middle managers were asked to put a range of tasks in priority order in the questionnaire, only 12 per cent (n=3) indicated that "teaching their subject" was their top priority; with 42 per cent (n=11) placing it in their top three priorities. Bennett (2003) found that the role of middle managers was often viewed as being a master teacher rather than a manager. However, this was not the case in this study and illustrates close accordance with Gleeson and Knights (2008) who contend that the role of the curriculum middle manager is now seen as one of a manager rather than a teacher; indicating a possible professional identity change for some. This may not only lead to role conflict due the difficulty of making the transition from leader to manager but also highlights the need for support and training thoughtout this period of change.

When asked to indicate the most important aspect of the curriculum middle manager's role, only 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers considered that being a 'subject expert' was the most important; with no senior manager or lecturer respondents considering it to be the most important aspect. This view is supported by the comments of one lecturer during the interviews. He commented that:

"… they are not there for specialist subject knowledge as there are too many subjects underneath them and they rely on the knowledge of their lecturers for these subjects. And even as a teaching guru you don't need to be that either I think. You have to be respected as a teacher – but you don't necessarily have to be an expert" L2(B)Utt4.

To some degree this reflects what Briggs (2003) found in her study; suggesting that it is not enough to be an excellent teacher, the curriculum middle manager needs to be able to simulate and maintain team effort toward achieving the departmental aims and objectives. Indeed, nothing was found in this study to suggest that any of the three groups believed that curriculum middle managers should be a teacher first and foremost, or that they should possess extensive subject knowledge. This appears to highlight the need for curriculum middle managers to have management skills and again raises the question of appropiate training to gain these skills.

As in Briggs (2003) study, the idea that curriculum middle managers should be a leader able to stimulate and maintain team effect was evident when all three groups were asked to highlight the most important element of a curriculum middle manager's role. However, while both senior and curriculum middle managers placed being a leader as the most important part of the role, lecturers placed it in second place; with ensuring the quality of teaching being considered the most important. This again highlights the difference in perceptions of those who have management responsibilities within their role and those who are purely involved in teaching; not only highlighting an area of possible role conflict but also further illustrating the direction that the curriculum middle managers role appears to be taking.

None of the curriculum middle managers or lecturer respondents placed being a manager as the most important part of a curriculum middle manager's role. This is not that surprising in relation to lecturer respondents, as it is evident from such writers as Bennett (2003), that teachers do not always view the management aspect of the middle managers role as being important. However, it is surprising in relation to curriculum middle managers as such writers as Hannagan *et al* (2007) and Leader (2004) suggest that this area is of growing importance in relation to their role; something reflected in the comments of two senior managers during the interviews:

"In simple terms, it is the core function of the role. A curriculum manager must be able to lead and manage their team"SM2(A)Utt14.

"All of my curriculum managers understand that managing their curriculum area is their Priority" SM1(C)Utt18.

This may indicate that the true importance of the management tasks undertaken by the curriculum middle managers were either not recognised or communicated by senior managers in such a way as to impress the importance that they attach to them. In addition, while the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other institutions, it does serve to validate and add further weight to the evidence in the literature that curriculum middle managers are spending more of their time addressing managerial tasks, instead of being allowed the time and space to focus on developing the quality of teaching. This is a concern, for not only does this appear to go against the increasing pressure put on colleges by the government to improve the quality of teaching in the sector but it suggests that there is no one focusing on this important aspect of the role.

Leadership

Leaders are seen as individuals who can influence the behaviour of others (Bryman, 1992) but Howard (1988) added that the creativity of an effective leader should not be confused with the completion of routine tasks. These leaders need to work from within the centre of a web of inter-personal relationships rather than from atop of a traditional hierarchy and such leaders need to work on the basis of shared purpose, co-operation and clarification rather than telling people what to do (Brown and Rutherford, 1996). Within the interviews a number of curriculum middle managers not only stressed the importance of leadership within their role but also indicated a participative style of management. One curriculum middle manager interviewed commented that if the staff were not happy they would not complete the task so discussion and persuasion were essential elements of their leadership style. However, a number of lecturers stressed that curriculum middle were adopting a more direct style of management, something which they normally associated with senior managers.

Most senior and curriculum middle managers interviewed described themselves as a manager. However, they often described other members of the college's management team as leaders. This concurs with the findings of Briggs (2003) study, in that middle managers are often reluctant to describe themselves as leaders. Indeed, it was evident that staff tended to equate the function of leadership with position, in particular that of senior managers. They did not appear to share senior manager's perceptions that leadership was exercised at various levels within the college, which reflects the findings of Leader (2004) and Briggs (2003).

If leadership is a dynamic concept, like 'role', then effective leadership must be the successful integration of a number of factors such as concern for defining and achieving tasks, concern for the interpersonal relationships within the group, and choosing appropriate methods of involving colleagues in the work of the group (Briggs, 2003). If leadership is to succeed, then time must be made available for genuine consultation, something which a number of curriculum middle managers and lecturers stated often did not happen due to lack of time. This study supports Wise (1999) when she highlights lack of time as a major barrier in the development of the management element of the academic middle manager role. However, not all issues can be tackled by group decision-making

and sometimes the leader or appropriate delegated person has to 'announce' the decision (Leathwood, 2000).

For the leader, the purpose of modifying and influencing behaviour is so that organisational goals can be achieved, by working through others (Hannagan *et al*, 2007). But it is clear from such writers as Briggs (2005), Leader (2004) and Wise (1999) that many middle managers are reluctant to actively manage their staff. Within this study curriculum middle managers were asked to rank the task "Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through" against eleven others. None of the curriculum middle managers placed the task in their 'most important' category and only 27 per cent (n=7) in their 'top three'; placing the task in seventh position. This would appear to support the idea that curriculum middle managers are reluctant to undertake tasks that involve the monitoring of staff.

However, this view is not shared by lecturers or senior managers; with the two groups clearly indicating in both the questionnaires and interviews that they considered tasks involving the monitoring or checking of curriculum staff to be a fundamential aspect of the curriculum middle managers role. For example, 50 per cent of senior managers (n=5) and 51 per cent (n=22) of lecturers placed 'Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff' in their top three; compared to only 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers.

In relation to their teaching, lecturers often need help to reflect on their performance, preferably from someone that they both trust and respect. According to Ribbins (1988) the individual best placed to do this is the academic middle manager for that subject or area. Bennett et al (2003) in their research found that less than half of the academic middle managers accepted responsibility for supervising the teaching methods of staff. They also found that those who accepted responsibility were unwilling to use direct lesson observation as part of this supervision. This reluctance to observe colleagues teaching was also found by Wise (1999) who noted that 75 per cent of heads of department surveyed rated their performance in observing lessons as unsatisfactory. Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) found that most heads of department never observed their team teaching despite opportunities having been created. Norris (1989) showed that the majority of those he interviewed believed that they should be observing colleagues' lessons but did not know how to do so without causing conflict. One of the team members interviewed during this research voiced the opinion that he had entered a profession and should be trusted to do his job. He therefore did not consider 'Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff' should be the responsibility of his middle manager. This would link into the previous finding that curriculum middle managers do not necessarily have to be a subject expert. However, Briggs (2003) suggested that there had been a turning point in the acceptance of the checking of teaching by academic middle managers.

