

**“A Case Study of Coaching in Leadership in Further Education”**

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## **Abstract**

There have been many complex and contradictory policy changes in further education colleges in the last twenty years. Whilst there has been a focus on the need for good leadership and management in the sector by Ofsted and government agencies little research exists on leadership development and in particular coaching and the impact it can have on improving leadership in the sector. This longitudinal single case (embedded) study explores the implementation of a leadership development programme based on coaching in a general FE college in the North of England. Embedded units of analysis (individual participants on the coaching programme) were studied over the length of the case and my role as participant, manager and researcher provided both opportunities and challenges to the research design and ethics of the study. Questionnaires, semi structured interviews and focus groups were used to gain the perceptions of senior and middle managers in the college over the duration of the coaching programme.

The research showed the importance and impact of coaching in leadership development in the college case study. It was also evident that being very clear about the aims of the coaching programme and setting the right ecological conditions in the institution are crucial to ensure that personal development and organisational development do not become out of kilter. The research showed that models of continuing professional development involving coaching can provide challenge and opportunities for new thinking in colleges which can give institutions the capacity to make a strategic leap. My own experience of introducing coaching to support teaching and learning in my new college also supported the findings that this kind of continuing professional development can have a significant impact on the participants. In conclusion, the use of coaching to support leadership and teaching and learning development in FE is still evolving. Against a cultural backdrop of governmentality and performativity, college leadership and teaching and learning can be transformed if managers and teachers are challenged to break old habits and move away from an obsessive focus on targets and policy drivers. Individual and college approaches can be enhanced particularly if the planning of development and the ecology is right in the institution to support both developments.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Rationale and Focus of the Research

In Further Education (FE) the role of college leaders has changed immeasurably over the last two decades. Since the early 1990s the introduction of quasi private sector status has redefined the role of college managers. Alongside the requirement to run the business side of the college, the need to improve and maintain high standards has increased in importance, as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) took over responsibility for inspection of college provision in the 1990s. The White Paper '*Success for All*' (DfES, 2002) stated that the key to an internationally competitive post-compulsory education sector is strong and effective leadership. Key Ofsted reports and summary documents, (*'Leadership and Management: What inspection tells us'*, 2003; *'Why Colleges Fail'* 2004a; *'Why Colleges Succeed'* 2004b) confirmed the importance placed on leadership and management in the sector by the main inspection body and the wide demands placed upon college leaders and managers in a complex and competitive marketplace.

As a middle manager in the 1990s I was part of the new culture of freedom and entrepreneurialism encouraged by the legislation. This led to many colleges thriving and developing new courses and markets whilst a few became embroiled in scandal and irregularities that led to college failures and mergers. After this period of sporadic boom and bust the new millennium brought a period of sustained growth and I was promoted to deputy principal in a thriving and high performing college. It was a time of rapid growth in student numbers accompanied by unprecedented capital and infrastructure investment in the sector. The challenge for college managers was how to keep up with the demand for skills and learning, meeting ever increasing growth targets and finding staffing for highly popular courses such as plumbing and computing.

This research project examines a leadership development programme based on a coaching model in the medium sized FE college where I was deputy principal. The project examined the nature of leadership and management in the college

and the particular effect that the leadership coaching programme had on the perceptions and attitudes of the managers participating. The leadership development programme was devised during a time of strong growth and generous funding however, for those of us managing post the 2007 economic downturn, the challenges facing middle and senior managers were the exact opposite to those faced in the previous two decades. The skill became how to manage ever decreasing public budgets, delivering more for less and offering provision that adult students must fully fund themselves.

This study comprises a case study of leadership coaching of middle managers in a medium size FE college. The research project aimed to establish how the leadership development coaching influenced the participants' leadership perceptions and attitudes, their ability to respond to change and their views on coaching. The case study built upon existing research (Goldsmith et al. 2000; Clutterbuck 2001; West and Milan 2001 and Rhodes et al. 2004) that demonstrated the possible impact of coaching on improving leadership development. It is also influenced by studies that suggested a general lack of understanding of coaching in the FE sector and the range of improvements to leadership practice that it may bring (Simkins et al. 2006). The research was designed to expand the level of knowledge available on leadership coaching in FE and identify areas for further research in the future. The key research questions were:

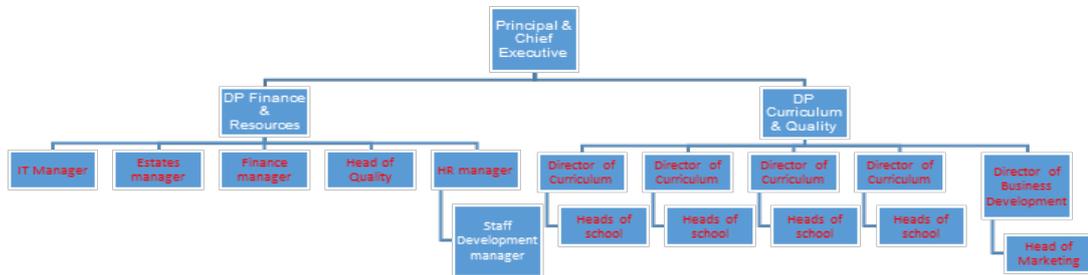
- What were the consequences of introducing a leadership and management programme involving developmental coaching in an FE college?
  1. Why was the leadership coaching programme introduced in the college?
  2. How did participants respond to the group development day and early coaching?
  3. How did participants respond to the coaching experience over a two year period?
  4. How did the coaching programme shape the participants views of leadership?

The research questions were designed to define the investigation, however, as a case study was used it was not anticipated that the questions would form a rigid structure which bound the research setting (Yin 2009; Bryman 2008; Bogdan and Biglan 2003). They were a framework around which data collection methods could be designed to gather perceptions and insight from the participants on the programme (Denscombe 2007).

## **1.2 My own position in the study**

Campbell et al. (2004) recommended that the education researcher should start any enquiry by writing up a curriculum vitae or pen portrait. Schon (1983) argued that reflection enables us to examine our practices and underlying assumptions in order to identify why we need to change our practices. As outlined earlier, I am a senior manager in the FE sector. My interest in coaching in leadership developed whilst I was studying on the EdD programme, the timing of the coaching programme in the college coincided with my research planning and a natural opportunity arose to combine my work planning and research with my doctoral research.

I started the research project while I was the deputy principal (curriculum and quality) in the case study college. As well as being part of the senior executive group I was also the line manager either directly or indirectly of 14 of the participants in the study and the direct line manager of all of the longitudinal participants. In addition I was a participant in the coaching programme myself, receiving the same group development and individual coaching sessions as the rest of the participant group. The managers were all either at senior executive group level or third tier middle managers in the college. They all had significant budgetary and staffing responsibilities and all were responsible for business units in the college. A structure chart of the college is provided in figure 1.1 (participants in the research study are highlighted in red).



**Figure 1.1 Structure chart of the participant college**

Two years into the study I left my role and moved to a nearby college to take up the role of principal and chief executive. I therefore became removed from the participants and the college in the study and no longer their manager. This unusual position both at the start of the programme and when I changed role and college provided me with some unique insights into the programme. My changing position also posed some significant challenges both in terms of my role as internal researcher, participant, line manager and then external researcher. The research design reflected the particular role I had as manager and the changing position I faced as researcher when moving roles and colleges. Of particular note was my journey of thinking that developed over the time of the research. Not only did my understanding of coaching and the factors needed to implement effective transformative learning develop but my own transformative learning took place from combining my work role with my doctoral research. A timeline of the development programme and the research is provided in table 1.1.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities with college/participants</b>	<b>Research activities/Thesis development</b>	<b>Transformative learning</b>
September 2007- April 2008	College discussions on leadership development	Reading development on coaching /methodology  Outline Literature review setting the scene	
May 2008	Appointment of external coach	Determine initial research questions and research methodology	A new understanding of the importance of the right research method
June 2008	Participants identified for coaching		
July 2008	Request to carry out research to College Principal approved	Documentary analysis	Developing understanding of the importance of ethics in research
September 2008	Participant group meeting to outline research	Revise research methodology	Transformative learning around the essential elements of research methodology
September 2008	Individual agreement to participate received from college managers	Research methods drafted/piloted	
September 2008	Senior Leaders/ Staff Development Manager interview		
September 2008	Participant interview 1		
October 2008	Coach Interview		
November 2008 /February 2009		Interview analysis stage 1	
April 2009	Participant questionnaires		
May/June 2009		Questionnaire analysis stage 1	
September 2009	Change job roles – left college in study to take up new post in nearby college	Sought informal approval to continue the research from the college Principal. Understanding here that the ethics of research runs throughout the timeline	Developing understanding of how ethics runs throughout the length of a research study and needs to be considered at every stage

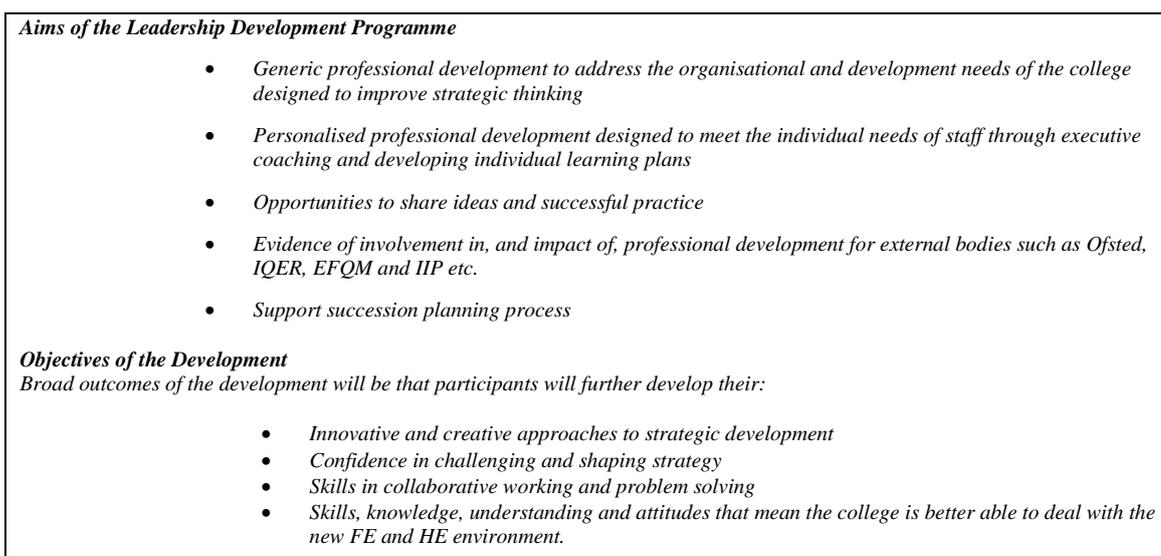
		of the study	
September/October 2009	Longitudinal participant interviews		
November 2009/Jan 2010		Longitudinal participant Interview analysis stage 1	
May 2010	Longitudinal focus group		
June/July 2010		Longitudinal participant Focus group analysis stage 1	At this point the wider implications of the coaching started to emerge alongside my deeper insight into the powerful influence of culture and coaching
September 2010/July 2011		Data analysis/review	
September 2011/July 2012		Chapter 1, 3 developed	
September/December 2012		Chapter 2 developed	The importance of context in the case study meant that I developed chapter 2 as a standalone chapter as the essence of the issues and implications of culture in FE needed to be captured for the reader
January 2013/July 2013		Chapters 5,6, 7 developed	My transformative learning developed during these development stages – the shift from managerialist approaches and my own understanding of the power of governmentality and performativity shaped my understanding of the complexity of cultures in which I was working
September 2013/May 2014		Chapters 4, 8, review whole thesis	
May 2014		Submission of thesis	

**Table 1.1 Timeline of research**

### 1.3 The Leadership Programme Design

In reaction to the continually changing FE landscape and the need for a new approach to leadership the case study college engaged a management consultant to deliver a twelve month leadership development programme based on one to one coaching with the heads of school and heads of department (support). The programme was designed in conjunction with the senior executive group to try to achieve the maximum impact for the college. The programme cost to the institution was £35,000 with a further £50,000 of anticipated manager time.

Much time and discussion was spent by the senior executive group (SEG) analysing the options for a new leadership development programme – SEG interviewed three different providers over two days seeking to agree what the aims and objectives of the programme should be and what the programme content would include. The college in the study had used basic management competencies to support a lower level management development programme for supervisors and was keen to use a framework of leadership competencies to kick start the coaching discussions. The aims and objectives of the development programme agreed by SEG and provided to all participants are set out in figure 1.2 below.



**Figure 1.2 Aims and Objectives of the College Leadership Development Programme**

The programme started with an introductory group day at an external venue. The day focused on strategic thinking and preparing the participants for the coaching programme to follow. The group day introduced leadership models such as 'thinking hats' (De Bono 2009), theories of neuro-linguistic programming and the basics of coaching and listening techniques (Dilts et al. 1980). The main body of the development programme then consisted of up to three individual coaching sessions spread out over 12 months supported by an initial emotional intelligence questionnaire (Goleman 1996). The coach and the participants were given carte blanche to agree what was to be covered in each session, how long the sessions would last, and the timetable for the three appointments. The only guidance provided to participants and the coach were the aims and objectives of the programme outlined above.

The research analysed interviews and questionnaires from the participants on the programme before and during the development and the views of four managers over a longer two year period. Interviews with college senior leadership, the staff development co-ordinator and the leadership coach together with written documents were used to review the expectations of the senior team and the context of the case study (outlined in Chapter 2). The documentary analysis provided information on the impact of the policy context on the leadership coaching programme particularly in terms of:

- Leadership, management and quality
- Responsiveness and delivering the skills needs for the country
- The influence of education policy in shaping the new landscape
- Delivering highly efficient and successful outcomes.

## Chapter 2. Context

### 2.1 Introduction

An important, but often ignored, approach in case study research (particularly those that aim to carry out an evaluation) is to ensure that the *context* of the case is fully explored. Yin and Davis (2006) highlighted that:

*“The classic case study focuses on single entities—an individual, organization, decision, community, and the like. When the method is used to do evaluations, the case study entities are more likely to be practices, projects, and programs....The evaluations distinguish between “context” and “phenomenon,” whereby the subject of evaluation may be considered the phenomenon of interest and the surrounding events its context. At the same time, one strength of the case study method is its ability to tolerate the real-life blurring between phenomenon and context.....In neither the education nor community example would phenomenon and context be readily disentangled” (Yin and Davis, 2006, p. 5).*

Yin suggested that except for studies of preliterate societies, documentary information was likely to be relevant to every case study topic (2009, p.101) and it was clear that the policy context of FE locally and nationally provided the rich picture in which the leadership development coaching in the college was based. The policy context in which the leadership development programme was embedded is outlined in this chapter. It provides the backdrop to the case study, providing an analysis of the FE policy landscape and the contradictory pressures on the individual participants and on the college at the time of the coaching programme. This context helped to shape the initial planning and design of the leadership coaching programme and influenced the participants in their daily leadership roles and in setting their individual development goals.

## 2.2 Analysing the Context

Analysing the context in which the college was embedded was key to understanding why the coaching programme was developed, how it evolved and how to formulate the research questions (Yin 2009; Bryman 2008; Marx 1997). In order to fully understand the pressures on the college managers it was particularly important to consider the context at two different levels – locally and nationally. In conducting the review of the policy documents I needed to consider which method and approach to use to ensure a systematic and robust review. In conducting the context analysis I was seeking to find sources that were *part* of the research and these comprised:

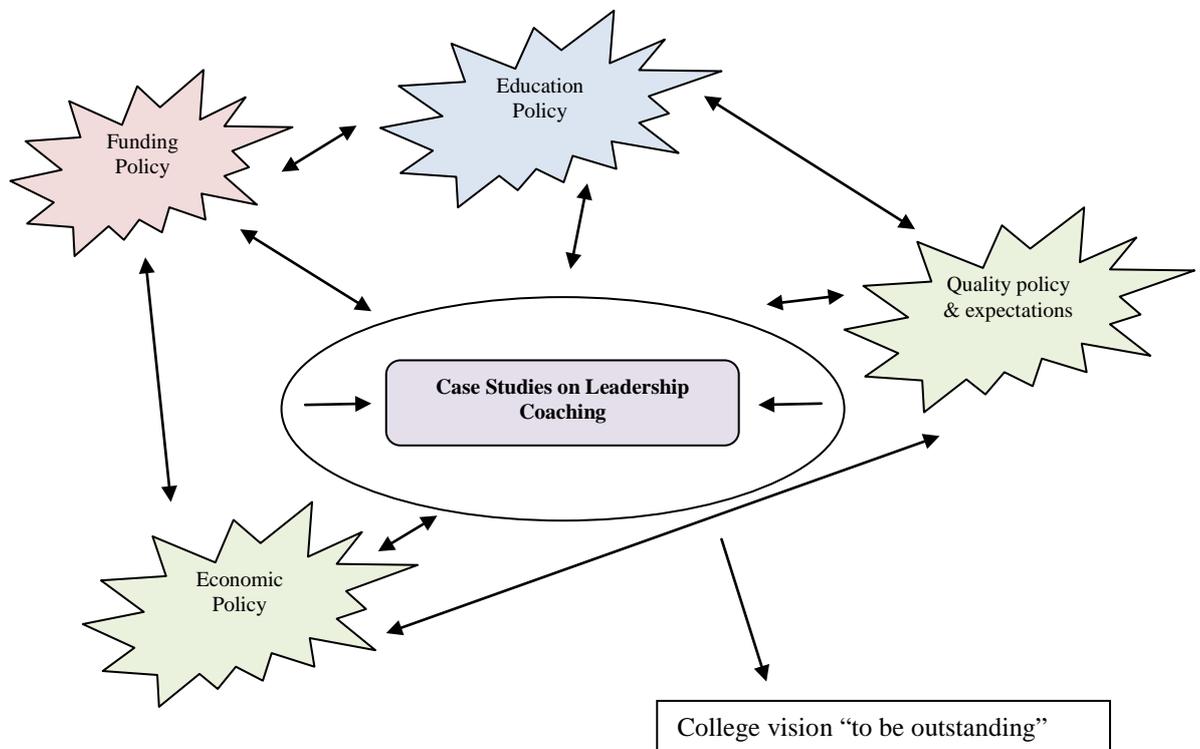
- National government publications – used to establish the national context;
- Documents produced by the organisation – used to set the local context of the study; and
- Books, journal articles (paper and electronic publication) and web-based articles (of appropriate providence) – used to establish the conceptual framework (Burton et al. 2008).

The first stage in carrying out the documentary research was to identify the rationale for the selection of documents. It was clear that in the FE national landscape there was a huge range of legislative drivers, policy statements, funding guidance, government papers and quality reviews. As my style was more interpretivist I spent time trawling through the range of policy and contextual documentation to gain the feel of what was important to the context of the case. This initial review provided my criteria for the identification of the key policy documents:

1. Leadership, management and quality policy
2. Education policy

3. Funding environments
4. Economic policy and pressures
5. The college context.

These criteria can be visually represented to show the different associations between the topics (figure 2.1). The double headed links between education, funding, economic and quality policy shows the layers of external national and local policy drivers that affect the case study. The policy drivers are interlinked, sometimes contradictory and multi layered and influenced the managers in the case study in differing degrees as the study progressed.



**Figure 2.1 Context in which the phenomenon is embedded**

I identified over 50 documents in my first sift and the document profile changed over the first year of the study as newer more critical policies were published. Using my initial criteria I then identified 18 key documents that set the policy drivers for the sector and as such reflected the setting of the case. The key documents selected are outlined in table 2.1 below.