The findings of this research cannot support that of Briggs (2003). For while this study suggests that there is now a divide between the views of senior and middle managers and those of lecturers it also highlights that the 'checking of teaching' is not seen as a priority by the majority of senior or curriculum middle managers. Indeed, during the interviews it

was suggested by both groups that with the need to standardise the approach to improving the quality of teaching in colleges of Further Education this task now lay outside the remit of curriculum middle managers; with specialist teams, headed up by the college's quality manager, now tasked with this function. However, this view is not shared by the majority of lecturers, who see the benefits of having their teaching checked by their curriculum middle manager before such other bodies as OFSTED. Indeed, they link this task with improving the quality of their own teaching and the overall teaching on courses that they are involved with.

Whilst there appears to be a growing acceptance by lecturers that their teaching should be monitored, there also appears to be, supported by evidence from the questionnaires and interviews, a reluctance by curriculum middle managers to prioritise this task. Indeed, it would appear that a number of those curriculum middle managers who do prioritise this task only do so because they believed that it was expected of them by their senior managers, rather than any attempt to improve the quality of teaching within their area. The suggested lack of commitment towards improving the quality of teaching by curriculum middle managers is a concern and warrents further investigation; for such a position could lower the quality of teaching within Further Education and thereby undermine existing government targets to improve student success rates.

Staff and professional development

Bennett *et al* (2003) suggest that as soon as teachers become middle managers they enter the 'in-service training business' but 'Devising and leading staff development within your curriculum area' was only ranked sixth in the survey's list of tasks. Just 4 per cent (n=1) of curriculum middle managers identified it as their top priority and 12 per cent (n=3) placed it in their top three.

Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) found that, despite academic middle managers not seeing staff development as part of their role or being happy about doing it, organisation of staff development was seen as the hallmark of a successful department by senior managers. Indeed, a number of other writers (Bennett, 2003; Briggs, 2005; Wise, 1999) support the idea of staff development being a prime function of the middle manager. However, this was not in line with the opinion of the senior or middle managers who participated in this research; with only 20 per cent (n=2) of senior managers and 35 per cent (n=9) of curriculum middle managers placing "Leading and/or promoting the development of the areas staff's professional abilities' in their top three tasks.

Learning and curriculum management

The curriculum middle managers' responsibility for the curriculum introduces yet another powerful reason for regular and effective monitoring to take place. No matter how well documented the curriculum is, it is always open to misinterpretation, either deliberate or inadvertent, by the individual teacher (Simkins and Lumby, 2002). In the questionnaire, 'Developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies' was ranked first in the list of tasks, with 50 per cent (n=13) identifying this task as their 'most important'

and 85 per cent (n=22) placing it in their 'top three'. This priority, coupled with the high ranking given to 'Academic' tasks in general, suggests that curriculum middle managers place a high priority on curriculum management.

In practice, Briggs (2003) in her study found little curriculum review taking place. Everything was assumed to be working as planned until proven otherwise. However, this attitude was not generally demonstrated by the comments made in the interviews where, lecturers in particular, commented that the monitoring of the curriculum was an essential aspect of the curriculum middle managers role. With one lecturer commenting that:

"The reality of the job is to set-up courses and ensure that they are meeting what the curriculum teams have said that they are going to do. In effect, it is overseeing, managing and implementing curriculum plans" L1(C)Utt23.

However, this view needs to be situated in relation to the low priority given to both 'Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through' and 'Monitoring classes' progress through schemes of work' by all three groups. Both suggest that in reality only a limited amount of monitoring takes place and appears to concur with Briggs' (2003) study. Indeed, curriculum middle managers suggest that due to the increasingly large curriculum areas that they now have to manage, to expect them to monitor each individual course is simply unrealistic. This reluctance to undertake what is a quality related task is a concern and worthy of further investigation; for if this is the case, then it may affect the overall quality of teaching being offered within the Further Education sector.

This supports the findings of Glover (1994), who in the post-Incorporation period noted a lack of monitoring of the curriculum. This highlights the need for senior managers to ensure that monitoring of the curriculum is taking place. But in the questionnaire, only 40 per cent (n=4) of senior managers placed 'Monitoring classes' progress through schemes of work' in their top three tasks, with 30 per cent (n=3) placing it in their 'bottom three' tasks. This appears to highlight a lack of agreement between senior managers as to the value or need for curriculum middle managers to monitor the curriculum. That said, a number of senior managers commented during the interviews that this task was becoming more important as course success rates become the standard by which a course's quality was measured; something highlighted by Hannagan et al (2007). One senior manager stated that:

"… it is of major importance that managers ensure that courses are being monitored. We cannot afford for courses not to perform. Managers have to ensure that course content is being delivered effectively SM1(C)Utt25.

Whilst there remains a need for curriculum middle managers to commit their intended curriculum to paper, they also have responsibility for checking both delivery by members of teaching team and receipt by pupils whilst within their curriculum area (Bennett, 2003). However, unlike senior managers, most curriculum middle managers during the interviews failed to recognise the importance of such tasks. The reason for this may be

linked to the fact that senior managers, with their close interaction with such bodies as the LSC and OFSTED, recognise the need to quickly adjust their priorities in relation to new government priorities. Curriculum middle managers, often with no direct access to this key information, appear not to be making such changes and therefore their view of this aspect of the curriculum middle managers role may be based on current information. This lack of information is likely to be a source of role strain and should be addressed by the inclusion of curriculum middle managers in the circulation of key information by senior managers

Role Set Influence

Research Question Five:

> ➤ Who influences the ways in which curriculum middle managers carry out their responsibilities

Overall

From the responses to both the questionnaire, and the interviews, it is clear that senior managers are overall seen as the most influential; a view not shared by Bennett (2003) or Wise (1999) who both found subject lecturers to be the most influential in their study. This apparent shift in influence is consistent with the changing nature of the college role with curriculum middle managers appearing to relate more to their senior managers than their teaching staff. However, if all of the curriculum middle manager's extended role set fail to share the view that senior managers are the most influencial then there may be difficulty in reconciling the needs of both senior managers and other role set members.

Across all of the four areas of decision making senior managers were considered to be the most influential, with 80 per cent (n=63) of all respondents placing them in their top three influences. 'Subject lecturers' and 'departmental staff' were placed in second and third place with significant number of respondents considering them to be the 'most influential' and/or 'within the to three influences'.

Table 43: Groups having influence in curriculum middle managers' decision making as an average over four areas - ranked by "Most influential'.