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Criteria for selection</b>
1.	<i>Office for Standards in Education, 2003. Leadership and Management: What inspection tells us HMI 1646</i>	Key document from Ofsted on leadership and management – set out expectations of inspectors for the sector
2.	<i>Office for Standards in Education 2004a, Why Colleges Fail, November 2004 HMI 2408</i>	Key summary document by Ofsted on the reasons why colleges received poor inspection grades – provided a crucial insight into the perspective that Ofsted had on satisfactory and poor leadership and management
3.	<i>Office for Standards in Education 2004b, Why Colleges Succeed, November 2004 HMI 2409</i>	Sister document to above. Key summary document by Ofsted on the reasons why colleges received good inspection grades – provided a crucial insight into the perspective that Ofsted had on good and outstanding leadership and management
4.	<i>Office for Standards in Education, 2005. Further Education Matters: the first four years of Ofsted/ALI college inspections. HMI 2532</i>	First Ofsted document summarising findings from all inspections in the first four years of Ofsted control. Set the tone for college leadership and the dominant culture
5.	<i>Office for Standards in Education 2007 'The Annual Report of her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2006/07', October 2007, HC 1002</i>	Provided an update on Ofsted issues as time progressed in the FE sector
6.	<i>Realising the Potential – A Review of the Future Role of Further Education Colleges, Sir Andrew Foster, November 2005</i>	The Foster review was a seminal moment post incorporation – this review set out the directions government suggested FE colleges should be moving in
7.	<i>Case Study College 3 Year Development Plan 2005</i>	Internal college document that set the agenda for the college in the case study. Required by the main funding body (Learning and Skills Council). Provided an insight into how external pressures and drivers from the funders influenced the college direction
8.	<i>Case Study College Lifelong Learning Policy 2006</i>	Internal college document from the case college that set out the aims and objectives of the college continuing professional development programme. Useful to set the college context for the leadership development programme
9.	<i>Case Study College Strategic Plan 2008-11</i>	Overall external college strategic document outlining the key aims and objectives of the college in the case study. Provided the outline of what the college deemed important for the future prosperity of the organisation
10.	<i>Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training, Education for All – The Future of Education and Training for 14-19 year olds, Routledge, 2009</i>	A key national paper that outlined the new 14-19 government agenda – gave an insight into the new policy drivers FE colleges faced
11.	<i>Skills for Growth – The National Skills Strategy – November 2009, Department for Business Innovation and Skills</i>	A key national government paper that outlined the government agenda for skills – this paper formed the

		driver for the funding allocations for FE colleges
12.	<i>Skills Funding Agency Guidance Note 6 – December 2010</i>	Example guidance note from the main funding body for colleges the SFA. Provided guidance on the interpretation of what would be funded and the future direction of skills funding in England and Wales
13.	<i>Head of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) - Geoff Russell Speech – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010</i>	Key speech by the new head of the SFA outlining the issues he felt the sector was facing.
14.	<i>HM Treasury Spending Review 2010, October 2010, CM7942, Executive Summary</i>	National document that highlighted government priorities for spending and for saving in the new era of austerity
15.	<i>Office for Standards in Education 2010 The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2009/10, November 2010</i>	National report on the issues facing FE as seen by Ofsted provided a later view of how colleges were performing in the eyes of the inspectorate
16.	<i>Schools White Paper 2010 – The Importance of Teaching, Department for Education – November 2010</i>	A more recent government policy paper that outlined the new direction of the coalition government
17.	<i>Young Peoples Learning Agency 16-19 Funding Statement – December 2010</i>	New funding agency for the sector – the statement provided guidance as to the new and changing priorities of this new body
18.	<i>Wolf Report – March 2011</i>	A key report commissioned by the coalition government on vocational qualifications – played a crucial role in shaping education policy in schools and colleges post 2011

**Table 2.1 Policy Documents**

It was important to note that the documents selected were the ones that I felt best represented the key drivers in the sector at a snapshot in time. A new researcher may well have chosen different policy documents depending on his or her views as to the relative importance of each publication. A change in the time frame would also have provided a potentially different emphasis to the policy selection. Appendix A shows a table mapping the chosen documents to the criteria for selection.

The documents provided the first stage of the context setting, rendering more visible the phenomenon under study (Prior 2003, p.87). The importance of choosing documents that best represented the context could not be overestimated, the themes that arose from the documentary analysis shaped the interviews with the senior leaders and the participants which were important elements of data collection later on in this study (see Chapter 4).

## 2.3 Analysing the Policy Documents

I carried out an analysis of the origins and bias of each document (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Bailey 1994; Scott 1990) using the template set out in Appendix B. The template provided a framework to assess the weighting and significance that should be placed on each document and the strength of influence it was likely to have on the college sector. I then carried out a content analysis (Denscombe 2007) of each document using the guidance outlined in figure 2.2 below.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Reveals</b>	<b>By measuring</b>
1	<i>What the text establishes as relevant</i>	<i>What is contained (e.g. particular relevant words, ideas)</i>
2	<i>The priorities portrayed through the text</i>	<i>How frequently they occur; in what order they occur</i>
3	<i>The values portrayed in the text</i>	<i>Positive and negative views on values</i>
4	<i>How ideas are related</i>	<i>Proximity of ideas within the text, logical association</i>

**Figure 2.2 Content Analysis (Adapted from Denscombe 2007, p.238)**

The content analysis provided a useful insight into not only the key themes of the documents but also the origins, potential for bias, the intended outcomes and potential uses of the documents. A sample of the analysis is shown in figure 2.3.

Stage 3

Content Analysis of Each Document

Content analysis:	
... reveals	
... by measuring	
What the text establishes as relevant	① <u>Review</u> - word expert (this as the document is doing a full review of all financial positions
What is contained (e.g. particular relevant words, ideas)	② <u>Spending</u> - clear focus here on the 'spending' of public money - veto for authority ③ <u>Government</u> - clearly stating <u>what</u> is - change here - that the spending age will be set by Government ④ <u>services</u> - significant weighting given to the services that are provided by the Government Spending ⑤ <u>growth</u> - key policy      ⑥ <u>new</u> Probably more interesting by looking at what is very little mentioned! ⑦ <u>UKs</u> - political nature of the document mean it has been very well written

Figure 2.3 Documentary analysis

In addition to the process above I also used the digital content analysis tool Wordle ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)) for generating word clouds from text in each of the documents (figure 2.4).



## 2.4 Leadership, Management and Quality

As the case study revolved around assessing coaching in leadership and management, the main policy context focus was leadership, management and quality. The first key point was to identify the quality policy drivers in the sector, and the tone and expectation of the inspectorates. These drivers in turn had a powerful influence on the college policies, procedures and leadership.

Incorporation of the college sector into independent educational trusts in 1993 increased the degree of autonomy but, alongside this, fundamentally shifted the roles and responsibilities of managers. The role of both senior and middle managers had to change to reflect the new focus of the sector on entrepreneurial, business like skills delivery in a new and highly competitive marketplace. Randle and Brady (1997) described this cultural change as the shift from the 'professional paradigm' to the 'managerial paradigm' (p128).

Alongside this new entrepreneurial and competitive culture, managers were also monitored rigorously by influential government agencies such as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The policy drivers from these agencies were dominant in the sector as the sanctions for non compliance in terms of quality (Ofsted) and funding (SFA) were powerful and prohibitive. To add to the difficulties facing college managers often the drivers from these agencies were conflicting and contradictory.

Ofsted (2003) highlighted that the link between leadership and management and standards and quality was being made more directly than ever before. In the Annual Report for Further Education Colleges 2006/07 (Ofsted 2007) the inspectorate were strong in their conviction of the link between leadership and management and success:

*“There are clear links between the inspection grades for leadership and management and for overall effectiveness. In good and outstanding colleges, clear strategic vision and challenging self-assessment have contributed significantly to the raising of standards.” (Ofsted, 2007, p.42)*

In the summary report '*Why Colleges Fail*' (2004a) the inspectorate drew upon their evidence from the inspection of 307 FE colleges and 42 independent specialist colleges. They provided clear pointers in the report as to the leadership and management factors they regarded as the key to the success of a college: clear vision and mission, clear communication and the relentless focus on the achievement of students. The parallel report '*Why Colleges Succeed*' (2004b) analysed the inspection reports of 29 highly successful colleges from the same cohort. Much was made again of keeping a focus on students at all times. Where these reports were weak, however, was in analysing how leadership and management factors were achieved in the institutions they inspected. The summary document '*Further Education Matters*' (November 2005) reviewed the first four years of college inspections under the Ofsted regime. It concluded that "the leadership and management of colleges are judged primarily in relation to outcomes" (2005, p.10). In the Ofsted Annual Report 2009/10 (2010) it was highlighted that too many colleges remained satisfactory with an unsatisfactory capacity to improve. Ofsted highlighted that the quality of leadership and management was very variable across the sector with a particular improvement needed in the leadership of adult and community learning and work-based learning.

Analysis of the discourse in the Ofsted documents highlighted a focus on learning, improvement and student outcomes. Of particular note was the analysis of leadership and management failed to recognise the complex environment and changing landscape in which college leaders were immersed. There was an over simplification of what made good leadership and a lack of recognition by the lead inspection body of the challenges that faced college leaders. Despite this college leaders still moulded their leadership around the Ofsted prescribed model to ensure compliance with the expected norm. The challenge facing the college leaders in the case study was to change their mindsets away from the model of managerialism and the competency based checklists so favoured by Ofsted and to become more strategic, innovative thinkers.





There was a clear statement of intent in the strategy to reshape the skills offer and that colleges should be primarily funded to meet the needs of their local economies. The references to both government and policy were strong throughout the document, highlighting that the policy drivers were all central. Despite the talk of reduced bureaucracy and greater college freedoms the government funding came with demanding central targets and priorities attached.

The Skills Funding Agency guidance note 6 (2010) provided a clear summary of the new drivers for colleges from the newly formed coalition government. Whilst the document was particularly technical, analysis of the discourse highlighted a strong emphasis on the agency itself and its role in directing the strategic direction of college provision. As would be expected there was a dominant emphasis on skills in the document and there was a strong reference throughout the guidance note on the need for *new* approaches, *new* provision and *new* ways of working. There was an emphasis in the discourse on 'new' and 'the future' and that competitiveness and efficiency were the keys to success.

It was clear from the SFA head Geoff Russell's speech (2010) that more than ever that colleges were expected to deliver the skills needed for the economy in new and innovative ways. The wordle analysis of Geoff Russell's speech (figure 2.7) showed starkly the change in emphasis in the SFA to *new* ideas, *new* delivery, *new* models of competitiveness and looking to the future of skills rather than delivering the current *outdated* curriculum.



The Young People's Learning Agency (2010) focused more on the themes of performance and participation (figure 2.8).

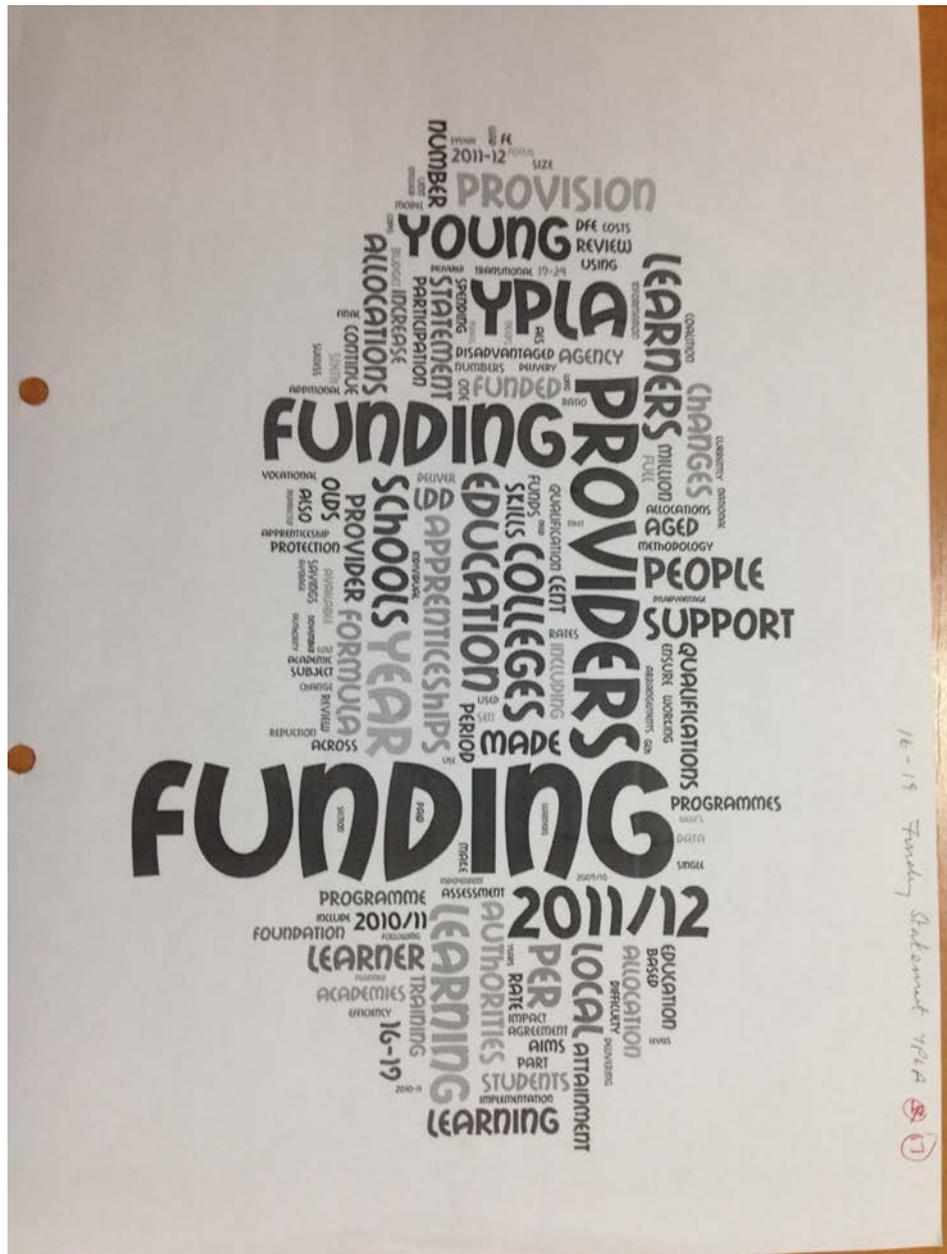


Figure 2.8 Wordle analysis of ‘Young Peoples Learning Agency 16-19 Funding Statement – December 2010’

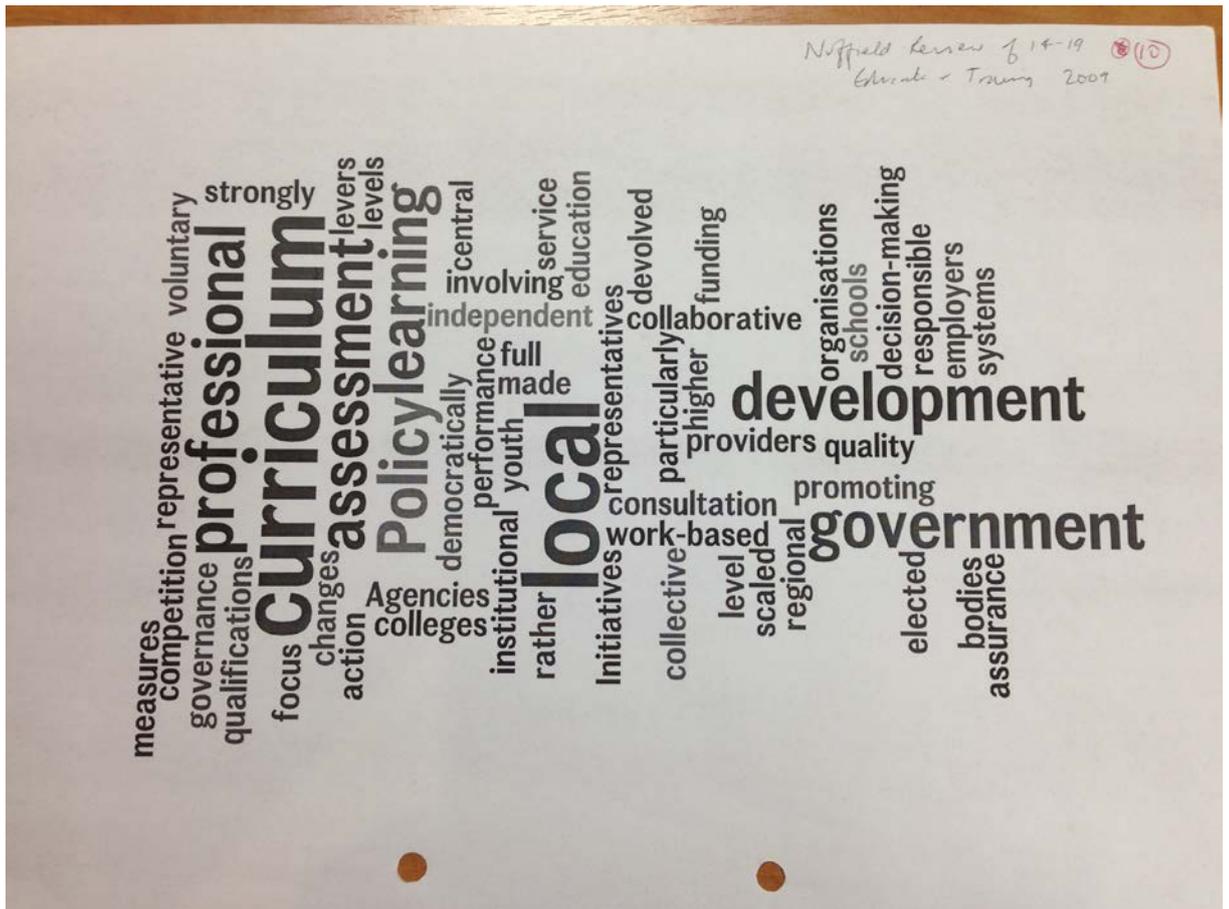
The YPLA however recognised that 16 to 19 education and training would inevitably be limited by fiscal constraints. There was a strong theme of local working to optimise the opportunities for young people and the need to narrow the gap in educational performance. The discourse showed a strong emphasis on funding, support and education. There was also a new and strong drive on

apprenticeships from the YPLA and this highlighted the need for college leaders to respond to new government initiatives in a speedy and innovative manner.

The reports from Foster, the SFA and the YPLA redefined the government's expectations of colleges as the primary engine for change in delivering the skills needed for a new and dynamic economy. The reports showed that the need for leaders to be strategic in their thinking and entrepreneurial in approach had increased over the last two years as funding opportunities significantly diminished and government targets increased.

## **2.6 The influence of education policy in shaping the new landscape**

The Nuffield Review of 14 to 19 Education (2009) looked at the considerable achievements in England and Wales in expanding education and training opportunities to meet both the social and economic aspirations of society. There was a strong theme in the discourse on the need to provide local provision, the importance of a *work* related curriculum and a recognition of the professional role of teachers in the delivery of 14 to 19 learning (figure 2.9).



**Figure 2.9** Wordle analysis of The Nuffield Review of 14 to 19 Education ‘*Education and Training, Education for All – The Future of Education and Training for 14-19 year olds, 2009*’

There was a significant challenge for college leaders in delivering the high-quality, bespoke curriculum and collaborative approach advocated by the Nuffield Review alongside the sharp edged skills driven business model expected by the SFA. The challenge for leaders in the sector was how to bring together these two competing and contrasting policies into a coherent and deliverable model.



one clear message from the government, that the very best graduates trained to the highest standards in teaching were the key to student success and this should be the focus of all schools and colleges. What was most interesting in the study was how quickly policy changed from this stance to the removal of the requirement for staff to have any teaching qualification in colleges in the space of only three years. College leaders were pushed towards a strong professional teaching agenda in 2010 to have these rules rapidly withdrawn by 2013.

Professor Alison Wolf's review of vocational education (March 2011), considered how vocational education for 14-19 year olds could be improved, to promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes. The review championed a fundamental simplification of the vocational education system for 14-19 year olds, as well as providing practical recommendations to inform future policy direction. The review proposed, once again, major changes to the organisation, funding, regulatory structures and quality assurance mechanisms of post 16 education with the stated aim of providing coherent programmes of learning for all young people. There was a particular challenge here for college leaders to respond to conflicting policy drivers. There was no clear policy direction for leaders to follow, rather a range of disparate views from different government departments providing a fog of new initiatives through which to navigate.

## **2.7 Delivering highly efficient successful outcomes**

The coalition government outlined in the '*Spending Review*' (Her Majesty's Treasury, June 2010) that the scale of the economic challenge presented an opportunity to take a more fundamental look at the role of government in society. The key challenge for college leaders was how to minimise the impact of the severe cuts to funding from 2011 onwards whilst continuing to improve the quality of provision. After ten years of steady growth in the FE sector delivering more for more, the significant challenge facing college leaders was to change their mindset and deliver considerably more for considerably less.



The documents collectively recognised the need to be innovative and entrepreneurial and the lifelong learning policy set the context of supporting training for staff that enhanced their capability to deliver the strategic aims of the college

## **2.8 Impact of the Policy Context on the Leadership Coaching Programme**

It was clear from the policy analysis that there were many changing and conflicting policy drivers affecting leaders and managers in the FE sector and that the change and dynamics of policy had accelerated in the last few years beyond everyone's expectations in the sector. The demands on leaders and managers were becoming increasingly complex and contradictory. Skills policy was strong in setting out what was needed to be achieved from government – but there were no guidelines as to expectations of how to achieve these policy drivers. Government policy focused on models of accountability that were bureaucratic and rigid while demanding innovation and entrepreneurialism coupled with reducing models of professional recognition for teachers and managers.

In FE policy there was a sea change in perspective, models of delivery and priorities from the new government alongside a policy shift towards greater local accountability but in the context of national funding frameworks, swathing funding cuts and constantly changing funding bodies. The challenge to leaders and managers to deliver high quality and highly efficient outcomes was clear. The phenomenon in which the case was embedded was challenging at the start of the research and increased in complexity and financial constraints beyond all expectations over the following years. The range of documents over a period of seven years showed the shifting policy frameworks that colleges were required to work to. Burton et al. (2008) highlighted that:

*“Most documents offer a ‘snapshot’ in time, reflecting or capturing a particular reality. This offers not only the interviewer the opportunity to reanalyse the documents with the changed perceptions following the passage of time, but also to identify and respond to change” (Burton et al. 2008, p.113).*

The need to revisit interviews and focus groups over the time span of the study, in light of this rapidly changing policy landscape, was essential. It allowed the research to capture the evolving environment and phenomenon in which the case was set and how this changed perceptions, attitudes and actions of managers in the study.

## **Chapter 3. Review of the Literature**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Having explored the key themes arising from the policy context it was important to consider the literature on leadership and management in education and how it provided an overview of the roles, responsibilities and challenges facing leaders and managers in schools and colleges. The powerful influence of policy in the sector was stark and far reaching and it would be interesting to see how this context influenced the actions and responses of managers and how the literature considered these challenges. There were very few studies that concentrated specifically on middle managers or context in FE, and even fewer that focused on the professional development of those managers. The small number of studies, however, highlighted key areas of interest including the impact of incorporation in 1993, the large amount of change in the sector and the changing roles of college managers (Gleeson and Knights 2008; Briggs 2005; Lumby 2003; 2005). In this chapter key themes will be explored around coping with change, the power and influence of policy on the sector, transformative learning, agency and coaching.

### **3.2 Literature Search**

The role of the literature review is to engage with the field of study in which the research was based. A thorough literature review serves a number of different functions. It introduces the reader to the topic and contextualises the research, it demonstrates an understanding of the field of research that currently exists in particular approaches adopted and their interpretation of findings (Sharp 2009; Bryman 2008; Newby 2010; Wiersma and Jurs 2005).

This literature search was based on the initial research questions which gave the basic parameters for the review. The initial search focused on the key texts on FE post incorporation (1993), key works on leadership, change and middle

managers in colleges and then extended into leadership and leadership development in schools and FE. The literature search on coaching started from a broader position looking at the origins of coaching then the use of coaching in educational development settings. Using the research questions as the parameters for the search the following steps were adopted to give a structure to the search:

- Review of academic journals, text books and online databases  
Educational websites search
- Review of professional journals, newspapers and magazines search (for example *The Times Educational Supplement*, *FE Focus*, *The Centre for Excellence in Leadership and Learning and Skills Improvement Service Research publications*).

Having identified the source texts and journals, a review of the works was carried out using a basic analysis template asking the questions who?, why?, where?, how? and what? (Yin 2009). This template enabled a structured set of notes on the key literature to be gathered and initial comparisons of ideas and findings to be analysed. This approach resulted in a reasonably large but manageable number of articles and texts being reviewed with a particular emphasis on core pieces on FE supplemented by generic but thought provoking wider texts.

### **3.3 Coping with Change**

The FE sector was founded by the 1944 Education Act, at a time when national and local government had a general agreement on educational policy and the way technical and vocational education should be delivered. The impact of the economic crises of the 1970s and the rise of free market thinking in the Thatcher government years however, led to a significant shift in public sector and educational thinking towards a market driven education system. Policy shifts in the 1980s and 90s focused government agendas predominantly on economic priorities. This era saw a significant change in emphasis on public sector management towards efficiency and targets, raising standards and

ensuring value for money (Leathwood 2000). In FE the impact of these changes was felt across every aspect of college business, colleges were expected to deliver new and challenging quality outcomes whilst cutting costs and embracing a new business style.

As outlined in Chapter 2 the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 had the most seminal effect on the FE sector during this period, changing the landscape for colleges and college managers fundamentally and irrevocably. The Act removed the sector from the ownership and management of local education authorities (LEAs) and colleges became independent corporate bodies funded directly by central government. The government at the time saw the freeing up of colleges from the constraints of local authority control as a way of creating a market driven, business oriented and learner responsive sector directly funded from government (Bush 1999; Simkins and Lumby 2002). The sector commonly described itself in the early days as businesses in an education market, Peter Kingston of the Guardian described the new model as:

*“A market-oriented approach to further education....Nowhere in the public sector has the pace of change been more rapid than in further education, triggered by the "incorporation" of colleges in 1993 and their independence from local authorities” (P Kingston, The Guardian, 2 September 2008).*

As outlined in chapter 2 this greater freedom however came with other control mechanisms – government regulations restricting the remit of college governing bodies and strict external inspection regimes that changed regularly depending on the age and status of learners (Ofsted 2003; 2005; 2007).

This shift of emphasis to running a business and creating economic impact put pressure on colleges to reform their curriculum and delivery to ensure it was efficient and responsive to the needs of the economy. College managers were now being held to account in terms of efficiency, competition and performance from the new funding and quality assurance agencies (Leathwood 2000; Hannagan et al. 2007). Generally FE colleges were perceived as not fully realising their potential; incorporation liberated the individual college, but failed to provide a basis for local strategic planning (Foster 2005). The challenges

that this posed for managers in FE was how to respond to the tidal wave of policy changes and competitive pressures in a positive and productive way. What leadership was needed to allow a college to survive and grow in such turbulent circumstances and how could managers adapt and learn new skills to allow them to succeed in the new landscape?

The literature suggested that as FE moved into the twenty-first century, leaders and managers needed to rethink their conceptions of how to respond to the rapid change (Stoll and Fink 1996). The single largest challenge facing college managers was how to manage change in their institutions to enable the business to respond to the tidal wave of contradictory policy and funding drivers in order to survive and thrive. If this was the single biggest challenge then it was important to recognise the huge difficulties facing managers in effecting change. Fullan (2001) warned that if there was one cardinal rule of change in human condition, it was that you cannot make people change, you cannot force them to think differently or compel them to develop new skills:

*“The real crunch comes in the relationships between these new programs or policies and the thousands of subjective realities embedded in people’s individual and organisational contexts and their personal histories” (Fullan 2001, p.46).*

The leadership approaches adopted traditionally in the college sector were predominantly transactional, it was about getting the job done. Yet this style no longer suited the dynamic commercial world that colleges inhabited (Briggs 2001, 2005; Lumby 2003). The need for leaders to move into a more transformational approach was never greater, to allow them to shape individuals to be able to respond and react positively to change, to embrace challenges and overcome resistance.

There was also clear recognition of the personal nature of change in the literature: it was inescapably and intensely personal, because it required people to do something different, to think something different and to feel something different (Duck 1993). Experience of change was highlighted as a key factor to individual resistance to change. Research showed that, for many, the experience of change had been bleak (Bush 1999, Briggs 2001, 2005; Simkins

and Lumby 2002; Lumby 2003). FE was in a negative position in implementing change due to the many and varied initiatives that had been implemented and failed over the years. In many situations (Kotter 1996; Fullan 1993; Plant 1987; Judson 1991) the improvements had been disappointing and the change was appalling, with wasted resources and burned-out, scarred or frustrated employees. Fullan (1993) summarised the problem aptly when he concluded:

*“Reform is badly needed, yet people’s experience with change is overwhelmingly negative – imposition is the norm, costs outweigh benefits, the few successes are short-lived” (Fullan 1993, p.353).*

Naturally when so many in education had had such bleak experiences of change a key challenge was overcoming the subsequent resistance that individuals exhibited towards it. Individual barriers were many and varied (table 3.1). The range and variety of individual barriers shown in the table showed the complexity and challenges facing a change agent.

<b>Barriers/Rejections</b>
<b>Values</b> - where the proposed change challenges one’s values system, lack of conviction. (Dalín 1978; Katzenbach and Smith 1993).
<b>Power</b> - where people may accept an innovation if it brings them greater power, or they may resist it if it diminishes their power. (Dalín 1978; Buchanan and Body 1992; Plant 1987; Judson 1991; Foucault 1980; Layder 1994).
<b>Psychological/emotional</b> – where people resist the challenge to security, confidence, emotional well-being and homeostasis that change brings. (Dalín 1978; Clarke et al.1994; Deal and Peterson 1990; Katzenbach and Smith 1993; Burnes 1996; Plant 1987; Judson 1991).
<b>Practical</b> - where people will resist change if it threatens to deskill them, if the investment in reskilling is too daunting, or if resources are insufficient to support the change. Threat to core skills and competence. Concerns about how the change will be implemented. (Dalín 1978; Plant 1987; Judson 1991).
<b>Social</b> - Poor relationships. Strong peer group norms. The degree of trust in colleagues. (Plant 1987; Judson 1991).
<b>Fear of inadequacy and admissions of weakness</b> - Fear of failure or looking stupid. (Bowman and Asch 1987; Plant 1987).
<b>Fear of loss of present status and current job satisfaction</b> – (Bowman and Asch 1987).
<b>Ignorance</b> - insufficient information about the change. (Clarke et al.1994; Buchanan and Body 1992; Plant 1987).
<b>Doubt</b> – people are unsure of the value of the change. (Clarke et al.1994).
<b>Situational factors</b> – what is being proposed is not seen as an improvement on existing practice. (Clarke et al.1994; Plant 1987).
<b>Previous experience of change</b> – ‘we’ve tried this before and it didn’t work’. (Morrison 1998; Lumby 2003; Sarason 1996; Fullan 1993; Kotter 1996; Plant 1987; Judson 1991).

**Table 3.1 Review of theories of individual barriers to change**

The key for leaders was to develop methods and approaches that allowed them to think about the challenges posed in a changing sector and how to lead individuals through change removing barriers and reducing obstacles (Briggs 2001). In any large, complex organisation change needed to be carefully planned, well resourced and have the involvement and support of the academic staff (Crosling et al. 2008). Gunter et al. (2007) highlighted where change had been successful and suggested the reason why:

*“The qualitative data clearly revealed that the project was perceived as a success as it was linked to evidence of visible positive differences to working lives” (Gunter et al. 2007, p.29).*

The literature showed that individual resistance to change was natural and perhaps unavoidable (Morrison 1998; Fullan 1993, 2001; Buchanan and Body 1992; Dalin 1978). It was also important to consider whether resistance to change should always be regarded as negative. Teachers and managers that questioned the constant and all encompassing drive for change were considered as mavericks, yet some academics (Coffield 2007; Coffield et al. 2008; Coffield 2008; Edward et al. 2007) agreed that the impact of policy on the post compulsory sector was far reaching and challenging and the sector *needed* a voice of dissent.

### **3.4 Culture and Change**

Alongside individual resistance to change the key organisational and policy features facing leaders was the power of school, college and the sector culture (Fullan 2001). The concept of culture was most useful to help to explain some of the more seemingly incomprehensible and irrational aspects of groups and organisations (Stoll and Fink 1996; Schein 1991; Fullan 2001). It was interesting that Fullan (2001) used such a strong word as *power* but it clearly highlighted how crucial culture could be to facilitating, or of course, hindering the change process. Stoll and Fink’s (1996) analysis suggested that ‘culture is extremely subtle yet powerful in the way it permeates the life of a school’ (1996, p.99). There were certain features of institutions and organisations that had to

be addressed if change was to be successful (Morrison 1998). Egan (1994) referred to them as the shadow side of organisations – the dynamics at work in them – and Morrison (1998) stressed the importance of ensuring that they were working to promote and facilitate change. Deal and Kennedy's (1982) simple definition of culture as, *the way we do things around here*, suggested that culture was all encompassing in an organisation.

Billing and Temple's (2001) research confirmed the difficulties in effecting culture change in higher education institutions in Eastern Europe:

*“weak and inexperienced institutional managements up against resistant central authorities and entrenched faculties conspired to make any change to move the whole institution onto a new course extremely difficult to bring about”*(Billing and Temple 2001, pp.114-115).

Uttal (1983) regarded changing cultures as a near impossibility, however Sathe (1983) believed culture change was possible however difficult but not always necessary. He suggested managers should be cautious and consider carefully before they entered into attempts to change cultures and in fact probably all they wanted to change was behaviours? Gallant (2007) found in her case study research of a Liberal Arts College in the USA that her study reinforced those of previous organisational change studies in that:

*“culture change is dynamic and complex as espoused values can be both inhibitors and enablers of change, and institutional members can effectively resist structural attempts at change”*(Gallant 2007 p.13).

Whilst highlighting all the dangers and difficulties managers faced in changing cultures the literature did suggest the importance that managers and leaders must place on it in considering leading change. Once culture was understood, it could be changed, because it is living and vital (Torrington and Weightman 1989).

The key point for leaders and managers considering change was that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures would manage them (Schein 1991) and that managers needed to

appreciate and interpret culture as an essential component of effective management (Bush and Coleman 2000). The challenge for the leadership development programme was how to reshape the middle management team to lead culture change and how would the culture of the college act as a barrier to the coaching programme itself?

### **3.5 The Power of Policy – Governmentality and Performativity**

Chapter 2 highlighted the strength of the policy agenda on the sector and theories of governmentality and performativity could be argued to provide an insight into the power and relationship structures in colleges and the influences on college managers' understanding of reality. Governmentality indicated a field of study which sought knowledge about:

*“the particular mentalities, arts and regimes of government and administration that have emerged since early modern Europe” (Dean 1999, p.2).*

Foucault (1980) defined government conduct, as the conduct of conduct and Powell and Steel (2012) described the phenomenon of governmentality as:

*“the subtle mechanisms through which the behaviour of individuals is shaped, guided and directed without recourse to coercion” (Powell and Steel 2012, p.2).*

Lemke (2000) summarised Foucault's view, in his history of governmentality, as showing how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence (2000, p.191) suggesting that power is the product of both the state *and* the individual. Peters et al. (2009) posed the question how power is exercised:

*“A neo-Foucauldian approach to the sociology of governance avoids interpreting liberalism as an ideology, political philosophy or an economic theory to reconfigure it as a form of governmentality with an emphasis on the question of how power is exercised. Such an approach makes central the notion of the self-limiting state, which in contrast to the administrative (or “police”) state, brings together in productive ways questions of ethics and technique, through the “responsibilisation” of moral agents and the active reconstruction of the relation between government and self-government” (Peters et al. 2009, p.xliv).*

Current political changes were described not as a decline of state sovereignty but as a promotion of forms of government that encouraged and demanded individual responsibility and market forces in a variety of social contexts (Lemke 2007; Rose and Miller 1992; O’Malley 1996; Rose 1996; Cruikshank 1999; Henman 2004). Davies and Bansel’s (2010) analysis of governmentality and academic work in Australian Universities highlighted similar tensions on Australian ‘new’ university academics to college managers in the UK. They suggested that the policy drivers in Australia circa 1988-92 were designed to make universities higher level training organisations for large corporations and government. This new market driven policy placed new challenges on individual academics and managers:

*“through setting individuals against each other in intensified competitive systems of funding with clearly defined measures of success, those individuals are de-individualised and converted into the generic members of an auditable group”(Davies and Bansel 2010, p.6).*

Most importantly they suggested the impact of governmentality was that:

*“the critical gap between the liberal subject and government is collapsed. Whereas the liberal subject, had as part of its responsibility the maintenance of a distance from government and a responsibility to call it to account, the neoliberal subject does not” (Davies and Bansel 2010, p.6).*

The key point that Foucault made about governmentality however was that an understanding of these power relationships could in fact *free up* individuals to act differently:

*“moreover, power relations do not always result in the removal of liberty or options available to individuals, on the contrary power in the sense Foucault gives to the terms, could result in an empowerment or responsabilisation of subjects, forcing them to free decision-making in fields of action” (Lemke 2000, p.5).*

Empowering subjects through engaging in thought (Foucault 1997) could, according to Foucault, enable us to become ethical subjects:

*“By ‘thought’, I mean what establishes, in a variety of possible forms, the play of true and false, and consequently constitutes the human being as a knowing subject; in other words, it is the basis for accepting or refusing rules, and constitutes human beings as social and juridical subjects; it is what establishes the relation with one self and with others, and constitutes the human being as ethical subject” (Foucault 1997, p.200).*

Davies and Bansel recognised in their paper that Foucault challenged us to “resist the collapsing of the gap between subject and government, through engaging in thought” (2010, p.7). In their study, Miller and Rose (1990) suggested that the transformation of structures of production is possible only if individuals optimise their relation to themselves and to work. In light of Foucault’s challenge the particular interest of the research was whether the coaching programme could encourage the participants to critically think and to distance themselves from government and to challenge the policy drivers they were facing.

Ball (2013) extended the idea of governmentality by considering how the modern state and systems of power led to a target culture in the public sector describing this as ‘performativity’. He said:

*“In regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything. Last year's efforts are a benchmark for improvement - more publications, more research grants, more students. We must keep up; strive to achieve the new and ever more diverse targets which we set for ourselves in appraisal meetings; confess and confront our weaknesses; undertake appropriate and value enhancing professional development; ...Performativity is a key mechanism of neoliberal government that uses comparisons and judgments, and self-management, in place of interventions and direction” (Ball 2013, p.137).*

Performativity can be described as a state of being where individuals respond to targets and indicators but often in a way that produces uncertainties about how they should organise themselves within their work. Davies (2003) described performativity as:

*“the management, surveillance and control of individuals and professional groups in the cause of accountability to the public” (Davies 2003, p.91).*

Jeffrey (2002) summarised performativity as:

*“Institutions focus their policies and practice, on improving performance and survival to maintain and develop their market share. This is due to the competitive nature of a market structure...In the case of education this means both ensuring a favourable qualitative award from a national inspection service and raising the achievement levels of pupils in national tests to ensure a high position in published tables of educational performance. High ratings on these two performativity indicators improve a school's attraction to parents and students in the educational market place” (Jeffrey 2002, p.3).*

The performativity process in the education system was described as: the closure of the policy implementation gap (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992); a challenge to provider capture by teachers (Lawton, 1992); simplified national measures of school achievement; and a reduction of the multiple goals for teachers that produced an intensification of their work leading to over conscientiousness (Mentor et al., 1997; Campbell and Neill, 1994). The performativity discourse was described as seductive (McWilliam et al. 1999), because there was a desire to be passionate about excellence and achieving peak performance (Ball, 2000). The dehumanising of the performativity

discourse, however has resulted in the emptying out of relationships (Lasch and Urry 1994). Murray (2012) suggested:

*“It would be naive to deny these profound and often negative effects of performativity regimes in changing the nature of work in teacher education, but recent research also shows some interesting forms of what might be termed ‘resistance’ to the tyranny of those measurable performance outcomes” (Murray, 2012, p.22).*

Performativity however, was regarded by some as a *positive*. It was important to recognise that the performative systems can offer to some:

*“the possibility of being better than we were or even being excellent - and better than others - in its own terms. Performativity is not in any simple sense a technology of oppressions; it is also one of satisfactions and rewards, at least for some” (Ball 2013, p.140).*

Despite the argument that some people respond positively to performativity however, the dangers of performativity on educational cultures should not be underestimated. The extent to which the managers in the case study were embedded in the governmentality and performativity cultures responding to the strong policy drivers outlined in chapter 2 will be an interesting dimension to explore in the research.