Summary	Most Influential	Within Top Three Influences
Subject Lecturers	**34%**	**25%**
Senior management	**29%**	**24%**
Departmental staff	**20%**	**23%**
Students	**14%**	**19%**
OFSTED	**3%**	**3%**
Other teaching staff	**0%**	**6%**
Governors	**0%**	**0%**
Parents/Guardians	**0%**	**0%**

However, this was not the case when the responses from just the curriculum middle managers were reviewed. Table 43 details each of the members of the curriculum middle

managers extended role set considered in the survey and the percentage of curriculum middle managers placing them as their highest influence and within their top three influences. The high level of influence accorded to subject lecturers concurs with the findings of Bennett (2003) and Wise (1999) but has new implications for senior management within a college; for if their opinions differ from those of curriculum middle managers, then it is likely that any change that senior managers may wish to introduce could be met with resistance. Indeed, it may not enough be to transform the opinions of the middle managers as a body, the opinions of their team need to be transformed too or their influence will push against the change.

This finding is in line with the opinion of Leask and Terrell (1997, p.10) who write:

> "At the centre of the management sandwich is the middle manager, working with the practical difficulties and pressures from below, and the higher aspirations from above. While the logic, aspirations and value judgements of senior management may be clear, practitioners living with the daily reality of classroom life may have a different view."

However, it should be noted that subject lecturers and other departmental staff were considered to be a stronger influence than other teaching staff in the college. There appears to be a segregation between the professional opinion of teachers within the curriculum middle managers' teams and that of other professionals within the college. This evidence highlights the importance of the curriculum area as a unit but also shows why cross-curricular subjects are hard to establish. Lecturers with responsibility for such cross-curricular subjects as 'key skills', a government initative introduced in 2000, are likely to be counted as 'Other teachers' and so have a small accepted influence. The establishment of ways of working which might minimise this effect become important, for example, having a member of the subject team with additional responsibility for the cross-curricular initiative who liases with the whole college co-ordinator.

The lack of influence attributed to the lay people within the extended role set, the students, parent/guardians and governors, is not surprising but could have important management implications for senior management who need to manage the interface between their professional staff and these three groups, who might legitimately expect to have some influence. More importantly, as their accepted level of influence is low, attempts at influence by such groups could be met with hostility or indifference by the curriculum middle managers.

The influence of the subject lecturers and department team was further emphasised when the curriculum middle managers' perceptions of the expectations of the two nearest groups within their role set were analysed. Despite the stated influence of lecturers over educational decisions made by the curriculum middle managers, the curriculum middle managers tend to align their expectations of themselves more closely to those they perceive as expected by their senior managers; the influence of doing what is expected of them overriding what they themselves may believe should be done.

Another change from earlier research (Bennett, 2003; Wise, 1999) is that a number of curriculum middle managers appear not to prioritise or accept administrative tasks as being a legitimate part of their role. In this they are aligning more closely with the view of lecturers. It is often the case that many of the tasks are routine and could be undertaken by an individual less qualified than the curriculum middle manager. This move away from acceptance of these tasks may be an attempt to rationalise their workload. However, with senior managers expressing a different view, the potential for role conflict here is significant and senior managers need to be much clearer about their expectations of curriculum middle managers.

Summary

Despite the stated importance of curriculum middle manager's holding a common understanding of their role with others within their role set, there does seem to be a degree of role ambiguity. The curriculum middle managers do not always share with their senior managers or teaching staff a common understanding of their responsibility. However, overall they are aware of the expectations of senior managers and on a number of occasions change their own priorities to reflect those they perceive senior managers hold. Because of the influence that senior managers are perceived to have over the decision making processes of the curriculum middle managers, it is particularly important that they are helped to a common understanding and acceptance of their middle managers' role.

In a similar way there was a difference of opinion between the team members and the senior management about whether the curriculum middle managers were 'leading professionals' or 'professional leaders'. Previous research highlights the respect that middle managers gained from their team and the authority gained from proving themselves to be good teachers. However, there is evidence to suggest that these tasks are no longer necessarily seen as being a priority by curriculum middle managers, with more time being spent completing management tasks. Indeed, this view appears to be shared by lecturers who see the potential benefits of the new management processes on the quality of student learning.

The finding in earlier studies that many academic middle managers did not accept their management role appears to have changed. In the interviews and questionnaire it was evident that many curriculum middle managers accepted their responsibility for the majority of such tasks. However, there is evidence to suggest that this does not mean that curriculum middle managers always prioritise these tasks over some of the more traditional ones or that such tasks are actually carried out in practice. Indeed, lack of time and the growth of the role of the curriculum middle manager were cited as justification for the non-completion of a number of tasks. As one curriculum middle manager stated:

"There really is not enough time in the day to do all the things that the college expect of me. It is not the same job as it was 10 yrs ago. We are managers rather than teachers and I have to prioritise my day accordingly. However, as a curriculum middle manager I

do try to put curriculum matters first. I know that my line-manager would not agree with this but it is what my staff expect CM2(B)Utt19

The discussion in this chapter is not only useful for those trying to understand the changing role of curriculum middle managers, but it could also be used to inform those responsible for developing and recruiting future middle leaders; for as the focus of the role changes, so do the skills needed to undertake the role.

The next chapter, Conclusions and Recommendations, presents an overall picture of the conclusions drawn in relation to the main aims of the research, an evaluation of the research design and how effective it has been in providing data to answer the research questions and support or challenge the conceptual frameworks that emerged from the literature review. It also presents some recommendations for current and aspiring curriculum middle managers, senior managers, and the institutions they work in. There is also some consideration for further research in this area and how it could support further the development of the curriculum middle manager role. The thesis concludes with a section of final reflections from myself.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter considers the findings from this research in the context of the main aims of the investigation that emerged from the literature review and how it has contributed to this body of knowledge. It also considers how effective the research design has been in enabling the analysis of the data to generate information that contributes to the understanding of the role of curriculum middle managers in colleges of Further Education.

These findings have also generated some ideas for further research in this area and these are considered in the third section of this chapter, with some suggestions as to how they may be undertaken and how they a) have emerged from this research and b) may contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this area. The final section of this chapter considers reflections on the research findings.

The next section presents an evaluation of the research design and considers how far it has provided evidence that answers the main aims of this investigation.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The data gathered from both the questionnaire and interviews supported effective analysis that enabled insights to the research questions to emerge. The use of interviews, following the analysis of the questionnaires, allowed key findings from the questionnaire to be explored in more depth during the interviews. The use of the questionnaire as the basis of the interview agenda complemented and expanded the data gained from the questionnaires. Indeed, this encouraged interviewees to give some direct consideration to the issues which they expressed as being very important, setting them in the context of their own role and that of the college as a whole.