### **3.6 Transformative Learning**

The literature on governmentality and performativity showed the powerful potential influence of targets and performance indicators on the way some managers performed in education and chapter 2 showed the large scale policy influence and drivers on the sector. Breaking the cycle of constantly responding to government power and performance indicators would therefore require a fundamental shift in managers thinking. An equally powerful type of learning would be needed to break the strong culture embedded in so many of the managers' thinking. Transformative learning theories could provide an insight into models of learning that significantly differ from traditional leadership views and set out to make managers rethink the deep set principles and understanding they had developed over time in the role. Transformative

learning (Mezirow 1991; 1995; 1996; Cranton 1994; 1996) was described by Mezirow as:

*“the process of effecting change in a frame of reference...frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences” (Mezirow 1997, p.5).*

The study of transformative learning emerged with the work of Jack Mezirow (1990; 1997). Transformative learning was defined as learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning (Clark 1993). Mezirow (1990) developed concepts of meaning perspectives, an individual's overall world-view, and meaning schemes, smaller components that contained specific knowledge, values and beliefs about individual experiences. He suggested a number of meaning schemes work together to generate an individual's meaning perspective. The key to the theory was that meaning perspectives were developed in childhood and youth. They operated as perceptual filters that determined how an individual would organise and interpret the meaning of his/her life's experiences. Transformative learning targeted these meaning perspectives in adulthood with a view to changing perspectives through significant events in the adult's life. The influences on Mezirow's early theory of transformative learning included Freire's (1970) conscientisation, and Habermas' (1971; 1984) domains of learning:

*“transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capabilities of the self; transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analysing underlying premises” (Elias 1997, p.3).*

Transformative learning has been divided into three phases including critical reflection, reflective discourse and action (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Freire (1970) also articulated a theory of transformative learning which he referred to as *conscientisation* or conscious-raising. Dirkx (1998) suggested that:

*“Through dialog and problem-posing, learners develop awareness of structures within their society that may be contributing to inequality and oppression. Learning helps adults develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which these social structures shape and influence the ways they think about themselves and the world” (Dirkx 1998, p.3).*

Freire (1970) argued that education should foster freedom among the learners by enabling them to reflect on their world and, thereby change it and transformative learning can be emancipating and liberating at both a personal and social level. Daloz (1986) suggested that transformative learning is more closely oriented to personal change and less to altering social structures and Boyd (1991) suggested that adult learners experience transformative learning by making the unconscious conscious, becoming aware of aspects of themselves of which they are not conscious. Dirkx (1998) however focused on the forces acting on individual's actions:

*“Central to our understanding of transformative learning is the emphasis on actualisation of the person and society through liberation and freedom. Actualisation is constrained through the presence of coercive forces or factors within our personal and socio-cultural contexts. These forces limit or shape the ways in which we come to understand who we are as persons and communities and what might be in our best interests. In effect, they constrain the degree to which we can be who or what we are. Transformative learning aims at identifying these forces and freeing us from their coercive influence through reflection, dialogue, critique, discernment, imagination and action.” (Dirkx 1998, p.8).*

For Mezirow (1997), one of the benefits of transformative learning was the development of greater autonomy as a person, a defining condition of adulthood. Mezirow (1997) stated that leadership development that wanted to effect transformative learning needed to challenge managers' current boundaries, thinking and working practices. Three common themes in the theory of transformative learning were – experience, critical reflection and rational discourse. To facilitate transformative learning Mezirow (1997) suggested that:

*“educators must help learners become aware and critical of their own and others’ assumptions. Learners need practice in recognising frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective” (Mezirow 1997, p.10).*

Transformative learning develops through discussion and exploration of concepts relating to these kinds of experiences. Another key aspect that was critical to helping effective transformative learning in adults, was the understanding of the importance of supportive relationships. Having a safe supportive system of teachers, coaches and other significant people could greatly facilitate the students’ willingness to move forward with transformative learning (Rogers 1957; West-Burnham and O’Sullivan 1998; Kemp 2008; Hobson 2012; Hobson and Malderez 2013). Taylor (1998) presented the case however that although the theory is much discussed, the practice of transformative learning has been minimally investigated, inadequately defined and poorly understood. Dirkx (1998) also warned that transformative learning was quite rare:

*“Some would lead us to believe that transformative learning is or can be a fairly common experience among adult learners, but it is my sense that transformative learning, as it has been defined here, is relatively rare within settings of adult education” (Dirkx 1998, p.11).*

If a leadership development programme was aiming to effect potentially transformative learning through fostering personal development in managers then it would be important to consider the climate that was needed to facilitate this personal challenge. The opportunities afforded in the coaching programme to facilitate transformative learning could be considerable. The environment required to challenge established learning in the managers needed be considered carefully in the design of the programme. The literature (Coffield 2007; Coffield et al. 2008; Coffield 2008; Edward et al. 2007) showed that breaking the traditional management mould and encouraging managers to think radically and challenge all their previous conceptions could be done.

### 3.7 Agency

As the policy context in chapter 2 showed, the strength of influence of government drivers and targets on the sector had increased significantly since incorporation in 1993. The literature on governmentality and performativity showed the potential influence of policy on individuals and cultures but also suggested an understanding of these influences could in fact set managers *free* to reframe their understanding and actions. The theory of agency could then provide a critical lens through which to view any growth in personal confidence, and change in organisational creativity and culture and whether the managers were 'set free' to challenge the habits of college management in the case study.

In Calhoun's (2002) dictionary of social sciences the definition of agency was related to the legal concept of principal and agent where the agent was given authority to act autonomously on behalf of the principal. A simple, more situated definition of agency was provided by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) as:

*"the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations"* (1998, p.971).

Agency in education followed on from Kant's concept of enlightenment (2013 [1803]). A propensity and vocation for free thinking was the basis of autonomous action and it was suggested this could only be brought about through education (Kant 2013). Evans (2002) identified 12 factors of importance in the analysis of bounded agency including confidence, belief that opportunities are open to all, belief that own weaknesses matter, belief in planning not chance and active career seeking (Evans 2002, p.255). Cote and Levines' (2002) construct also considered agency as residing in tangible personal assets such as memberships of organisations, and intangible personal assets such as internal locus of control and a sense of purpose in life (Cote and Levine 2002, p.143-149). Commentators varied in how they defined agency with the distinction being mainly how much the *individual* or the *context* influenced the agentic orientation of parties in situations. Three different types of agency commonly highlighted in the literature: individual, ecological and relational are discussed below.

Levine (2005) described agency very much as a characteristic of the *individual* developing five constructs: self, self-concept, social identity, personal identity and ego identity. Bynner et al. (2001) also described personal agency as comprised of an individual's disposition and resources: social, cultural, human capital (Bynner et al. 2001, p.23). Bourdieu and Giddens developed their ideas of individual agency around pragmatism, with the notion of 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977; 1990) and 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984; 1990; 1991). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) described their three key aspects of individual agency as the chordal triad. Emirbayer and Mische described the first element of individual agency as the iterational element:

*“the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.971).*

They suggested that increased individual agency was often due to the opportunity to be more 'reflective' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.973). Following on from the iterational element Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) second proposition of projectivity encompassed:

*“the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors hopes, fears, and desires for the future” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.971).*

This was similar to Schutz's (1967) concept of the project as a completed *act to be*. Thirdly the changing context in which the programme was embedded provided opportunities for the coaching to challenge the 'practical evaluative' capacity of the managers to:

*“make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently unfolding situations” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 971).*

This concept was similar to Dewey's (1922) theory of inquiry which promoted three dominant 'tones' (problematisation, decision and execution) and two secondary tones (characterisation of a situation against the past experiences and deliberation over possible trajectories of action). Emirbayer and Mische suggested the importance of 'the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations' (1998 p.971). According to Biesta and Tedder (2007):

*"the achievement of agency is inextricably linked with the ways in which people are 'in control' of their responses. Given the triadic nature of agency this means that the achievement of agency is influenced by the ways in which actors can re-organise the composition of their agentic orientations" (2007 p.138).*

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also suggested however, that human agency could be seen as a more complicated relationship where *context* is crucial:

*"the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments - the temporal relational contexts for action - which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (1998, p.970).*

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) built on the work of Alexander (1988; 1992) and other pragmatic sociologists (Dewey 1922; Mead 1934) and phenomenology (Schutz 1967) defining a type of *ecological* agency. The focus of ecological agency here, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), was the complex interrelationship between individuals, their contexts, their own habits and their understanding of their own capacity to reshape these factors. Biesta and Tedder (2007) described their version of ecological agency suggesting that:

*"agency should be understood as something that has to be achieved in and through engagement with particular temporal-relational contexts-for-action. Agency, in other words is not something that people have; it is something that people do" (2007 p.136).*

This type of agency was described as ecological in that "it focuses on the ways in which agency is achieved in transaction with a particular context-for-action, within a particular 'ecology'" (Biesta and Tedder 2007 p.137). Biesta and Tedder (2007) highlighted that:

“this concept of agency highlights that actors always act *by means* of an environment rather than simply in an environment. To think of agency as an achievement makes it possible to understand why an individual can achieve agency in one situation but not in another” (Biesta and Tedder 2007 p.137).

Biesta and Tedder (2006) also differed from Emirbayer and Mische’s view of ecological agency in that they suggested the importance of the context *engaging* with individuals rather than the other way round:

*“In our discussion of Emirbayer’s and Mische’s understanding of agency we mentioned that one of the shortcomings of their analysis is that they pay far more attention to the different ways in which individual actors engage with temporal relational contexts than with understanding how such contexts ‘engage’ with actors” (Biesta and Tedder 2006, p. 22).*

According to Bevir (1999):

*“the subject is a function of regimes of power/knowledge. The claim seems to be valid as the composed one that all agency is influenced by its social context: the subject is not autonomous” (Bevir 1999, p2).*

Fuchs (2001) also suggested that there was an over socialised, macro view of agency in social research, often ignoring the local or specific – or concentrating too much on individualised notions of agency. Agency was also described by Archer (2000a) as autonomy and *causal efficacy*. Archer criticised what she saw as the oversocialised view of someone who is ‘shaped and moulded by his social context’ (Archer 2000b, p.11). Some commentators also questioned how institutional change was possible if actors’ intentions, actions and rationality are conditioned by the institutions they wish to change (Holm 1995; Seo and Creed 2002). Some also reaffirmed the ability of actors to escape the determining power of institutions (DiMaggio 1988; Rao 1998; Beckert 1999; Carney and Gedajlovic 2002). Arendt (1958, 1977) also suggested that we cannot act in isolation, in order to act others need to respond to those actions.

The impact of the shift in policy and funding in FE outlined in chapter 2 also meant that the participants were experiencing a completely new and challenging education environment. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) described how agency could increase in times of significant change:

*“during periods of upheaval, other forms of agentic activity may come into play. While certain sets of actors might resist change and holds tightly to past routines (such as local or national traditions) in an attempt to ward off uncertainty, others may be more likely to engage in projective activity (as expressed in ideologies and utopias) as they seek to imagine alternative futures for problematic present” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1006).*

The unsettled times in which the case study college was operating could contribute to the opportunity for the increased individual and ecological agency of the managers.

Edwards et al.'s (2010) study focused on the *relational* agency aspects of the work in schools and how practitioners felt this needed to develop to respond to the need to prevent social exclusion. They concluded that:

*“Relational agency, which we would argue is a prerequisite for inter-professional work, demands more. It is premised on: (a) informed interpretations of, for example, a child’s trajectory as an object of activity; and (b) the capacity to make those interpretations explicit....Relational agency requires that practitioners are not only able to recognise and draw on the expertise that is distributed across local systems, but also to contribute to it” (Edwards et al. 2010, p.41).*

Actors who are located in more complex relational settings must correspondingly learn to take a wider variety of factors into account (Coser 1975). The extent to which the relational agency of the participants could be developed through the leadership development programme could be considered. The literature on relational agency was the least developed with only a handful of studies considering this aspect. An interesting question for the research would be to what extent did the participants’ relational agency increase developing their collective knowledge from each other and how did the

cultural aspects of the college and the contradictions in policy, culture and strategy affect the actions and responses of the managers?

### **3.8 The Role of Learning in Achieving Agency**

According to Biesta and Tedder (2007):

*“the achievement of agency is inextricably linked with the ways in which people are ‘in control’ of their responses. Given the triadic nature of agency this means that the achievement of agency is influenced by the ways in which actors can re-organise the composition of their agentic orientations”* (Biesta and Tedder 2007, p.138).

Emibayer and Mische also suggested the importance of:

*“the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations”* (Emibayer and Mische 1998, p.971).

The coaching in the case study college, could therefore offer the opportunity for the college managers to reconstruct their agentic orientations. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggested that:

*“By subjecting [our] own agentic orientations to imaginative recomposition and critical judgement actors can loosen themselves from past patterns of interaction and reframe their relationships to existing constraints”* (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1010).

In the ‘Learning Lives’ project (Biesta and Tedder 2006) the key question was ‘how different forms, practices and processes of learning influence the capacity of individuals to give direction to their lives’ (2006, p.6). Biesta and Tedder argued that:

*“learning about the particular composition of one’s agentic orientations and how they play out in one’s life can play an important role in the achievement of agency”* (Biesta and Tedder 2007, p.133).

It was reasonable to translate this concept into the workplace where the structure and norms previously surrounding the FE manager had been stripped away over time leaving them facing a much more volatile and constantly changing set of circumstances and drivers. The coaching programme was designed to focus on the individual with the aim of making managers more creative and able to respond to the new changing environment. Emibayer and Mische argued that in order to change agentic orientations then a learning process requires ‘imaginative distancing and communicative evaluation’ (1998, p.971). Biesta and Tedder also suggested the learning requires that:

“in some way or form, we distance ourselves from our agentic orientations so as to make them an object of attention, reflection, evaluation and imagination” (2007 p.138).

The role of learning here can then offer the opportunity if they are ‘enabled to reconstruct their agentic orientations’ (Biesta and Tedder 2007 p.138). It would be interesting to consider the extent to which the agency of those individuals was increased *or not* from the learning through the leadership coaching.

### **3.9 Coaching**

#### ***3.9.1 The Emergence of Coaching as Professional Development***

Coaching as a concept started in sports and managerial performance and grew to a much wider application in leadership and professional development. Gallwey in *‘The Inner Game of Tennis’* in 1974 focussed on a more psychological approach to coaching the game and later Whitmore (2002; 2009) developed the GROW model (goal, reality, options, wrap-up) from Gallwey’s original thinking and this model is still being used widely today. Czigan (2008) however highlighted that the paradigm of sports coaching more closely resembled instruction in techniques than coaching, thus the analogy could break down and could have been more detrimental than helpful in explaining the process.

In terms of leadership development there was a range of literature chronicling the development of coaching as a key professional development model (Goldsmith et al. 2000; Clutterbuck 2001; West and Milan 2001 and Rhodes et al. 2004). Coaching in leadership, according to West and Milan (2001), was about facilitating the client's enhanced performance. Coaching came into use in the educational world in the early 1980s. Joyce and Showers (1982) were credited generally as the first researchers to use it in education. Their peer coaching model focussed on pairs of teachers coaching each other. McGatha (2008) highlighted three reports describing the state of school-based coaching in the United States (Poglinco and Bach 2004). Interestingly these reports agreed that coaching seemed to have great potential for improving student achievement however, they acknowledged the lack of research based evidence supporting this. Simkins et al. (2006) highlighted that coaching had emerged more recently for use in teacher development (*DfES 2005 National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching*) and as part of the National College for School leadership. Simkins et al. (2006) highlighted that in education in England mentoring had been particularly promoted in education policy, with mentoring forming a core element in teacher training and head teacher development.

Whilst the research into leadership coaching in the school sector was growing there was very little published research into the use of coaching in FE. Executive coaching was beginning to be used on programmes such as the principals' qualifying programme run by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (superseded by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service) but no focus had been placed on reviewing the coaching element of the programme. This research provided a case study analysis of leadership coaching in an FE college which would add to the knowledge in the sector on new developments in continuing professional development.

### **3.9.2 Defining Coaching**

There was no one clear acknowledged definition of coaching in the literature. Hamlin et al. (2008 p.292) presented a useful summary of definitions of coaching shown in Appendix C. Day et al. (2008) highlighted the connections coaching had with psychotherapy including:

*“using client-centred, collaborative partnerships and behavioural change through trying to understand how coaches’ cognitive and emotional reactions impacted on their effectiveness’ (Day et al.2008, p.207).*

Simkins et al. (2006) suggested that coaching was a narrower concept than mentoring, focusing on the improvement of skills and performance in relation to job-specific tasks rather than on broader aspects of personal, professional and career development. Coaching was construed by Whitmore (2002) as unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. Coaching was suggested to focus more on facilitating the performance and development of another (Downey 2001; Dubrin 2005) whereas mentoring embraced broader counselling and support. Joyce and Showers (1995) critically highlighted three key purposes of coaching which was of greater guidance than the variety of definitions:

*“The first is to build communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft...second coaching develops a shared language and set of common understandings necessary for the collegial study of new knowledge and skills...third, coaching provides a structure for the follow up to training that is essential for acquiring new teaching skills and strategies” (Joyce and Showers 1995, p.44).*

It was interesting to note the range of definitions provided by leading writers with some element of commonality focused on individual professional growth but with equally differing views on the directed or non directed nature of the development.

### **3.9.3 Coaching as a driver for professional learning**

In the last decade theory and research have looked into the possible effectiveness of coaching as a driver for professional learning (Kampa-Kokesch 2002; Feldman and Lankau 2005; De Haan 2008; Day et al. 2008 p.207). Prior to this Costa and Garmston (1994) and Joyce and Showers (1995) suggested that coaching was *the* most effective form of continuing professional development. Zwart et al. (2007) highlighted that a considerable amount of literature on peer coaching suggested that the professional development of

teachers could be improved through experimentation, observation, reflection, the exchange of professional ideas, and shared problem solving. Joyce and Showers (2002) suggested that:

*“The school is the organisational unit where curricula and instructional changes take place, and the challenge is for them to become self-renewing organisations where the faculties continually seek to improve the educational environment” (Joyce and Showers 2002, p.69).*

They found from their research that:

*“a large and dramatic increase in transfer of training occurs when coaching is added to an initial training experience comprised of theory explanation, demonstrations, and practice” (Joyce and Showers 2002, p.77).*

Joyce and Showers suggested from their research that effective training systems developed a learning to learn aptitude and that:

*“individuals learn more efficiently over the long term by developing the metacognitions that enable self-teaching in settings where essential training elements are missing” (Joyce and Showers 2002, p.77).*

Joyce and Showers (1982) also explored the impact of coaching on long-term implementation, following initial training on new content. These studies found that the long term support of coaching resulted in much greater classroom implementation of new ideas. From their 1980s studies Joyce and Showers concluded that coaching contributed to the transfer of training in five ways:

1. coached teachers and principals generally practiced new strategies more frequently and developed greater skill in the actual moves of a new teaching strategy than did uncoached educators
2. coached teachers used their newly learned strategies more appropriately than uncoached teachers in terms of their own instructional objectives
3. coached teachers exhibited greater long term retention of knowledge about and skill with strategies in which they had been coached

4. coached teachers were much more likely than uncoached teachers to explain new models of teaching to their students
5. coached teachers exhibited clearer cognitions with regard to the purposes and uses of the new strategies (coupled with self awareness this is a key to transformational learning).

Veenman et al. (1998) highlighted the importance of feedback to teachers in their professional development stating that:

*“coaching can help teachers improve their instructional effectiveness by providing them with feedback on their functioning and stimulating them to become more reflective” (Veenman et al. 1998, p.139).*

Zwart et al. (2007) concluded that:

*“experimentation and the observation of a lesson of a colleague are overlooked as valuable learning opportunities” (Zwart et al. 2007, p,167).*

The literature suggests that peer coaching could improve the professional development of teachers through experimentation, observation, reflection and the exchange of professional ideas (Ackland 1991; Gottesman 2000; Joyce and Showers 2002; Robbins 1991). Zwart et al. (2008) in their research highlighted that a key outcome of peer coaching was that:

*“interaction with the dyad partner or colleagues in the form of asking and receiving help, advice or feedback, but also consultation in a coaching conference to provide teachers with greater self confidence, increased capabilities ...and an increased sense of belonging” (Zwart et al. 2008, p.997).*

This greater self confidence and increased capability found by Zwart suggested an increase in agency discussed earlier.