Overall I believe that this research design and the data collection methods could be utilised in other institutional settings as a follow up to this research without any major modifications. Inevitably the results would be unique to each situation and time context in which the research was undertaken, but they would enable the researcher to derive findings that could be compared and contrasted with those from this investigation to develop further understanding of the curriculum middle manager role. An additional strategy for further research could include a longitudinal study as there may be the opportunity to investigate how perceptions change over time and what influences were brought to bear on those views.

The next section considers the study's contribution to knowledge and how far it has provided evidence that answers the main aims of this investigation.

Contribution to Knowledge

"The critical knowledge of the way which colleges could be managed to be effective and to improve remains underdeveloped, and extrapolation from literature on schools … will not meet the case. (Lumby, 2003. p.294).

The literature supports a need for further investigation into how the role of the curriculum middle manager has changed in relation to its management content following Incorporation (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) which is echoed by Briggs (2003) who supports the view that the role is actually changing in response to changes in the way the sector allocates management tasks.

From my research the findings demonstrate that the role has been and is still being developed and refined in order to take into account changes within the Further Education sector. In practical terms, the focus of these changes relate to an increase in management tasks, some of which were previously undertaken by more senior managers. My research suggests that these changes are having some impact on the way that curriculum middle managers perform their duties; either by limiting the amount of time available for the more traditional aspects of the role, or by fundamentally changing the actual focus of the role itself. The main influence on the implementation of this aspect of the role is senior management; although, it is recognised that both lecturers and curriculum middle managers themselves have some influence over its operationalisation and practical development to meet the individual needs of their own areas.

The following three charts attempts to depict in visual form the essential nature of the factors that have shaped the current role of the curriculum middle manager; not only allowing other colleges to reflect on the factors affecting the role but also informing the ongoing research agenda. Figure 32 depicts an overview of the nature of the factors and influences that have and continue to shape the role of the curriculum middle manager's role. While Figures 33 and 34 depicts the significance of a number of the individual influnces identified as bearing down on the curriculum middle manager role pre-Incorporation and their current significance as identifed in this research.

Figure 32: Role Influences
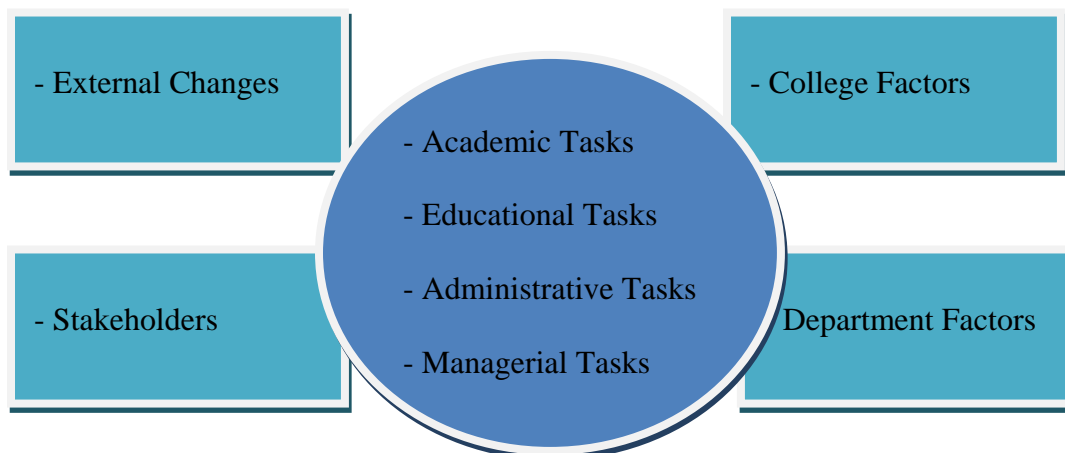
The outer part of the diagram (Figure 32) indicates the pressure being exerted on the curriculum middle manager role by a number of key influences; while the internal element of the diagram illustrates the internal pressures between the four areas of classification used in the study to review the tasks undertaken by the curriculum middle managers.

In order to illustrate and summarise the change in the importance of the perceived key influences on the curriculum middle manager role, which have emerged from the analysis regarding the tasks undertaken in the role, I have devised the models below (Figures 33 and 34). The vertical axis expresses both the perceived importance of key tasks and role set members and their perceived influence on the role. The inclusion of both the pre and post-Incorporation position allows colleges, lecturers, curriculum middle managers and senior managers to reflect upon the changing influences on the role.

Figure 33: Pre-Incorporation Influences on the Role of Curriculum Middle Manager
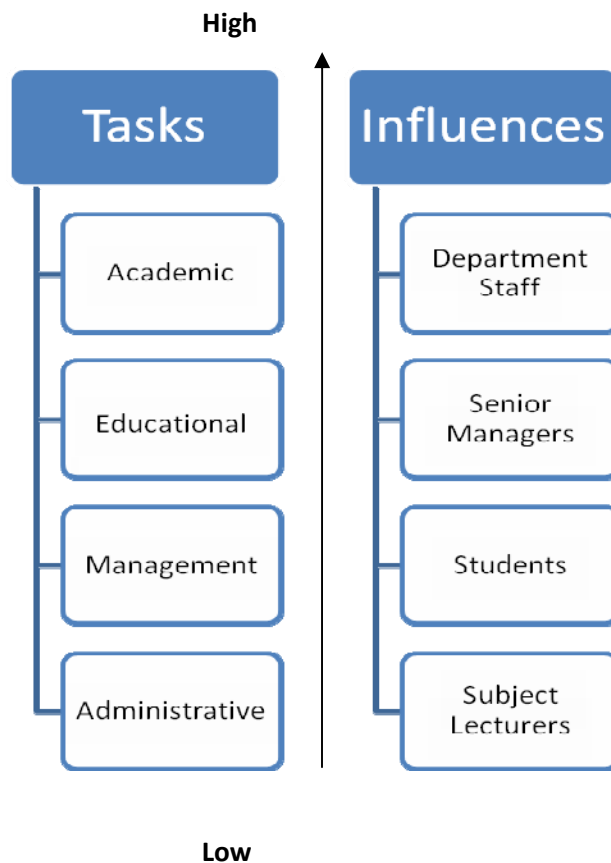
Figure 34: Current Influences on the Role of Curriculum Middle Manager

High

Low
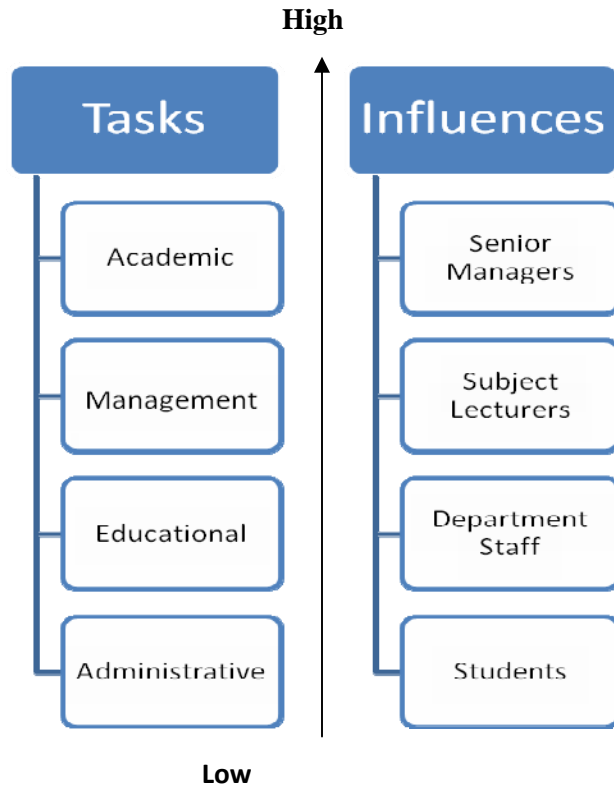
The tasks undertaken by curriculum middle managers vary quite considerably and can be of a specialist or generalist nature dependent upon the definition of the role. However, the lack of a definition for the role, or even a formal list of duties, generally impedes the role holder in either understanding the true extend of their role or, in practical terms, undertaking the relevant responsibilities either in a prescribed way or as a collection of rights and duties. Irrespective of the specialist or generalist focus, these responsibilities have been found to be wide ranging and of a changing nature; a feature also identified in the literature.

This study has shown that the perceptions of the role are heavily influenced by how effectively and consistently its responsibilities are understood amongst the curriculum middle manager's role set. It is essential that the role set, including curriculum middle managers themselves, have a clear understanding of the purpose of the role within the college and what its responsibilities are; otherwise misunderstandings and frustrations can develop that hinder its effectiveness and future development. It is the all encompassing nature of this need for effective communication that seems to be omitted in some cases, where curriculum middle managers and their role set are not readily aware of all of the areas of responsibility undertaken by the curriculum middle manager or the priority attached to any particular task. By improving communication, and developing more effective working relationships between the curriculum middle manager and their role set, tensions and role conflict between the three groups may be reduced.

The findings have thus provided a basis on which to make some recommendations to college senior management teams and current and aspiring curriculum middle managers

which are outlined in the next section of this chapter. Indications of where further research may be undertaken have also arisen and these are considered later in this chapter.

Recommendations

In addition to developing our understanding of the curriculum middle manager's role, it was expected that this research would enable some recommendations to be made to inform and potentially improve role development where differing perceptions exist; these recommendations are considered below under their key headings.

Curriculum Middle Manager Role Definition

This research has shown that defining the role of the curriculum middle manager is essential to enable the role holder to fully understand the tasks associated with their position and, therefore, function effectively in relation to the expectations of their role set. Indeed, there is a need for the definition to be shared throughout the organisation; if one section of the college defines it differently from another (as it appears they currently do within the three colleges within this study) then different expectations from the role will be apparent.

This leads to the recommendations that the role of the curriculum middle manager is made as transparent as possible; for while it is accepted that the role is to some degree organisational specific, and the work involved therefore may defy classification, it is important to ensure that the role holder and their role set are fully aware of how the role contributes to the overall strategic direction of the college and the full scope of the tasks expected of the role holder. Indeed, while the context of the role may be different outside of the three colleges within this study, it remains important that role of curriculum middle manager has a clear definition. For it is key to the improving the effectiveness of the role that there is a clear understanding between these groups as to the range and nature of the responsibilities assigned to the curriculum middle manager and what is (and is not) expected of them.

Undertaking Responsibilities Previously Undertaken by Senior Managers

There are clear indications from the interviews that curriculum middle managers are accepting responsibility for tasks that they previously rejected, implemented in a limited way or were never previously involved in; suggesting both a change in role focus and role overload. While Briggs (2003) found that there was a tendency for downward delegation of operational responsibility from senior managers to curriculum middle managers, evidence from this research suggests that curriculum middle managers are attempting to reduce their workload by also downward delegating a number of their responsibilities; with tasks previously completed by curriculum middle managers now being completed by lecturers. Such delegation may not only blur the role of curriculum middle managers and lecturers but also cause lecturers to experience role strain/conflict as the expectations of their role set change.

In response to this, it is recommended that more time should be provided for middle managers to fulfil their management duties. While this is not a new recommendation (Briggs, 2003; Bennett, 2003; Wise, 1999), it is evident from the discussions about the expectations of senior managers, and the curriculum middle managers themselves, that this recommendation has not been implemented and that 'management time' is inadequate to fulfil all of the diverse tasks which now form part of the curriculum middle manager's role.

Indeed, this is becoming a key feature of the role as this research provides evidence that curriculum middle managers are continuing to shift their emphasis from the more traditional tasks towards management. Delegation, in the form of leadership distribution, may provide a partial solution, for example in relation to role overload arising from the increase in managerial responsibilities. However, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that colleges may have underestimated both the time required to perform these duties successfully and the need to review the tasks expected of the curriculum middle manager following such major changes as Incorporation; the dual role of teacher and manager imposes a heavy burden and may not be sustainable without additional resources.

Staff Management

This research has indicated changes in the attitudes of curriculum middle managers on several important issues since the publication of previous research. Whereas previously, academic middle managers did not accept their staff management role, there is evidence that this has changed, with curriculum middle managers now, indicating their acceptance of the need for monitoring and supervising their team members. However, there is also evidence to suggest that this does not actually happen in practice and that senior managers do not view this task as a key element of the curriculum middle manager's role. Indeed, this research suggests that some senior managers now view this task as being far too important to be left purely with curriculum middle managers. With the increasing focus and consequent spotlight on improving success rates throughout the Further Education sector, it is suggested that this aspect of the curriculum middle managers role will be shared with, or lost, to more specialist management appointments in the future. This may or may not be a positive move for the curriculum middle manager role. For while such a move would ensure that the monitoring of teaching within the college was effectivly carried out, it would also mean that the curriculum middle manager would have less of a direct insight into the teaching in their area.

Clearly, this is an area of confusion, with mixed messages being sent by different members of the curriculum middle manager's role set as to the importance of this task. There is a need for colleges to be clear about their position on formal monitoring systems, and for the role that it plays in enhancing learning for all young people within its care to be understood by senior managers, curriculum middle managers and lecturers, for any 'mixed message' places curriculum middle managers under some role stress. There cannot be a situation where on the one hand the majority of senior managers expect

curriculum middle managers to monitor the teaching within their area, but on the other, a smaller number expect this to be done by other specialist teams within the college.

In response to this, if these conflicts are to be avoided there needs to be much clearer communication of role expectations by all members within the role set. Senior managers need to communicate clearly to team members what their expectations are of curriculum middle managers and vice versa. In this way the more open debate about expectations should reduce the lack of agreement between the different groups and between perception and reality.