### **3.9.4 Key Factors in Implementing Coaching**

Coaching should not be considered in isolation from the context in which it takes place (Simkins et al. 2006). The success or failure of coaching can depend on a number of contextual factors (Hobson 2012). Hobson (2012) acknowledged the similarities between coaching and mentoring and proposed the five conditions suggested for effective coaching/mentoring as:

1. Mentees' openness to being mentored;
2. Contextual support for mentoring;
3. Mentor selection and pairing;
4. Mentoring strategies employed; and
5. Mentor preparation. (Hobson 2012 p.62)

Peer coaching has been shown to expand the opportunities for collegial learning cultures and cooperative relationships in the school environment (Hobson 2012; Williams 2006; Joyce and Showers 1995). Williams (2006) highlighted that the structured approach of peer coaching allowed teachers to overcome the barriers to letting another adult in with them in the classroom. He highlighted Joyce and Showers' (1995) key point that:

*“Giving up isolation is probably the area that causes the greatest concern in the process of developing a collaborative school...studying teaching together is more aggravating than deciding how to teach one's own classes with one's best judgement unfettered” (Joyce and Showers 1995, p.39).*

Simkins et al. (2006) and Hobson (2012) found from their research that *time* was a key factor in facilitating a good coaching process. They highlighted common themes that in many cases work pressures made the coaching difficult. Levinson (1974) also highlighted lack of time as the first reason why coaching fell short.

In their research Li and Chan (2007) highlighted some key cultural factors that organisations should consider when planning coaching. Giving freedom to coaches and teachers to develop their own coaching model was also a key to success – research highlighted that engaging staff buy-in was essential and this

depended on whether the coaches and teachers were given the autonomy to develop their own coaching system relatively free from excessive emphasis on externally determined goals (Li and Chan 2007; Hobson 2012; Lofthouse and Leat 2013). Lofthouse and Leat (2013) argued that tensions tended to arise if senior leaders intervened in the process. The importance in the project of the support of the head and the project co-ordinator through the handover of the power to the coaches and the teacher participants was also crucial.

The individual nature of coaching compared to other forms of continuing professional development was also highlighted as a key strength. Of particular interest was Hobson's (2012) suggestion that:

*“While a number of mentoring strategies have been shown to be effective across different contexts, it is clear that, like teaching, mentoring is most successful where it is personalised and adapted to the needs of the individual mentee” (2012, p.67).*

Another interesting point was the suggestion that mentoring or coaching should support the mentee's development of 'learnacy' (Hobson and Malderez 2013):

*“that is, their ability and willingness to manage their on-going learning from their own and others' experiences of teaching, and continue to engage in this 'alone', thus avoiding the development of a form of 'learned helplessness' that can result from over-reliance on another, and a corresponding lack of agency” (Hobson and Malderez 2013, p.91)*

This concept of 'learnacy' builds on the ideas of agency outlined earlier in the chapter, in particular focusing on how *learning* can be the key to helping individuals develop their individual agency.

### **3.9.5 The Importance of Developing Trust and Interpersonal Relationships**

Commentators highlighted that a key step in establishing any coaching relationship was the formation of a strong interpersonal relationship and a feeling of trust between coach and coachee (Rogers 1957; West-Burnham and

O'Sullivan 1998; Kemp 2008; Hobson 2012; Hobson and Malderez 2013).

Hobson (2012) suggested the key attributes that a mentor should have were:

*“they should be trustworthy, approachable, supportive, empathetic, positive, non-judgemental and good listeners” (2012, p.63).*

Kemp (2008) also highlighted that for some coaching relationships, this quality within the coaching alliance could only occur after several meetings and conversations. Li and Chan's (2007) research echoed Rhodes and Beneicke (2003) suggesting that coaching was:

*“a complex human relationship building process that required both the coach and the coached to enter into genuine ongoing dialogue of their beliefs in language learning and teaching as well as to develop an awareness of the individual teacher's teaching competence, the teaching contexts and the constraints that the coached are in.” (Li and Chan 2007, p.343).*

Li and Chan (2007) and Hobson and Malderez (2013) highlighted the crucial importance of providing non-judgemental feedback – insensitive and judgemental feedback on performance could adversely affect teachers' confidence, damage relationships and encourage teachers to have negative views on their own abilities.

The manager as coach also posed additional problems in organisations (Hobson et.al 2012; Oberski et al. 1999; Lofthouse and Leat 2013) as he/she was expected to be a coach of their people whilst also evaluating their performance in appraisal etc.:

*“this is an unhappy conjunction at best and militates against the establishment of effective coaching relationships based on partnership, trust, openness and honesty” (Alexander, in West and Milan Ed. 2001, p.150).*

The importance of a non managerial context for coaching should not be overlooked. Hobson (2012) suggested that:

*“Mentoring will tend to be more effective where it is carried out in contexts relatively free from excessive emphases on externally determined goals and agendas” (Hobson 2012, p.64)”*

Hobson (2012) suggested that where the external mentor was a supporter rather than an assessor this encouraged trainees to be more open about their needs. Lofthouse and Leat (2013) summarised the importance of trust and power in the coaching relationship:

*“Trust, in theory, should allow people to be more honest about themselves and their practice and be prepared to engage in dialogue. It should encourage participants to be less defensive, as one has positive expectations of the intentions and character of the other. In coaching contexts how partnerships negotiate around issues of power and accountability is very telling, as it is important for power to be neutralised as far as possible” (Lofthouse and Leat 2013, p. 15).*

### **3.9.6 Particular aspects of leadership coaching characteristics**

In their review of executive coaching Feldman and Lankau (2005) suggested that coaching had moved from correcting deficiencies of managers to facilitating learning. Kets de Vries (2005) suggested that:

*“coaching and commitment cultures had replaced command, control and compartmentalisation” (Kets de Vries 2005, p.62).*

West and Milan (2001) believed that one of the main drivers for the evolution of coaching in leadership was that it provided a context for individuals to explore their development needs as leaders. West and Milan suggested that in leadership coaching:

*“essentially the coach is trying to help the client shake the kaleidoscope of his or her perception and mindset and act on the new picture that emerges” (West and Milan 2001, p.80).*

Coaching was clearly distinguished from therapy in the literature (Blukert 2005; Bobkin 2002; Eaton and Johnson 2001; Whitworth et al. 1998). Coaches and organisations needed however, to consider the ethics and ethical behaviour

required for coaching – the boundaries and procedures for referral (Whitworth et al. 1998). There was also the negative impression that some coachees had, that being assigned a coach was for the purpose of improving poor performance (Eaton and Johnson 2001). This negative attitude was shown to potentially hinder progress of a coachee (Goldberg 2005). Greenfield and Hengen (2004) also highlighted the key importance of confidentiality in leadership coaching:

*“the right of an individual not to have those communications imparted in confidence revealed to third parties” (Greenfield and Hengen 2004, p.9).*

Table 3.2 below shows my summary of the key leadership coaching outcomes that were highlighted in the literature.

<b>Literature</b>	<b>Coaching Outcome</b>
Gyllensten and Palmer 2007; Grant et al. 2002	Indirectly reduce the experience of stress. Researchers have found that some people who spend a large amount of time reflecting on their personal thoughts and feelings do not always move on to a constructive problem solving approach
Conway 2000; Kampa-Kokesch 2002; Wang & Wentling 2001	Improved leadership skills. Increased ratings from others on charismatic behaviour, impact on followers, better relationship handling
Grant 2003	Improved goal attainment. Change motivation and concreteness of the goals were the best predictors of firm behaviour effects
Maethner et al. 2005	Behaviour Change
Smither et al.2005; Libri and Kemp 2006	Improved direct report and supervisor ratings of performance. Coaching can lead to improvements in performance and self perception
Wang and Wentling 2001; Evers et al. 2002	Increased the transfer of training. Coaching can lead to the transfer of coaching skills to the person being coached. Research found increased self efficacy in relation to setting own goals and acting in a more balanced way

**Table 3.2 Leadership Coaching Outcomes and Issues**

Although coaching was a relatively new concept in education and leadership development the literature showed many positive outcomes for individuals and organisations. It was clear from the literature that *well planned* coaching in a *supportive culture*, a *context of trust* and with well developed *personal relationships* could have a significant impact on the learning of the coachee.

### 3.10 Conclusions

The review of the literature on leadership and management in education posed significant questions for the research study. The impact of change on the sector was shown in the literature as having a mostly negative effect on individuals and colleges. The literature showed that managers were ill prepared for the new era of FE as their backgrounds, values and experience meant they were uncomfortable in dealing with fast moving challenging scenarios removed from the academic student experience. The previous experience of staff led to a negative perception of change with a fundamental lack of trust in change initiatives and the managers leading them. The literature showed that individual resistance to change also sat in a broader *cultural* resistance to change. Leaders and managers who *understood* the culture in which they were embedded were more likely to break down 'the way we do things around here'. Some commentators however, cautioned that not all change is good and resistance to change could in fact be sensible and logical.

It was clear from the literature that the policy drivers for change in the FE sector (highlighted in chapter 2) were substantial and contradictory. Post incorporation the wave of policy initiatives, funding reviews and quality standards had led to a fundamental change in the pressures on managers in colleges. The theories of governmentality and performativity suggested the strength of power and influence of policy on culture posed significant challenges for those individuals or organisations who wanted challenge the norm. Performativity was described as a state of being where protagonists respond to targets and indicators but often in a way that produces uncertainties about how we should organise ourselves within our work. The performativity discourse was described as seductive (McWilliam et al. 1999), because there was a desire to be passionate about excellence and achieving peak performance (Ball, 2000). A key point however was that the dehumanising of the performativity discourse has resulted in the 'emptying out' of relationships Lasch and Urry (1994).

The dangers of governmentality and performativity on the culture of FE should not be underestimated and therefore a new type of learning is needed to break those habits and influences. The literature on transformative learning

suggested examples of where fundamental shifts in thinking could be achieved and could therefore challenge deep rooted habits, routines and principles. Commentators suggested that individuals can become conscious of the unconscious, becoming aware of aspects of themselves of which they were not conscious. Transformative learning develops through discussion and exploration of concepts relating to individuals' own frames of reference (agency) and therefore coaching could facilitate this type of sea change in managers however the environment needed to be right to foster this more fundamental type of development.

In order to develop transformative learning the literature suggested the key was a growth in personal confidence. The literature on agency suggested that increased personal confidence (individual agency) was often due to the opportunity to be more 'reflective' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

Commentators suggested the importance of the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also suggested however that human agency could be seen as a more complicated relationship where *context* is crucial. The focus of ecological agency here was the complex interrelationship between individuals, their contexts, their own habits and their understanding of their own capacity to reshape these factors. According to Bevir (1999):

*"the subject is a function of regimes of power/knowledge. The claim seems to be valid as the composed one that all agency is influenced by its social context: the subject is not autonomous" (Bevir 1999, p2).*

The literature suggests that a coaching programme may be likely to increase the agency in the college and therefore increase the chances of transformative learning. The research to date showed the positive impact well planned and implemented coaching could have on education and leadership performance. Coaching however was not without challenges, the willingness of participants to engage fully in the coaching model, the cultural climate in which the coaching was based and the need for time for coaching and trust in the coach are key factors that need to be considered in the research. The study will need to consider how the performative culture in the college could put at risk the trust

and relationships needed for effective coaching which could in turn minimise the potential for opportunities for transformative learning. The literature strongly suggested the case context was embedded in a powerful mix of contradictory forces. The analysis would therefore need to consider the contradictions facing the college managers and consider the findings in this complex and contradictory context.

## Chapter 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapters two and three discussed the context for the case study: the policy and the academic literature which helped shape the research project. My particular research interest was the perceptions and responses of managers to leadership coaching. The research questions for the study therefore were:

- What were the consequences of introducing a leadership and management programme involving developmental coaching in an FE college?
  1. Why was the leadership coaching programme introduced in the college?
  2. How did participants respond to the group development day and early coaching?
  3. How did participants respond to the coaching experience over a two year period?
  4. How did the coaching programme shape the participants views of leadership?

The aim of the project was to explore the impact of a particular type of coaching in one college as a means to support the leadership development of the middle managers. This chapter focuses on the research process I used to gather and analyse the data for the study.

## 4.2 Considering the 'Big' Questions

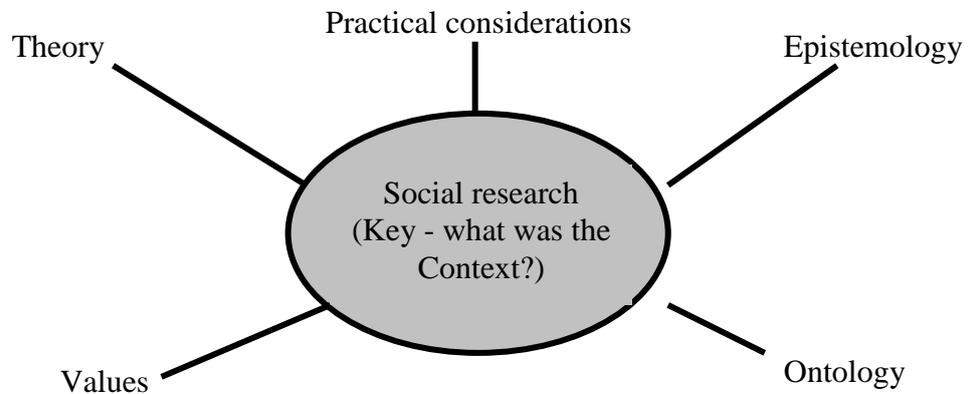
Before embarking on a detailed review of the research design and approaches essential to my investigation, it was imperative to consider some of the big questions posed to me as the researcher. The first of which was - what did I mean by educational research and how would I approach my study? Bassey (1999) defined research as:

*“systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom” (Bassey 1999, p.38).*

This definition, however felt quite passive and did not focus on the challenges facing me as a researcher when first considering design and methods. Cohen et al. (2007) warned that research is not as simple as we think. Adopting a planned approach, however could mitigate some of the difficulties a researcher can face:

*“To change the ‘rules of the game’ in midstream once the research has commenced is a sure recipe for problems. The terms of the research and the mechanism of its operation must be ironed out in advance if it is to be credible, legitimate and practicable. Once they have been decided upon, the researcher is in a very positive position to undertake the research” (Cohen et al. 2007, p.78).*

In planning the research design I considered Bryman's (2008) 'influences on social research' (figure 4.1) and this helped me to consider the key factors that needed to be considered before embarking on research.



**Figure 4.1 Influences on social research (Bryman 2008, p.24)**

From the outset in planning my research it was important to recognise, acknowledge and consider the above influences. It was crucial therefore to reflect on the educational phenomenon that I was attempting to study critically: What was the context of the social research? What did my history and managerial stance bring to my research – how much of a blank canvas was I bringing to my research? How did I determine my attitudes and my activities to ensure my research was critical, self-critical and added to the knowledge in the field?

### **4.3 Epistemology and Ontology**

As a starting position I considered my own background, values and educational beliefs (Cohen et al. 2007). In particular I spent time analysing my epistemological and ontological position as this would shape the design and methods I used in the research. Punch (2009) summed up that methods of inquiry are:

*“based on assumptions - assumptions about the nature of reality being studied, assumptions about what constitutes knowledge of that reality,*

*and assumptions about what therefore are appropriate ways (or methods) of building knowledge of that reality” (Punch 2009, p.15).*

These assumptions concerned the very bases of my knowledge – its nature and forms, how it could be acquired, and how it was communicated to other human beings. The two assumptions that I focused on initially were positivism and interpretivism. Both positivism and interpretivism have their champions and their critics, but what was key for me in planning my research was to immerse myself in these epistemological conundrums and to determine my stance and my rationale for it. It was important to note, however that the distinctions between the paradigms were not as simple as I would have liked, as Burton et al. (2008) warned:

*“Although certain research approaches and methods tend to reside in either the positivistic or the interpretive paradigm, there is overlap in the way in which methods are used within specific paradigms. Indeed, a mixed methodology is often adopted, combining qualitative or quantitative data” (Burton et al. 2008, p.61).*

Their table on developing a research stance (Burton et al. 2008, p.61) provided a helpful series of questions and an outline of competing research paradigms which allowed me to consider my own viewpoint. I used the questions as a framework to test my own views and beliefs and to challenge own perceptions of education.

After my initial readings I felt I associated more towards the constructivist, interpretivist researcher. My natural leanings were towards the richness of the interpretivist study particularly in attempting to dig deep into the thoughts and perceptions of developmental needs of the managers in the college. This impacted on the strategy and methods I used in my research. Interpretivist evidence was the key to establishing how the coaching programme was received by the participants and how they felt as the programme progressed. This type of evidence could only be gathered through looking at the in depth thoughts and feelings of participants. This would provide good evidence for the study as it would establish why participants felt as they did, and how they felt

about the programme. My research design therefore exhibited the characteristics of interpretivist/constructivist research in that it:

- Focused on natural settings recognising that social life is complex in its range and variability with many layers of meaning (Seeley 1966; Mac an Ghail 1989; Berger 1966; Blumer 1976). Methodologically a focus on natural settings required me to keep an openness of mind, not prejudging the matter nor settling for first or even second appearances.
- Had an interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings (Wax 1971). The aims of the research were to explore the perspectives of the managers on the coaching.
- Used inductive analysis and grounded theory as an influence (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Hargreaves 1967; Lacey 1970). In my research design and methods I aimed to come to the project with an open mind rather than starting with a hypothesis.

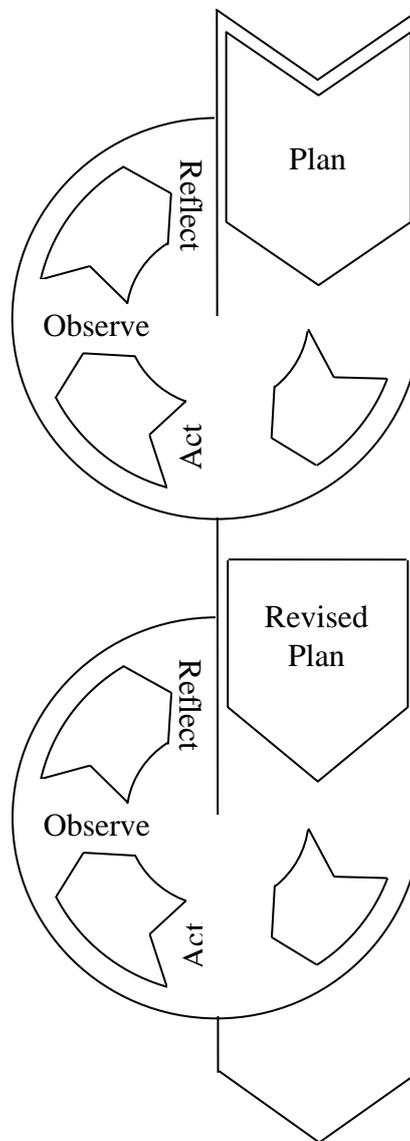
I naturally leant towards the position that the reality of the participants was multi-dimensional and shaped by the policy context in which they were operating. A key factor for me therefore in designing the research was my role as participant and manager then later as external researcher. The biggest challenge in the research design was how to mitigate my influence as an insider at the start of the programme then as an outsider as the programme and the research developed. The power relationship between me and the participants needed to be acknowledged and attempts made in the research design to mitigate the influence my own stance may have had over the participants' views. Thinking in this way meant I leant towards an interpretive stance in my data collection methods seeking deeper knowledge from the participants.

Another key aspect for me was that I needed to acknowledge that, in this research, I was not seeking to prove or disprove a hypothesis or provide extensive generalisations. Instead I was seeking to provide an insight into how one particular leadership programme shaped the views, attitudes and actions of middle managers in an FE college. In this research the knowledge was co-constructed between the researcher and the participants. In this case my

subjectivity and bias as the researcher and as a college manager needed to be acknowledged in the research. The influence of the policy context was key to the sector and the college and was therefore essential to the research. I developed a separate policy context chapter (Chapter 2) to reflect on the main policy drivers affecting the college. I also needed to acknowledge in the literature review that the theories of leadership and educational management were constructed from emergent theories and in themselves are subjective.

#### **4.4 Research Design**

Moving on from my commitment to constructivism and interpretivist approaches a range of potential research designs were considered. An action research model seemed, at first, to be a simple fit with my research context as I was a practitioner carrying out research in my own college. I looked at a variety of models of action research from which I started with the action research spiral (based on Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, p.14) as a basic model on which to base my research (figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2 The 'action research spiral' (based on Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, p.14)**

As my research planning progressed, however, I started to encounter the disadvantages of action research. Action research is an approach which is appropriate when 'specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system' (Cohen and Manion 1994, p.194). In addition, in action research the involvement of the practitioner can limit the scope and scale of the research and

my role as action researcher could make it difficult to be detached or impartial in my approach to the research (Denscombe 2007). Action research also focuses on the individual researcher and activity rather than the object of interest. The college here was not just the backdrop to the research it was in fact the object of interest (Bryman 2008). As I also moved out of the college into a new role elsewhere the concept of being central to the research phenomenon did not fit with my circumstances and further confused the model. In fact, as I developed the model further, I found myself trying to fit the research to the model, rather than the other way round.

In order to revisit different research designs I used Yin's table of relevant situations for research methods (2009) (table 4.1). The table provided a useful comparison of research designs that helped me to establish why the case study design was better suited to my research than action research. Yin highlighted three research conditions and showed how each was related to the five major research methods: experiments, surveys, archival analyses, histories and case studies in table 4.1 below.

Method	1	2	3
	Form of research question	Requires control of behavioural events?	Focuses on contemporary events?
<b>Experiment (Action Research)</b> <i>It was interesting that Yin characterised action research as an 'experiment' which could be disputed.</i>	<b>How, why?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Survey</b>	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes
<b>Archival analysis</b>	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/no
<b>History</b>	How, why?	No	No
<b>Case study</b>	<b>How, why?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**Table 4.1 Relevant situations for different research methods (Yin 2009, page 8 source: COSMOS Corporation)**

The useful difference for me between action research and the case study in Yin's table was that in action research a condition of the design was that it required control of behavioural events. A case study allowed and recognised there was no such control. The case study method recognised that the

research looks at the how and why, focusing on contemporary events but without any intervention by the researcher – it looked at the events as they unfolded rather than controlling the behavioural event. The emphasis of a case, in fact, tended to be upon an intensive examination of the setting (Bryman 2008).

Case studies are often used as a research method in the social science disciplines – psychology (e.g. Campbell 1975), sociology (e.g. Hamel 1992; Platt 1992; Ragin and Becker 1992), political science (e.g. George and Bennett 2004; Gerring 2004), and education (Yin 2006; Yin and Davis 2006). Bassey (2007) highlighted that:

*“we need case studies not simply of the story-telling or picture drawing kind, but theory-seeking/theory-testing studies which try to tease out why a situation is good, bad or mediocre”* (Bassey 2007 p.154).

The literature on case studies warned that many are drawn to the method because they believe it is easy (Yin 2009) and having already been complacent in my approach to considering action research I was particularly alert to this pitfall. In fact the demands of the case study were far greater because the data collection procedures were not routine (Yin 2009). Guidance on collecting data for case studies originally focussed on three areas: fieldwork (Murphy 1980; Wax 1971), field research (Bouchard 1976; Schatzman and Strauss 1973) and social science methods (Kidder and Judd 1986; Webb et al. 1981). All agreed that the key to gathering good case study evidence was to follow some strong justifiable principles. Yin’s guiding principles (2009 p.101) provided a good starting point:

1. Use multiple, not just single sources of evidence
2. Create a case study database
3. Maintain a chain of evidence

The key strength of the case study approach was that it allowed me to use a range of sources, a variety of types of data and a number of research methods as part of the investigation (Bryman 2008; Bogdan and Biglan 2003). Using this design I could focus on one or a few instances allowing me to deal with the

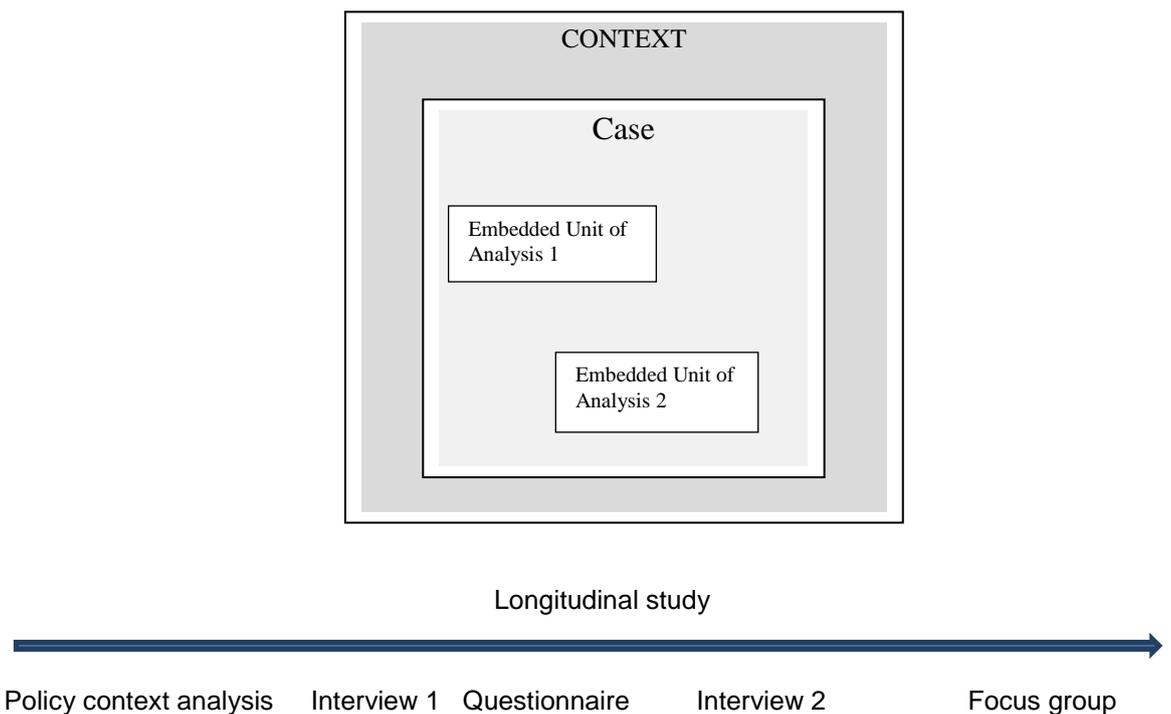
subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations. Using Denscombe's (2007) guidance the research design was therefore shaped to emphasise:

- the depth of study rather than breadth of study (detailed analysis of one coaching programme on a set of managers in one college)
- the particular rather than the general (the impact of coaching for leadership development)
- the relationships and processes rather than outcomes and end products (how the coaching shaped the relationships of managers to each other and the college, how the coaching reshaped the management processes in the college)
- a holistic view rather than isolated factors (the effect of the coaching programme on the college managers overall)
- natural settings rather than artificial situations (analysis of the coaching programme from the start to the end without any influence on the planning, design or implementation)
- multiple sources rather than one research method (interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, documentary analysis).

The design however had the potential for many pitfalls due to the range of options open to me and my main challenge was to provide a structure and rationale to the design. The case study research here had an all encompassing method – covering design, data collection techniques and approaches to data analysis (Stoecker 1991). In considering the design of the case study I needed to deal with four issues– what questions to study, what data were relevant, what data to collect and how to analyse the results (Yin 2009; Philiber et al. 1980). A further difficulty was identifying what the unit of analysis was – i.e. what the case was (Ragin and Becker 1992, Platt 1992).

The case study aimed to focus on one instance of a particular phenomenon (the leadership development programme) with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance (Denscombe 2007). A key distinction in designing case studies is between single and multiple-case designs (Yin 2009) and it was

important to decide on the design before starting to collect data. The units of analysis were an important part of the research design of the case study as was the longitudinal element (Yin 2009). The case study approach allowed me to focus on the leadership development programme in the college setting, in real time, as the managers were faced with new and conflicting demands. The aim of my research was, through a longitudinal study, to find out what was successful in the coaching programme and what did not work and why, rather than focusing solely on individual case stories. The research design needed to bring the participants together to gain a wider reflection on issues and findings in order to provide some theories, whilst also recognising the dangers of over generalisation of the findings. With this in mind the chosen case became the leadership development programme in the college. I followed a single-case (embedded) design (figure 4.3 Type 2 Yin 2009, p.46).



**Figure 4.3 Case Study Design – Single-case embedded design (multiple units of analysis) (Adapted from Yin 2009 p.46)**

My research fitted Yin's fifth rationale for a single-case study (2009 p.49) as a longitudinal study, studying the same single case at two or more different points in time. It was also possible to have a single-case design which involved more than one unit of analysis (embedded) as opposed to a study that examined only the global nature of an organisation or of a program (holistic). The danger

particularly with the holistic case study design is that it could be at such a high level that the researcher conducted the research at an unduly abstract level, lacking sufficiently clear measures of data (Yin 2009 p.50).

The design I used was the single-case embedded model where the single case was the leadership development programme in the college and the units of analysis were the participants on the programme. By using the single-case embedded design I collected data from each of the participants as units of analysis but the challenge was to avoid focusing on the subunit level (each participant) and to draw together the data into the larger unit of analysis i.e. the college programme.

#### **4.5 Understanding Quality in a Case Study**

Having established a design and process for the case study the next challenge was to consider the how to overcome the traditional questions of reliability, replicability and validity raised with case studies. Bryman cautioned that:

*“The question of how well the case study fares in the context of research design criteria – measurement validity, internal validity, reliability, and replicability – depends in large part on how far the researcher feels that these are appropriate for the evaluation of case study research” (Bryman 2008, p.55).*

The key for me was to recognise that qualitative research can be judged in many ways and it can be used in many different contexts. I was particularly keen to consider how I could design the case study to provide high quality research in my method, outcomes, reliability and replicability? From a practice based perspective the quality of the research would also depend on the generalisability, trustworthiness, level of triangulation and the ethics of the approach.

Flyvbjerg (2004) confronted the perception that case studies cannot provide reliable information about a broader class because they are a detailed examination of a single example. He challenged the conventional wisdom and summarised in his view five key misunderstandings. His approach to these five

misunderstandings provided a strong framework for me to follow and to recognise the potential limitations of the design while focusing on ways to mitigate these limitations. Table 4.2 below provides Flyvbjerg's summary of the five issues with my additional commentary expanding the debate to the wider literature with my own responses as enacted in the final column.

<b>Five misunderstandings about Case Study research (Flyvbjerg, 2004)</b>	<b>Commentaries from the literature</b>	<b>My reflections and actions on my case study design</b>
<p>1. General, theoretical (context – independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge</p>	<p>In a teaching situation, well-chosen case studies can help the student achieve competence, while context-independent facts and rules will bring the student just to the beginner's level. Teaching and research in professional schools are modelled to a wide extent on the understanding that case knowledge is central to human learning. There is some benefit in looking at individual case studies not for proof of anything but to learn something. (Cragg 1940; Christensen and Hansen 1987; Eysenck 1976; Ragin and Becker 1992)</p>	<p><i>I felt that my case study research could fall into the category of helping the learning of the reader</i></p> <p><i>The case study should help the learning in college staff development of how coaching can affect college management thinking and cultures</i></p>
<p>2. One cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case; therefore the case study cannot contribute to scientific development</p>	<p>Finding the black swan;</p> <p>In social science the strategic choice of case may greatly add to the generalisability of a case study (Goldthorpe et al. 1968-9)</p> <p>Eckstein (1975) suggested that if predicted theories existed in social science, then the case study could be used to test these theories just as well as other methods</p> <p>Case studies are likely to produce the best theory (Walton 1992)</p>	<p><i>The case in my research could not be categorised as the black swan, however I feel that the findings from the research could be given some weighting as theory</i></p>
<p>3. The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory-building</p>	<p>Case studies are better for testing hypotheses than for producing them (Eckstein 1975)</p> <p>Generalisability of case studies can be increased by the strategic selection of cases (Rosch 1978; Ragin and Becker 1992). The use of a representative case or a random sample may not be the best strategy where the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem. Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information</p>	<p><i>It was not the case that my sample chosen was extreme, maximum variation or critical. My sample college and managers did not fall into a category that would allow me to claim stronger generalisability by their uniqueness. Therefore careful consideration was given in the findings and discussion chapter to ensure I did not make assumptions of the wider applicability of my findings</i></p>
<p>4. The case study contains a bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions</p>	<p>Case studies suffer from 'a crippling drawback' because they do not apply 'scientific methods' that is methods useful for 'curbing one's tendencies to stamp one's pre-existing interpretations on data as they accumulate' (Diamond 1996)</p> <p>Case study researchers have reported that often their</p>	<p><i>I tried hard not consider my pre-conceived notions of what the coaching development programme would bring to the college and then considered ways to remove these from my research methods. In the design of the interviews, questionnaires and focus group questions I aimed to remove leading questions or to shape participants</i></p>

	<p>preconceived views, assumptions, concepts and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points (Campbell 1975; Ragin and Becker 1992; Geertz 1995; Wieviorka 1992)</p>	<p><i>responses by my choice of questions.</i></p> <p><i>I would agree with Campbell, Ragin and Becker, Geertz and Wieviorka that the findings from the case study contradicted my own assumptions at the beginning of the research – I was surprised by the findings of the case study and how much they differed from my own hypotheses at the start of the programme</i></p>
<p>5. It is often difficult to summarise and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies</p>	<p>Good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life, accordingly such narratives may be difficult or impossible to summarise into neat scientific formulae, general propositions, and theories (Roth 1989; Benhabib 1990; Rouse 1990; White 1990; Mitchell and Charmaz 1996)</p> <p>This can be seen as a drawback of case studies, however a rich or 'thick' narrative can be seen as a strength of the case study. The point of research science is not to divest itself of 'rich ambiguity' (Nietzsche 1974)</p> <p>Peattie (2001) warns against summarising a dense case study. The dense case study is more useful for the practitioner and more interesting for social theory than either factual 'findings' or the high level generalisations of theory</p>	<p><i>In my data collection and analysis I aimed to find common themes in the case study but resisted the temptation to summarise the narrative in light of these comments. The richness of each individual participant story meant that I added in a chapter (5) giving space to the four individual participants and their own distinctive narrative to allow the reader to experience the richness of the data. In chapter 6 I pulled together common themes from the case but again did not overly summarise the points as again there were some useful and rich data in the narratives that I felt suited the research design better to be fully included</i></p>

**Table 4.2 Reliability, Replicability and Validity in the Case Study**

Flyvbjerg's (2004) summary of the five misunderstandings of case study research highlighted that my research could fall into the first category in that concrete, practical (context dependent) knowledge *can* contribute to learning in that there is some benefit in looking at individual case studies not for *proof* of anything but to *learn* something (Cragg 1940; Christensen and Hansen 1987; Eysenck 1976; Ragin and Becker 1992). I considered the case study design carefully asking myself the question would my design stand up to scrutiny to enable the research to help the learning of how coaching could affect college management thinking and cultures?

#### **4.5.1 Reliability and Replicability**

Yin (2009) highlighted that in determining the reliability and replicability of case study research:

*“The objective is to be sure that, if the later investigator followed the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions. The goal of reliability is to minimise the errors and biases in a study” (Yin 2009, p.45).*

In the past, case study research procedures were poorly recorded and presented, making external reviewers suspicious of the reliability of the case study method (Yin, 2009). Yin (2003) suggested that there were appropriate criteria and outlined ways in which case study research could be developed to enhance its reliability. Stake (1995) however, barely mentioned them at all, reflecting a common position in the literature that case studies were not conducive to providing reliable and replicable findings. The challenge for me was how to avoid this criticism of my research. I used a case study protocol and database to deal with the challenging question of how to provide accurate and thorough documentation. I followed Yin’s (2009) guidance of approaching the reliability problem by making as many steps as operational as possible and to “conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder” (Yin 2009, p.45). I recorded all my data on a case study database so there was an easily accessible record of all interviews, questionnaire responses and focus group data. This would allow a reader to dig deeper into the narratives or test the findings from the full data set.

My next problem was how to ensure that my findings accurately reflected the participants’ views. All the interview transcripts were shared with the participants, they were asked to check them through and to confirm that they agreed they were a true record. No interviewee amended or withdrew data.

#### **4.5.2 Validity**

The next focus for me was how to structure my approach to respond to the misunderstandings outlined above to enhance the validity of the findings. Yin (2009) suggested that:

*“Because a research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statements, you can also judge the quality of any given design according to certain logical tests” (Yin 2009, p.40).*

In planning the case study design I set out the need to gather evidence on the college context (strategy documents), the college reasons for the development (college documents, interviews senior team), the participants' expectations (interviews), the participants' views (interviews, questionnaires) and the participants' perspectives (interviews, focus group). Cohen and Manion (1994) warned the potential causes of invalidity in questionnaires were that respondents may not complete questionnaires accurately and those who failed to return questionnaires may have responded differently to those who did. In interviews the potential source of invalidity was bias (Bush 2007). In order to respond to this I gave careful consideration to the formulation of my questions and I drafted a case study diagram to plan the chain of evidence. The participants were also given a draft of the research and asked to review and respond to the findings and discussion: they were asked did they feel it was a true reflection of their views. Their feedback was very positive, they agreed with the findings and said they were an accurate reflection of their views on the programme.

In aiming to establish the internal validity of my research I asked myself the question did the research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation (Bush 2007). In order to respond to this question I used an approach influenced by grounded theory to carry out my data analysis. The

approach particularly focused on pattern matching and explanation building. The emerging themes were very much from the bottom up and the strength of each theme could be clearly established from the strength of the pattern matching.

External validity related to the extent that findings could be generalised to the wider population, which the sample represents, or to other similar settings (Scott and Morrison 2006). My case study was a single case study and because of this I focused on the question how did findings link to theories drawn from the literature review or was there a case for establishing some new theories. I was cautious in my findings section to recognise the limitations of the single case and to highlight that my findings did not claim to have extensive generalisability – rather a useful narrative to help the learning in the sector of college leadership development.

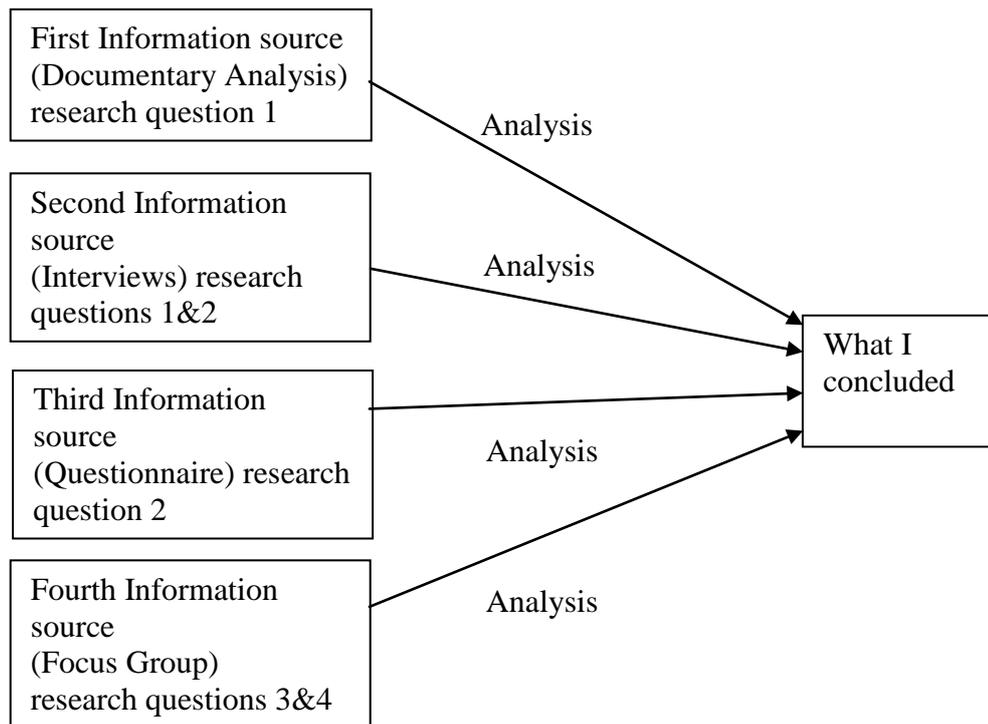
#### ***4.5.3 Trustworthiness***

Commentators have suggested that qualitative studies should be judged not just on reliability and validity but on trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Guba and Lincoln 1994). Trustworthiness focused on four criteria which had an equivalent criterion in quantitative research (Bryman 2008). The first criteria was credibility, which paralleled internal validity (I carried out the research according to the canons of good practice, I submitted the research findings to the participants for confirmation that my understanding of the social world was in agreement with theirs and I used triangulation with multiple methods to gather data). Secondly I needed to consider transferability, which paralleled external validity (I gave a ‘thick description’ of the culture and context of the case study to allow others to make a judgement about the possibility of transferability of findings to other milieu (Geertz 1973; Bryman 2008)). Thirdly I focused on dependability, which paralleled reliability (I adopted an ‘auditing’ approach to my research collection and analysis that would allow peers to review the data to establish how far proper procedures had been followed (Bryman 2008)). Finally I considered confirmability, which paralleled objectivity (whilst recognising that complete objectivity was impossible in social

research I endeavoured to show that I acted in good faith throughout the study and that I was not swayed by my personal values, again this can be checked by auditors (Bryman 2008)).