Further Research

There are a number of areas in this thesis that would benefit from further research. For while the work involved the use of a questionnaire and interviews and, provides an insight into the role of curriculum middle managers within three colleges of Further Education, it could be extended into a case study and so provide a much richer picture. To achieve this it would be necessary to collect additional information from observations of curriculum middle manager's performing their role and documentation, such as, job descriptions and work diaries. The use of a focus group to discuss the initial analysis would also be beneficial. Such an approach was not possibe within the scope of the present project. However, before embarking on this work one would have to be satisfied that enough new information could be collected to warrant the additional effort.

Indeed, this research has illustrated that in colleges, there is only a partial understanding of the different elements of the curriculum middle manager's role and how they all fit together. This in itself illustrates the need for further study and could be extended to include an investigation into more institutions and therefore develop a wider knowledge-base to further refine the recommendations made in this thesis.

Inevitably there are many more areas for potential research relating to the role of curriculum middle managers. In particular, an investigation into how the change in role focus has affected the student experience is needed. After all, the success of the students is central to the business of education.

Clearly, the role of the curriculum middle manager in Further Education remains an under-researched area in the UK and as such it is an exciting time for those seeking to undertake investigations that are aimed at understanding this important role.

Final Reflections

The last 16 years have been a period of reform and turmoil in English colleges of Further Education. Incorporation, OFSTED inspections, competitive enrolments and the ever increasing number of government initiatives focusing on improving quality have all contributed to a sharp increase in the extent and quality of management expected of education professionals. Curriculum middle managers, in particular, have experienced

substantial increases in expectations, notably in respect of managing a subject-based curriculum and monitoring the performance of their team members. It is evident from this research they are experiencing considerable difficulty in balancing the demands of a relatively heavy teaching load with meeting the legitimate but burdensome expectations on their limited management time. Pressures on colleges to improve performance, and to meet rising demands from government and parents, have created tensions for all staff in colleges but curriculum middle managers are at the centre of these pressures and often experience acute role conflict. The attitudes of curriculum middle managers to their enhanced role are admirable but bringing practice in line with their aspirations will require an increase in resources to fund the additional management time. This increase in time can only be achieved by reducing their commitment to other tasks such as teaching. Once this time is available to complete all the tasks expected of them, the work can begin them to appropriately monitor and supervise their area.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire: The Role of Curriculum Middle Managers in Colleges of Further Education

Questionnaire for Middle Managers

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, it should only take you 10 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is part of research being carried out at a number of colleges into the role of the FE curriculum middle manager. Colleges, managers and individual lecturers within them will not be named and due care will be taken to avoid any identification by implication during the subsequent analysis and writing. I would be most grateful if you could return the questionnaire in the envelop provided by 17th July 06.

[BCFE 2]

* Can you please confirm your age, gender and the number of yours in your current role by ticking the relevant box(s) below:

Age			Gender		Experience in Role		
Under 30yrs	30yr-45yrs	45yrs+	Male	Female	Under 5yrs	5yrs-15yrs	15yrs+

1. Would you describe your role as?
(Please tick the appropriate box on each line)

	Role	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
A	A "bridge" or "broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams			
B	Someone who leads, motivates and manages a team			
C	Someone who interprets the College vision and College policy and			

	implements it within the curriculum area			
D	A source of specialist expertise			
E	Someone who ensures the quality of teaching within the curriculum area			
F	Someone who ensures that administration within the curriculum area is completed			

2. Which one of the above do you feel is the most important part of your role?
(Please only circle one)

A	B	C	D	E	F

3. Expectations of senior managers and curriculum teams.

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box on the list below those tasks which you believe that senior managers your curriculum team members expect you, as a curriculum middle manager, to ensure are completed within your curriculum area.

Please rank the **three most important** and the **three least important** tasks.

	Task	Top Three	Bottom Three
A	Ensuring that the curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities.		
B	Making decisions about what resources to buy.		
C	Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff.		
D	Organising the testing of student attainment.		
E	Organising the storage of departmental resources.		
F	Inducting new staff.		
G	Keeping staff informed of whole school matters and encouraging debate.		
H	Monitoring classes' progress through schemes of work.		
I	Formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content.		
J	Maintaining dept. records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings.		
K	Checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies.		
L	Ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources.		
M	Leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities.		

N	Providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching.		
O	Providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work and/or behaviour.		
P	Maintaining records of classroom observations.		

4. Influences.

There are potentially a number of different individuals or groups who influence decisions within an area of responsibility. Below are four individual decisions. Please rank each 1, 2 or 3, where 1 is the highest priority, to indicate the three most influential groups of people when you are making decisions about:

Change of curriculum	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Purchase of resources to support a new course	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Professional development plan for departmental staff or team	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	

Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Discipline of a pupil being difficult within your area of responsibility	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

5. Expectations of Self:

Please rank the **three most important** <u>and</u> the **three least important** tasks that you, as a curriculum middle manager, need to ensure are completed within your curriculum area.

Please insert 1, 2 or 3, where 1 is the highest priority, in the most important column and 1, 2 and 3, where 1 is the least priority, in the least important column.

	Task	Top Three	Bottom Three
A	Teaching your subject.		
B	Developing the curriculum including teaching and learning strategies.		
C	Implementing college policy.		
D	Supervising/monitoring colleagues work to ensure that policies are followed through.		
E	Devising and monitoring student records.		
F	Collaborating in cross-college planning.		
G	Being in charge of funds for the curriculum area.		
H	Devising and leading staff development within your curriculum area.		
I	Co-ordinating and overseeing course assessment in line with college policies.		
J	Monitoring and controlling the use of stock and other resources.		
K	Overseeing or assisting with the maintenance of the fabric		

	and facilities including Health & Safety duties.			
L	Liasing with outside agencies.			

Thank you very much for your time and responses. Please be assured that neither you, nor your college will be identified in the published research.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire: The Role of Curriculum Middle Managers in Colleges of Further Education

Questionnaire for Senior Managers

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, it should only take you 10 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is part of research being carried out at a number of colleges into the role of the FE curriculum middle manager. Colleges, managers and individual lecturers within them will not be named and due care will be taken to avoid any identification by implication during the subsequent analysis and writing. I would be most grateful if you could return the questionnaire in the envelope provided by 17th July 06.

[BCFE 1]

- Can you please confirm your age, gender and the number of yours in your current role by ticking the relevant box(s) below:

Age			Gender		Experience in Role		
Under 30yrs	30yr-45yrs	45yrs+	Male	Female	Under 5yrs	5yrs-15yrs	15yrs+

1. Would you describe the role of the curriculum middle manager as?
(Please tick the appropriate box on each line)

	Role	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
A	A "bridge" or "broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams			
B	Someone who leads, motivates and manages a team			
C	Someone who interprets the College vision and College policy and implements it within the curriculum area			

D	A source of specialist expertise			
E	Someone who ensures the quality of teaching within the curriculum area			
F	Someone who ensures that administration within the curriculum area is completed			

2. Which one of the above do you feel is the most important part of the role?
(Please only circle one)

A	B	C	D	E	F

3. Expectations

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box on the list below those tasks which you believe a curriculum middle manager needs to complete within their area.