#### **4.5.4 Triangulation**

After designing the case study to take into account questions of reliability and replicability I then asked myself the question would my qualitative study stand up to scrutiny in terms of using a variety of sources to ensure a rigorous interpretation of data. Bell (2005, p.167) cautioned that “researchers must be vigilant, critical of their interpretation of data, regularly question our practice and wherever possible triangulate”. Triangulation seeks to validate a claim or outcome by looking two or more independent sources (Cohen and Manion 1994; Newby 2010). Triangulation could be particularly valuable in case study research when multiple methods are used (Bassegy 1999). The questionnaire was particularly useful to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the findings by providing triangulation to the interviews. By introducing a questionnaire to the research methods I wanted to provide alternative information sources to add to individual interviews with participants (Newby 2010). The diagram below (figure 4.4) shows the range of methods I used (assigned to the research questions) to gather data and to corroborate my findings.



**Figure 4.4 The Principle of Triangulation (Adapted from Newby 2010, p. 123)**

Whilst triangulation was provided by using a range of methods I was still cautious not to overestimate its value (McFee 1992). I was cautious in my findings to recognise that:

*“The assumption that ‘true’ fixes on ‘reality’ can be obtained separately from different ways of looking at it may be incompatible with certain approaches to qualitative research that value and celebrate individual or subjective ways of seeing and interpreting phenomena.” (Bush 2007, p101).*

#### **4.5.5 Ethics**

Social researchers should be ethical in the collection of their data, in the process of analysing the data and in the dissemination of findings (Denscombe 2007). The key issues that needed to be considered in planning my research were:

*“Whether there is harm to participants; whether there is lack of informed consent; whether there is an invasion of privacy; whether deception is involved” (Bryman 2008, p.118).*

The role of the researcher as 'a data gathering instrument' in qualitative research was recognised by Paton (1990) and Hatch (2002). Research in educational leadership does not exist in an objective or neutral vacuum in which understandings about the term 'management', remain uniform or uncontested (Morrison, 2007). It was crucial to heed the warnings of recognising my own preconceived views of the role of 'manager' and to consider that;

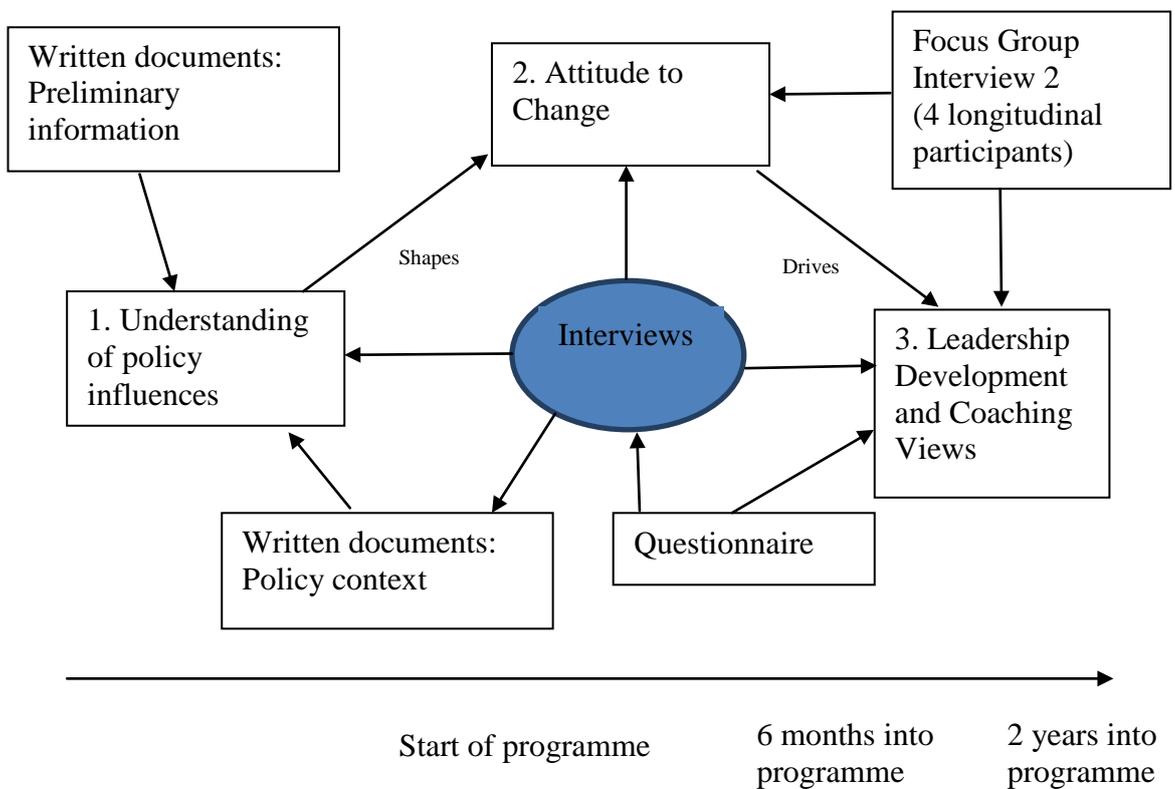
*“researchers do not embark upon a study that has a management focus without having some idea about what management means to them, or indeed what they think it means to others” (Morrison 2007, p. 15).*

The British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) provided clear and precise guidelines for me to ensure the highest standards of ethics were adhered to in my research. Its key recommendations were for me to focus on voluntary informed consent, the right to withdraw and privacy. I needed to consider in my case study design and data collection how I planned to protect the human subjects in the case study (Yin 2009). I gained formal approval for the study from the principal and I gained informed consent from the participants by inviting them to a meeting where I outlined the aims of the study and the methods I planned to use. The participants were able to ask questions and these mainly focused on how confidential their responses would be. I explained that all responses would be confidential to me the researcher and in the data presentation their identities would be changed. It was important to be clear to them however that I could not guarantee complete anonymity in the research findings, as even though all names would be changed and the college would not be named, it would not be too difficult for a diligent reader to work out the college in the study from my own career background and therefore to at least be able to identify the group of managers in the study. I did make clear to the participants however, that their individual responses would be anonymised and would remain confidential. The group meeting was particularly useful in allowing the participants to air their individual concerns and discuss the aims of the research. One participant decided that she did not wish to take part in the research and this suggested to me that the participants felt comfortable enough from the discussions to decline to take part.

The impact of my own practitioner views and the context in which we were all working needed to be considered very carefully in this study. It was important to consider the interviewer effect (Denscombe 2007) and how the social status, educational qualifications and professional expertise of the people to be interviewed these compared with my own. I was careful to consider if this was likely to affect the interviewer/interviewee relationship in a positive or negative manner. I was particularly concerned that my role as the line manager of some of the participants and a senior manager in the College may have had an impact on participants' willingness to answer questions openly and honestly. I followed advice to researchers given to minimising the impact of researchers on the outcome of the research by adopting a passive and neutral stance (Bryman 2008, Morrison 2007). When I changed role mid way through the research from internal researcher and participant to external manager the ethical implications of the move needed to be considered. The dynamic of my role in the research changed significantly and therefore posed new challenges in how I handled the research data and approached the focus group as an external researcher. I approached the Principal of the college and informally asked for his consent for me to continue the research as an external researcher. We discussed whether the Principal felt it was appropriate for me to draft a formal letter of request for this change but agreed that this was not necessary for the college and that he remained comfortable with me as researcher in my new role in another college. I reiterated my commitment to confidentiality and preserving the anonymity of individual responses as previously agreed. It was interesting to note when I moved role and changed college I did feel that the participants relaxed more in my presence as researcher as I was no longer their line manager. This highlighted that despite recognising issues of power and relationships and taking steps to reduce this it is almost impossible to negate that influence completely.

## 4.6 Research Methods

The research methods used in the study followed recommendations from Yin (2009), Bryman (2008) and Cohen et al. (2007) for case studies. Multiple sources provided evidence, including written documents on policy, interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather the data however given the rich nature of the case study, the aims of the research and my stance as a researcher, the majority of the data collected was qualitative. The case study design is illustrated in figure 4.5 below.



**Figure 4.5 Case Study Design and Processes of Each Participant in the Case Study**

In order to develop an in depth analysis of the case the FE and college context set the scene for the study and was considered essential to frame the research questions. Data from the senior leadership team was highlighted as an essential component to establishing the college dynamic and the reasons for the introduction of the leadership development programme. The views of the participants were then identified and tracked as essential before, during and after the programme's implementation.

## 4.7 Sampling

Social researchers are also frequently faced with the fact that “you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything” (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.27) therefore I needed to rely on getting evidence from a portion of the whole. It was not good enough, however, to assume the findings for the sample would be replicated in the rest of the population:

*“In practice, the complexity of the competing factors of resources and accuracy means that the decision on sample size tends to be based on experience and good judgement rather than relying on a strict mathematical formula” (Hoinville et al. 1985, p.73).*

I therefore used multiple sampling techniques for the research. The college in the case was selected using opportunistic methods as it was the college in which I was working and it was embarking on a professional development programme using coaching as the main model. The participants were selected using further sampling techniques (McClintock 1985). The 19 participants were the full cohort of managers taking part in the coaching programme (one manager declined to take part in my research leaving 18 participants in the study).

The study included a longitudinal element tracking the college and the participants from the start of the programme through 24 months of coaching and reflection. I used purposive sampling (Bryman 2008; Cohen et al. 2007) to identify four participants who would be the focus of the longitudinal element. This was a type of non-probability sampling (Bryman 2008) where as the researcher I applied my experience to select participants which were, in my judgement, representative of the full participant cohort. The advantages of this model were that it ensured the representation of crucial categories of staff in the sample. The main disadvantage of the selection model was that the sample frame and size also need to be considered to ensure accuracy, currency and adequacy for generalisability (Bryman 2008; Punch 2009). Using this method the participants selected reflected both the curriculum and support sides of the

college, senior executive group membership and middle management membership. The four participant managers for the longitudinal study were identified six months into the programme to be involved in a longer term review of the impact of the coaching programme. The longitudinal manager profiles are presented in chapter five. Apart from the requirement that the participants should be managers on the leadership development programme, there were no other criteria placed upon selection of participants in terms of ethnicity, age, gender or role. It was important to note, however that even though this gave coverage of the range of roles and levels the small sample is subject to questions on generalisability in particular.

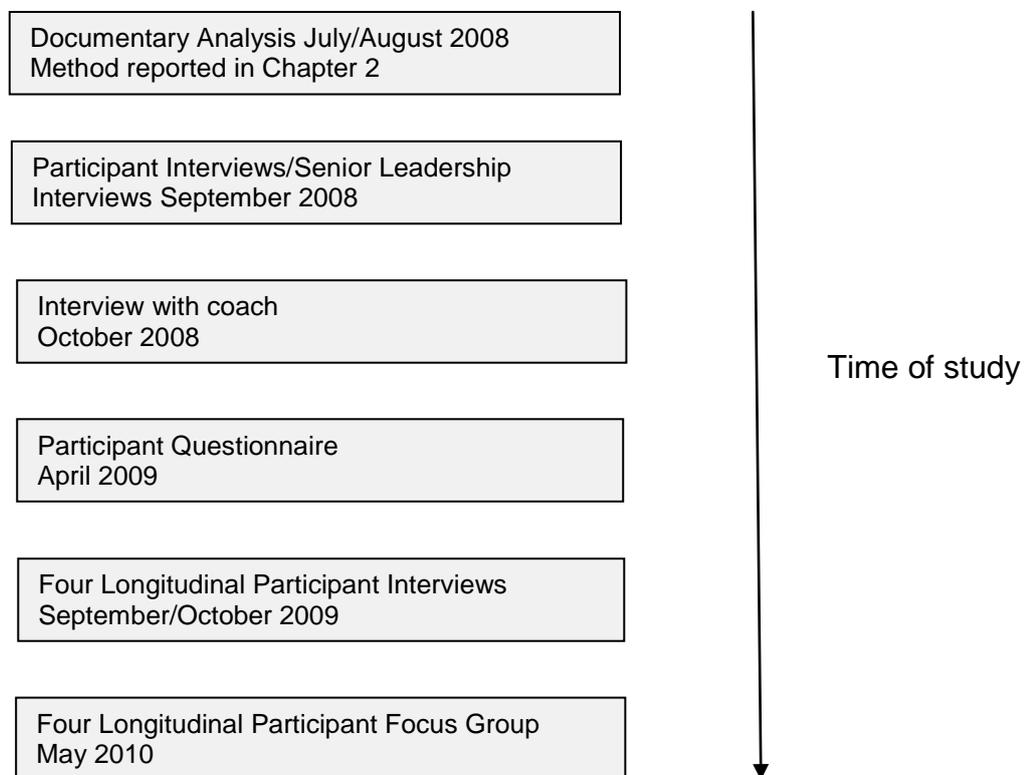
#### **4.8 Collecting the Data**

I looked at each data collection source in the college focusing on whether it was individual or organisational and how that data source contributed to the case study data as a whole. Having identified that the case study was an individual case about one leadership development programme in one college with individual units of analysis (the participants) I populated the boxes with what I was trying to find out about individuals and the organisation and then where I would find that information in the research. The multiple sources and data collection methods used are shown in table 4.3.

Research Methods			
(A)	(B) Instruments	(C) Information to capture	(D) Research and literature to support the research instrument
Written Documents	Preliminary Data	Participants' histories Educational background Leadership experience Past coaching experience	Yin (2009) Denscombe (2007) Bryman (2008) Creswell (2007)
	National Policy Documents	The Further Education Context Challenges for leaders Funding changes Curriculum changes	Yin (2009) Denscombe (2007) Marx (1997) Burton et al. (2008) Prior (2003) Cohen et al. (2007) Bailey (2007) Busher and James (2007)
	College Policy Documents	The College context Policy position on national influences Cultural influences	Yin (2009) Burton et al. (2008) Prior (2003) Cohen et al. (2007) Bailey (2007) Denscombe (2007) Busher and James (2007)
	Mid Programme Questionnaire	Six month reflection by managers on the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development day</li> <li>• 360 degree feedback</li> <li>• Coaching</li> </ul>	Denscombe (2007) Cohen and Manion (1985) Robson (2002) Campbell et al. (2004)
Interviews/Questionnaires	Pre Leadership development programme Interview schedule	Gain in depth understanding of participants' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expectations of the development programme</li> <li>• views on the coaching</li> </ul>	Bryman (2008) Bell (2005) Patton (1990) Punch (2000) Campbell et al. (2004)
	Second Mid Programme Interview schedule	Gain in depth understanding of participants' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• views on the coaching</li> <li>• views on how the programme has changed them</li> </ul>	Bryman (2008) Patton (1990) Campbell et al. (2004)
Focus Group	Focus group schedule, mind maps	Gain in depth understanding of participants' collective views on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the coaching</li> <li>• how the programme has changed them</li> </ul>	Bassey (2007) Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) Hayes (2000) Denscombe (2007)

**Table 4.3 Summary of Research Methods**

The table allowed me to focus on the best data collection method for the information that I wanted to capture and the key research texts for each method that would give guidance as to how to approach each stage. As interviews and focus groups were a key part of the research design, I spent the most time considering the method, approach, strengths, weaknesses and pitfalls to ensure that I gathered the best information possible for the study. The research timetable then needed to be planned to map out when each research method would be used. The research timeline is shown in figure 4.6.



**Figure 4.6 Research timeline**

One of the difficulties that arose in preparing to collect case study evidence from the multiple sources was clarifying what information came from the organisation and what information came from the individual. It was important to avoid basing my conclusions about the individuals from organisational sources only. Yin's 'Design Versus Data' table (2009, p.89) provided a template for me to adapt and focus on the range of data sources and the different units of analysis (figure 4.7).

		<b>Data Collection Source</b>			
		From an individual	From an organisation		
<b>Design</b>	About an individual	Individual behaviour Individual attitudes Individual perceptions (Interviews, questionnaires, focus groups with participants)	Interviews with individual's manager; other employees (Principal, Deputy Principal, Staff Development Manager)	If case is an individual	<b>Study Conclusions</b>
	About an organisation	How college works Why college works (Interviews with senior leadership team)	Policies Strategy documents College outcomes		

**Figure 4.7 Design versus Data Collection: Different Units of Analysis (Adapted from Yin 2009, p.89)**

## **4.9 Interviews and Focus Group**

### **4.9.1 Interviews**

The use of interviews in research recognised that data is not something external to human subjects but in fact can be generated between humans, often through conversations (Cohen et al. 2007; Kvale 1996). One major advantage of the interview was its adaptability. It was important, however, to consider the disadvantages. Commentators emphasised that interviews were a time-consuming and highly subjective technique and in which there was always the danger of bias (Bryman 2008; Cohen et al. 2007; Punch 2009). Analysing responses could present problems, and wording of the questions was almost as demanding for interviews as it was for questionnaires (Bell 2005).

When using interviews in case studies they should be guided conversations rather than structured queries (Yin 2009). It was also recommended that the case study interview should be fluid rather than rigid (Rubin and Rubin 1995). The complexity of the case study interview could not be ignored and as interviewer I needed to be careful of asking the 'why' question – which may have caused defensiveness rather than asking the 'how' question (Becker 1998). Thus case study interviews required me to act on two levels at the same time – gaining information from the interview that provided useful data for my research whilst also asking more friendly questions in the interview to put the participants at ease (Yin 2009). I adopted the focused interview approach (Merton et al. 1990) to allow me to ask open ended questions in a conversational manner but following questions derived from the case study protocol. I used a checklist for planning and conducting interviews as a basis for my preparation to ensure I maximised the advantages of the method and minimised the possible disadvantages (Bell 2005). The interview schedules (Appendix D) were designed to provide structure to the meetings. I used a checklist of the use of interviews (Appendix E) to test my preparation and approach to my research and to capture my reflections on the difficulties I encountered in the interview process (Denscombe 2007). All the interviews were recorded and then typed into transcript form and approved by the participants as a true record of the event.

A key ethical consideration was how to mitigate the influence of my role as manager to the participants in the interviews. The power and influence that I had with the participants was a constant theme in my mind. Problems could arise in research where there were status differences between researcher and researched (Newby, 2010). As researcher I was trying to delve deeply into the thoughts and feelings of the participants but as a senior member of staff in the college and as the line manager of many of the participants it was difficult to create a new dynamic different to the everyday line management roles that we occupied. In order to reduce the impact of this dynamic I conducted the interviews in the participant's own offices rather than my own. I reiterated the confidential nature of the interviews and that only aggregated data would be presented to the college with quotes anonymised. I explained that I was most interested in how the coaching model worked as leadership development and

not the individual issues that the managers discussed with the coach. I deliberately set out in the interviews to not ask what the managers had discussed with the coach, rather how the coaching had influenced them. Some managers offered up the topics they had discussed and pleasingly some managers just talked about the coaching and how it had influenced them. This made me feel that I had been successful in reducing the impact of my power relationship with the participants and that they did feel that they could relax in the interviews.