Please rank the **three most important** and the **three least important** tasks.

	Task	Top Three	Bottom Three
A	Ensuring that the curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities.		
B	Making decisions about what resources to buy.		
C	Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff.		
D	Organising the testing of student attainment.		
E	Organising the storage of departmental resources.		
F	Inducting new staff.		
G	Keeping staff informed of whole school matters and encouraging debate.		
H	Monitoring classes' progress through schemes of work.		
I	Formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content.		
J	Maintaining dept. records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings.		
K	Checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies.		
L	Ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources.		
M	Leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities.		
N	Providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching.		

O	Providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work and/or behaviour.		
P	Maintaining records of classroom observations.		

4. Influences.

There are potentially a number of different individuals or groups who influence decisions within an area of responsibility. Below are four individual decisions. Please rank each 1, 2 or 3, where 1 is the highest priority, to indicate the three most influential groups of people when curriculum middle manager make decisions within their asrea of responsibility:

Change of curriculum	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Purchase of resources to support a new course	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Professional development plan for departmental staff or team	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	

Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Discipline of a pupil being difficult within your area of responsibility	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Thank you very much for your time and responses. Please be assured that neither you, nor your college will be identified in the published research.

Appendix 3

Questionnaire: The Role of Curriculum Middle Managers in Colleges of Further Education

Questionnaire for Lecturers

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, it should only take you 10 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is part of research being carried out at a number of colleges into the role of the FE curriculum middle manager. Colleges, managers and individual lecturers within them will not be named and due care will be taken to avoid any identification by implication during the subsequent analysis and writing. I would be most grateful if you could return the questionnaire in the envelope provided by 17th July 06.

[BCFE 1]

• Can you please confirm your age, gender and the number of yours in your current role by ticking the relevant box(s) below:

Age			Gender		Experience in Role		
Under 30yrs	30yr-45yrs	45yrs+	Male	Female	Under 5yrs	5yrs-15yrs	15yrs+

1. Would you describe the role of the curriculum middle manager as?
(Please tick the appropriate box on each line)

	Role	Yes, Strongly	Yes, on the whole	Not really
A	A "bridge" or "broker" between senior managers and curriculum teams			
B	Someone who leads, motivates and manages a team			
C	Someone who interprets the College vision and College policy and implements it within the curriculum area			

D	A source of specialist expertise			
E	Someone who ensures the quality of teaching within the curriculum area			
F	Someone who ensures that administration within the curriculum area is completed			

2. Which one of the above do you feel is the most important part of the role?
(Please only circle one)

A	B	C	D	E	F

3. Expectations

Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box on the list below those tasks which you believe a curriculum middle manager needs to complete within their area.

Please rank the **three most important** and the **three least important** tasks.

	Task	Top Three	Bottom Three
A	Ensuring that the curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities.		
B	Making decisions about what resources to buy.		
C	Monitoring the teaching of departmental staff.		
D	Organising the testing of student attainment.		
E	Organising the storage of departmental resources.		
F	Inducting new staff.		
G	Keeping staff informed of whole school matters and encouraging debate.		
H	Monitoring classes' progress through schemes of work.		
I	Formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content.		
J	Maintaining dept. records of schemes of work, mark lists and minutes of meetings.		
K	Checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies.		
L	Ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources.		
M	Leading and/or promoting the development of the area staff's professional abilities.		
N	Providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching.		

O	Providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their college work and/or behaviour.		
P	Maintaining records of classroom observations.		

4. Influences.

There are potentially a number of different individuals or groups who influence decisions within an area of responsibility. Below are four individual decisions. Please rank each 1, 2 or 3, where 1 is the highest priority, to indicate the three most influential groups of people when curriculum middle manager make decisions within their asrea of responsibility:

Change of curriculum	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Purchase of resources to support a new course	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Professional development plan for departmental staff or team	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	

Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Discipline of a pupil being difficult within your area of responsibility	Rank
Departmental staff	
Senior management	
Students/Pupils	
OFSTED	
Subject Lecturers	
Other teaching staff	
Parents/Guardians	
Governors	

Thank you very much for your time and responses. Please be assured that neither you, nor your college will be identified in the published research.

Appendix 4

Interview Schedule – Lecturers

✦ **Introduction**

- Purpose of Study

- Research Interview Consent Form

- Taping/notes during interview

- Anonymity

✦ **Role of Middle Managers**

In the questionnaire sent out to lecturers, there was a section relating to the role of middle managers. A copy of this section was included in the "Pre – Interview information.

- Which of the six roles identified in the Table did you think are part of a middle managers role?

If all six roles not ticked,

- Why did you consider … not to be part of a middle managers role?

- Which of the six roles did you feel was the most important?
- Why did you feel this was the most important role?

✦ **Expectations of Curriculum Middle Managers**

In the questionnaire sent out to lecturers, there was a section that asked lecturers to rank the **three most important** and the **three least important** tasks that they expected curriculum middle managers to ensure are completed within their curriculum area. A copy of this section was included in the "Pre – Interview information.

- Which three tasks did you identify as the most important?
- Why did you feel each of the three tasks was so important?

- Which three tasks did you identify as the least important?
- Why did you feel each of the three tasks was not important?

✦ **Influences**

In the questionnaire sent out to lecturers, there was a section that asked
lecturers to indicate the **three most influential** individuals/groups
for each of four different curriculum related decisions. A copy of this section
was included in the "Pre –Interview information.

For each group,

- Which three individuals/groups did you identify as the most important?
- Why did you feel each of the three individuals/groups was so important?

✦ **Any Other Issues**

- Is there any other issue that you would like to raise regarding the role of the
  curriculum middle manager?

Appendix 5

Transcript Extract - Lecturer

Coll	Lect	Utt	Text
A	L1	1	Thank you for agreeing to the interview. The reason for the interview today is to explore the role of curriculum middle managers within Further Education, the information gained will form part of my Ed.D at Birmingham University.
A	L1	2	OK
A	L1	3	While information from the interview may be used in my thesis which may be published, individuals and their Colleges taking part in the research will not be named. In the questionnaire, you have identified that the most important role of a curriculum middle manager is leading, managing and motivating the team. Why is that? Why is it so important?
A	L1	4	I think, particularly since I have been education, it's a department thing. If we all work together then the department, when it is buzzing, we can get a lot more out of it. As a lead role it's important to lead the teacher but let the teachers get on with teaching. You haven't got to understand the subject areas of the teachers or have to specialist knowledge to operate a department effectively.
A	L1	5	One interesting point is that you have not ticked E – someone who ensures the quality of teaching within the curriculum area. Do you not think that is part of a curriculum middle managers role?
A	L1	6	Not at all. We have a quality department to monitor that. One thing that I do notice, in this College and other Colleges that I have worked at, is that you have a quality control department but do not let them quality control. It's their job. Yes, if they have got problems they need to come back to you to deal with it, but to discuss the problem and find out what the problem is I do not think is a curriculum middle managers job. To deal with the problems after they have been identified I think is a management role but supervising the quality of teaching in a department is not a middle managers role.

A	L1	7	What about a curriculum middle manager knowing the capability of their staffs teaching?
A	L1	8	I think understanding the feedback from students and other staff is important as it is part of the motivational thing which we talked about earlier.
A	L1	9	Sure
A	L1	10	It's part of understanding how it all fits together as a unit, I think that's important. But not the actual task. I think the quality of control is what Ofsted are after and the College has a quality department for that.
A	L1	11	On the second question of the questionnaire, you have placed "monitoring the teaching of department staff" as your most important expectation of curriculum middle managers. Why was that?
A	L1	12	Although you don't have to understand the expertise of the area that they teach. To be fairly sure in a managers mind, and to be sure that they are delivering the right curriculum at the highest possible level the College could deliver at, a manager needs to know what the teaching is like in their area.
A	L1	13	The second most important task you identified was (H), "Providing support for colleagues facing disciplinary problems in their teaching.
A	L1	14	I think in particularly, the colleges I have been involved with discipline has been an issue. And as a consequence all the rest of building up a department, getting good teachers in and ensuring that the curriculum is taught, if disciplinary are not dealt with then the knock on affect to the department is huge – retention figures and success rates fail, so its protecting the department.
A	L1	15	The third most important task you identified was (A) - ensuring that the curriculum areas courses cater for a range of abilities.
A	L1	16	Because of the way the LSC are set-up the college has to provide services for what the community want – meeting local needs and all that. But it's also about money. The senior management team looks at its budget at the start of the year and then look at what areas it physically needs to move into to raise the required money. The implementation of this plan is left on the shoulders

			of curriculum middle manager. They are ones going to have to get involved in recruiting teachers and buying resources to run the courses. That is why they need to be involved, subject tutor just don't have the experience or time to deal with it. They just want to come in and teach the subject, middle managers to say - ok what do you need to deliver this course.
A	L1	17	On the other side, the least important task you identified was (E), maintaining records of classroom observations.
A	L1	18	Again, its this thing about having a quality control department – if its an issue then fair enough a curriculum middle manager needs to get involved, otherwise let them earn their money.
A	L1	19	The second least important task that you have identified is (E), organising the testing of student attainment.
A	L1	20	Same thing – the quality team will look at the student attainment at the end of the year, but until quality have looked at the figures I don't think curriculum middle managers can move on it.
A	L1	21	Ok. Your third least important task that you have put down is (C), checking teaching methods are in line with department and college policies.
A	L1	22	Same thing again, its just quality control – until the quality team has checked the teaching there's nothing for the curriculum middle manager to do. For me, the curriculum middle managers role is liaison between SMT and the lecturers – it's a hard enough role without checking teaching. You have the aspirations of SMT, you have resources teachers, rooms, limited resources to use, how do you get the best out of them – there's too many distractions away from this. Every college I have worked at the curriculum middle manager has to do everything and to be honest with you they end up not doing everything right.
A	L1	35	The last part of the questionnaire relates to decisions and who influences them. In relation to change of curriculum you have put down parents/guardians as the most influential.
A	L1	36	I think parents in any area of the country or parents and the community decide what it really wants from a college. The kids are too young to make the decisions so its really the parents who decide what the son or daughter is going to study – I have lost

			count of the times a parent has come in and said I want my son or daughter to do science or business studies. Then it's up to SMT to decide whether it is financially worth doing the course or not?
A	L1	37	The second most influential you have put down as "subject leaders".
A	L1	38	Again, it's this area of expertise – a good teacher knows what is happening in their subject areas and knows whether a particular curriculum is working or not.
A	L1	39	The third most influential group you have identified is "senior management".
A	L1	40	Yes, senior management. Er, they will be the next in line because the parents and community need to want it, then there has to be the expertise, but SMT need to decide if they want to go down that road or not – as I said before, is it financially worth running the course or not? Does it match what the LSC want from the college? All questions which only SMT can answer.
A	L1	41	The second decision relates to the purchase of resources to support a new course. You put "senior management" as the most influential.
A	L1	42	They hold the purse strings. Simple as that really – they must have some vision as to how they want to spend it and it maybe an either or situation.
A	L1	43	The second group you have identified is the "governors".
A	L1	44	Governors have to oversee the purse and someone has to check money is being spent wisely – that's where governors come into their own. I don't think governors have enough hands on experience to understand teaching but they operate at SMT level and can keep an eye on the finances.
A	L1	45	The third most influential you have put down is "departmental staff".
A	L1	46	Again, without the other two making the decision it doesn't even become an issue for departmental staff – its just simply the way decision are watered down.
A	L1	47	The third decision relates to the professional development plan for departmental staff or team. Here you have put "departmental staff" as the most influential.

A	L1	48	Yes, I think once you are into what we are going to teach then we are into a specialist area – the people on the ground. They know what development they need to move their courses on – they and their team – its nothing to do with SMT or middle managers – its teachers knowing what they need to do to improve things.
A	L1	49	The second most influential you have identified is "subject lecturers".
A	L1	50	Yes, because once the department has worked out what they want then individual lecturers can say what they want.
A	L1	51	The third most influential you have put down is "other teaching staff".
A	L1	52	Again, supplementary teachers, visiting teachers – they need to have their say.
A	L1	53	The fourth and final decision on the questionnaire relates to the discipline of a pupil being difficult within your area of responsibility – here you have put "students" as the most influential.
A	L1	54	Er .. I'm not taking about the students who have misbehaved, I'm taking about the other students. To be honest with you – from a college point of view, its protecting the rights of the good students against the bad students. Sadly, at the moment we are stuck in disciplinary issues where we try everything possible to keep the bad students. But this does affect the good students and they still do influence how bad students are treated – I don't think we use peer pressure enough though.
A	L1	55	Sure, the second influential group you have chosen is "departmental staff".
A	L1	56	Yes, again because you can't have lecturers, because of what we spoke about earlier, influencing this type of decision because they are often too close to the student. Departmental staff set limits on bad behaviour and often are the ones who decide if a student is disciplined or not.
A	L1	57	The third and final influence you have put down is "parents/guardians".
A	L1	58	How possible it is I don't know – it might be a utopian ideal –

			but I think the involvement of parents is very important. Ok, you might get a lot of parents who don't want to come to the party and their children can do no wrong or they simply don't care – but they are important if we are going to change behaviour.
A	L1	59	Thanks, well that's the questionnaire covered. Is there anything else you would like to raise regarding the role of curriculum middle managers?
A	L1	60	Er, no – I think most things have come out in the interview.
A	L1	61	Well thank you for the interview and just to reiterate your responses will not be individually identified in anything that is published.