The senior leadership were interviewed (Interview schedule Appendix F) to establish their views on the policy context in which the college was operating and the future challenges that they felt the college would be facing. The two senior leaders (principal and deputy principal) had a significant amount of leadership experience in FE and other public sector bodies. Their views and approaches formed part of the college policy context in that they shaped the environment in which the managers operated and the culture of the college. The staff development manager was instrumental in the design of the programme and a strong advocate of coaching as a developmental tool. The leadership coach was also interviewed to establish his perspective on the programme and his views on what he was expecting to achieve. I used the policy context analysis as the basis for the interviews with the senior leaders and the coach. My aim was to establish the reasons why the leadership development programme was introduced in the college, to understand the rationale behind the decision and what the leadership team wanted to achieve. The ability to ask good questions was a prerequisite for me as the investigator (Yin 2009). The result I was aiming for particularly with the senior leadership team was to gain a rich picture from the dialogue (Becker 1998).

#### ***4.9.2 Piloting the interviews***

The interview schedules for the first participant interviews were piloted with two participants a month before the full survey took place. The pilots provided useful clarification of how the questions were being considered and highlighted

ambiguities in the questions and the requested response methods. The first interview was slimmed down considerably following the pilot study as participants said they felt there was too much repetition however, in hindsight interview one was still too long. Overall, the pilot work focused the interview schedules and created a more concise list of questions. Despite the pilot work and a considerable rationalisation of the schedules there was still a considerable amount of excess data gathered on interview number one. Interview number two was much more streamlined because of this however, I was still in the position of having gathered around 50% erroneous data in interview number one. Greater clarity of aims for the interviews would have streamlined my approach and avoided overzealous data collection. Despite these difficulties the data that was gathered from the interviews provided very candid information for the research. A positive from the process was that the participants were very relaxed in the interviews and talked openly at length about their fears and concerns about the programme which meant the data was rich and insightful.

#### **4.9.3 Focus Group**

The use of focus groups with the participants alongside the semi-structured interviews aimed to bring validity to the research findings by using multiple sources of evidence, by establishing a chain of evidence and by having the participants review key emerging findings from the case study (Bryman 2008). The focus group was particularly useful for:

- Orienting to a particular field of focus
- Developing themes, topic and schedules flexibly for subsequent interviews
- Generating hypotheses that derive from the insights and data from the group
- Generating and evaluating data from different subgroups of a population
- Gathering qualitative data
- Generating data quickly and at a low cost
- Gathering data on attitudes, values and opinions (Cohen et al. 2007)

In particular I wanted the focus group to make use of group dynamics. I aimed (as the moderator) to bring together the small group of four longitudinal participants to explore attitudes, perceptions, feelings and ideas about the leadership development programme and in particular about their experiences of the coaching. I wanted the focus group to provide data on how they had developed over the length of the programme. In relation to the study I wanted to use the focus group to:

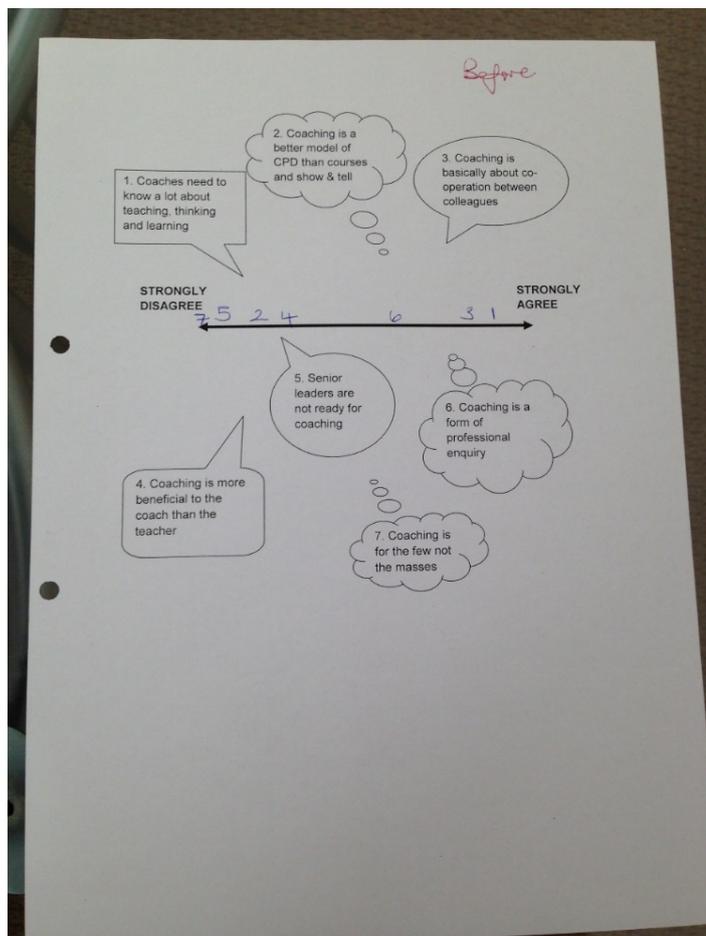
- Review the participants' views of coaching two years into the programme and see how it had evolved
- Establish the participants' views on the usefulness of coaching as a continuing professional development tool and whether they were using coaching themselves
- Consider how they felt they had developed personally from the coaching
- Review how they felt the college culture had developed from the coaching programme

It has been recommended that focus groups should consist of between six and ten people (Morgan 1998). For practical purposes, however, focus groups sometimes could consist of fewer. Focus groups of three or four could be seen quite regularly in small-scale social research particularly when participants were likely to have a lot to say on the research topic (Morgan 1998). Practical considerations in this study were that potential participants needed to be available. They needed to be willing to devote a few hours of their time to help the research, and were able to attend at the time and date of the scheduled focus group meeting. I constructed the focus group to be balanced and to achieve the maximum frank and free discussion with a varied range of respondents (Hayes 2000). The three distinctive and vital points about focus groups (Denscombe 2007) that I took into account were:

1. There needed to be a focus to the session, with a good discussion being based on an item or experience about which all participants had similar knowledge

2. Particular emphasis was placed on the interaction within the group as a means for eliciting information
3. My role as the moderator was to facilitate the group interaction. I did this by using a series of prompts for the group shown below.

The discussion in the focus group was triggered by a stimulus. Such kinds of mediator induced stimulus have emerged as common practice (Newby 2010) and were regarded a crucial part of focus group activity. Whatever the stimulus, however, its role was vital in the sense that it literally focused the discussion by providing a topic with which all members of the group were familiar, and channelled the discussion on to something specific and concrete. I introduced the focus group to research findings on coaching and mentoring as a stimulus for the discussion. I particularly wanted to discover if the group's views and perceptions of coaching and the college dynamic had changed over the time of the programme. Stimulus activity 1 is shown in figure 4.8 below.



**Figure 4.8 Focus group stimulus activity 1**

The participants were asked to mark on the Likert scale (1932) their group response to the cloud statements as to how they felt at the start of the programme. For example the focus group collectively put statement number 1 'coaches need to know a lot about teaching, thinking and learning' near the end of the scale – saying they strongly agreed with this statement at the start of the programme. In contrast the focus group strongly disagreed with statement 7 'coaching is for the few not the masses'.

In stimulus activity 2 (figure 4.9) the focus group were asked to mark 'Where do you feel the college is on the scale of coaching practice development?' at the end of the programme. They marked their group position as at level 3 'refining coaching practice' and marked where they felt the rest of the college managers were who had not been on the programme as at level 1 'emerging coaching practice'.

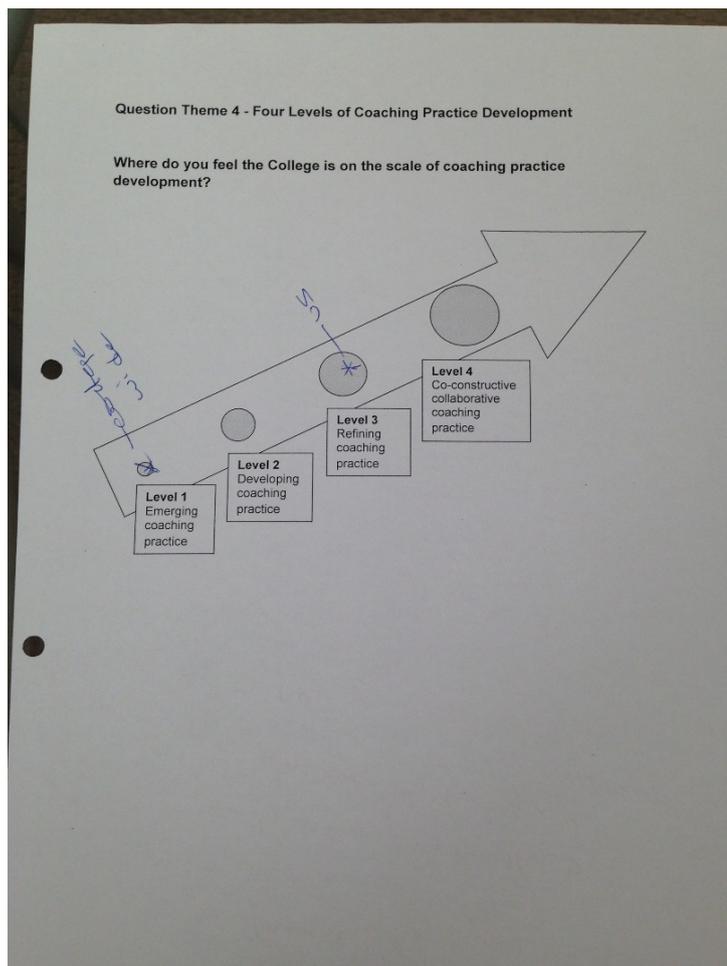


Figure 4.9 Focus group stimulus activity 2

In stimulus activity 3 (figure 4.10) the focus group were asked to mark their individual positions they felt they were at in terms of:

1. Past college leadership practice
2. Current college practice
3. Desired practice

This showed the movement of each participant over the time of the programme and their future goals for where they wanted to be.

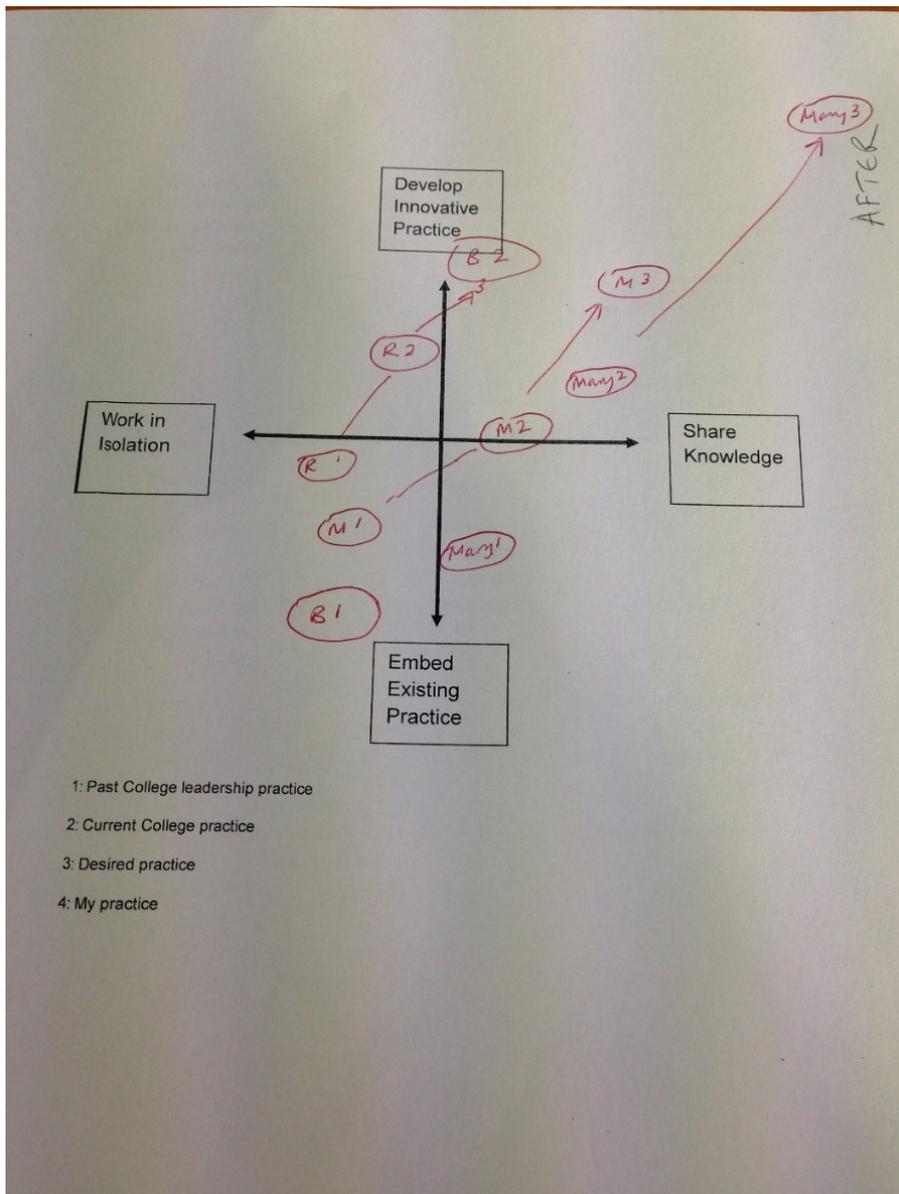


Figure 4.10 Focus group stimulus activity 3

During the focus group session participants were encouraged to discuss the topics among themselves. This interaction helped me to understand the reasoning behind the views and opinions expressed by a group of members. It provided me with the method of investigating the participants' views and a means for exploring underlying factors that might explain why people held the opinions and feelings they did. I took careful consideration of my role as the moderator (Bryman 2008). As moderator I was responsible for organising the focus group session, for selecting the members, arranging the venue, the time and ensuring all participants could attend. I took responsibility for creating a comfortable atmosphere for the discussion, introducing the stimulus, keeping the discussion on track, focused around the topic, encouraging participation from all members and ensuring there was no abuse or intimidation (Bryman 2008).

Taking time to prepare stimulus activities and to consider my role as the moderator definitely contributed to the focus group dynamic. Although, by this point, I was no longer the line manager of the participants I was keen to ensure they felt they could speak freely and confidentially. I was aware that one of the participants in the longitudinal study was now the line manager of the group and was mindful to ensure that this person did not dominate the discussion or indeed suppress any responses. The focus group discussion was extremely dynamic and I was really pleased that all the participants contributed and discussed together their perceptions of the programme and their individual goals. There were no signs of intimidation or domination of the session by any individuals, the atmosphere felt relaxed and enthusiastic.

#### **4.10 Questionnaires**

I used a questionnaire to survey the 18 participants after six months on the programme. Questionnaires have been defined as a simple collection of pre-formulated questions to a means of discovering things (Punch 2009). I particularly wanted to ask at this point in the programme whether the participants felt they were achieving any of the aims they had set themselves and how they now felt about the design and implementation of the programme

given their clear concerns at the start of the development. I used a questionnaire because I wanted a quick and simple tool to gather overall perceptions that would not be too time consuming for the participants and would be simple for me to collate (Bryman 2008). Another advantage of using a questionnaire rather than an interview was that questionnaires could provide standardised answers, to the extent that all respondents were posed the same closed questions with no scope for variation (Cohen et al. 2007). The first interviews gave me the aspirations of the group for the programme and the particular concerns they felt about the design and implementation. This questionnaire provided structured, numerical data and as such was comparatively straightforward to analyse (Wilson and McLean 1994). There was also little scope for data to be affected by the interviewer effect and interpersonal factors (Bryman 2008). Whilst the questionnaire provided the opportunity for more simple data gathering there were factors I needed to consider that were possible negatives in using a questionnaire:

- Pre-coded questions can be frustrating for respondents and thus deter them from answering
- Pre-coded questions can bias the findings towards the researcher's, rather than the respondent's, way of seeing things
- Questionnaires offer little opportunity for the researcher to check the truthfulness of the answers given by the respondents
- Questionnaires need to be piloted and questions consequently refined (Denscombe 2007, p.169).

A key consideration was whether to use open or closed questions. Closed questions were written in a way that the respondent had no leeway in terms of a personalised input (Punch 2009; Bryman 2008). The strength of closed questions was that respondents did not have to articulate their answers so they found it easy and quick to respond (Newby 2010) as a result the data would be easier to code and quantify (Oppenheim 1992; Bailey 1994). Open questions, however, required respondents to work harder articulating answers and the

researcher to work harder analysing responses providing data deeper, richer and more personal to the respondent (Bell 2005; Bryman 2008). Open questions however were valuable in giving a sense of the respondent's open voice, but always tempered with caution as to how much they were influenced by completion of the questionnaire itself (Newby 2010).

My choice in whether to use open or closed questions was influenced by the issues I was looking at six months into the programme, by the respondents I expected to have and by the balance between the two types of questions that I wanted to have in the questionnaire design as a whole (Bryman 2008). In order to try to capture both elements from the questionnaires I used both closed and open questions however the majority of the focus of the questionnaire was on closed questions. I chose this method as I wanted to generate responses that were amenable to basic statistical treatment and analysis and to allow me to make comparisons across groups in the sample (Oppenheim 1992). I used a checklist to help me design questions to avoid potential problems (Robson 2002). At the end of the questionnaire I used open questions to explore more the feelings of the participants (Bailey 1994). The closed questions made the questionnaire quick to complete and straightforward to code (Cohen et al. 2007) but it was important to note that they did not allow respondents to add any remarks or any qualifications. I assigned a code number to each question in order to make the subsequent data analysis and handling more efficient (Cohen and Manion 1985). A structured and clear approach to the design and implementation of the questionnaire enabled me to determine the validity and trustworthiness of the responses and the findings. I also used similar questions through the questionnaire at particular points to see if participants gave consistent replies (Bryman 2008).

I analysed the responses to the questionnaires and in particular looked at three questions that asked similar things. The consistency of response to these questions by the individual participants showed there was a strong sense of trustworthiness in the replies I received. I made it clear again to participants that their answers would be anonymised to encourage honest answers. The design aimed to minimise potential errors from respondents by having a very clear Likert (1932) scale with no changes in gradings and a consistent approach

to questions and avoiding double negatives (Bryman 2008). I kept the questions short and simple with only one issue or idea in each question to avoid the respondents having cognitive overload (Newby 2010). The aim was, to ensure that respondents would not have to think about what the question was driving at, before they could answer it.

The questionnaire needed to capture their interest as it was voluntary, it needed to encourage cooperation and elicit answers as close as possible to the truth (Newby 2010). All 18 questionnaires were returned (which, at a 100% return rate was excellent) this showed the form was quick and easy to complete. Another explanation was however, that the 100% return rate suggested the strength of the power relationship I had in the case study college as I was still the line manager of the participants at this time. Only 13 participants had completed their first coaching session by the time of the questionnaire so part two of the questionnaire (Questions 6-10) had a sample of 13.

#### ***4.10.1 Piloting the questionnaires***

Oppenheim (1992) advised that everything about a questionnaire should be piloted. In developing the questionnaire I drafted up some working documents and asked two participants to comment on the questions, structure, style and layout. The questionnaire was modified to include more quantitative data responses to allow me to rate some answers as well as gathering qualitative judgements. The drafts are shown in figures 4.11 and 4.12.

**Leadership Development Programme**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you want to gain from this programme?

How enthusiastic are you about? Low     High

How clear are you about what you hope to gain from this programme? Highly     Low

How useful do you expect it to be to you in your role? Highly     Low

How useful was it? Highly     Low

How much benefit do you think you will get from the programme?

Which aspects of leadership development are you particularly looking for?

- ? Motivation
- ? clarity - what to expect

Any other comments?

- ? (expectation of) usefulness.
- ? 3 aspects

**Figure 4.11 Draft Questionnaire version 1**

The first draft started out with key questions then a free text box for participants to complete. In the pilot the participants suggested using ratings for questions rather than having lots of boxes where they were asked to write free text as they said everyone was really busy. I drafted up some boxes for participants to tick and this was seen as more accessible by the pilot participants. Version 2 (Figure 4.12) of the pilot questionnaire was then discussed with the pilot group where I tested the key questions I was looking to use.

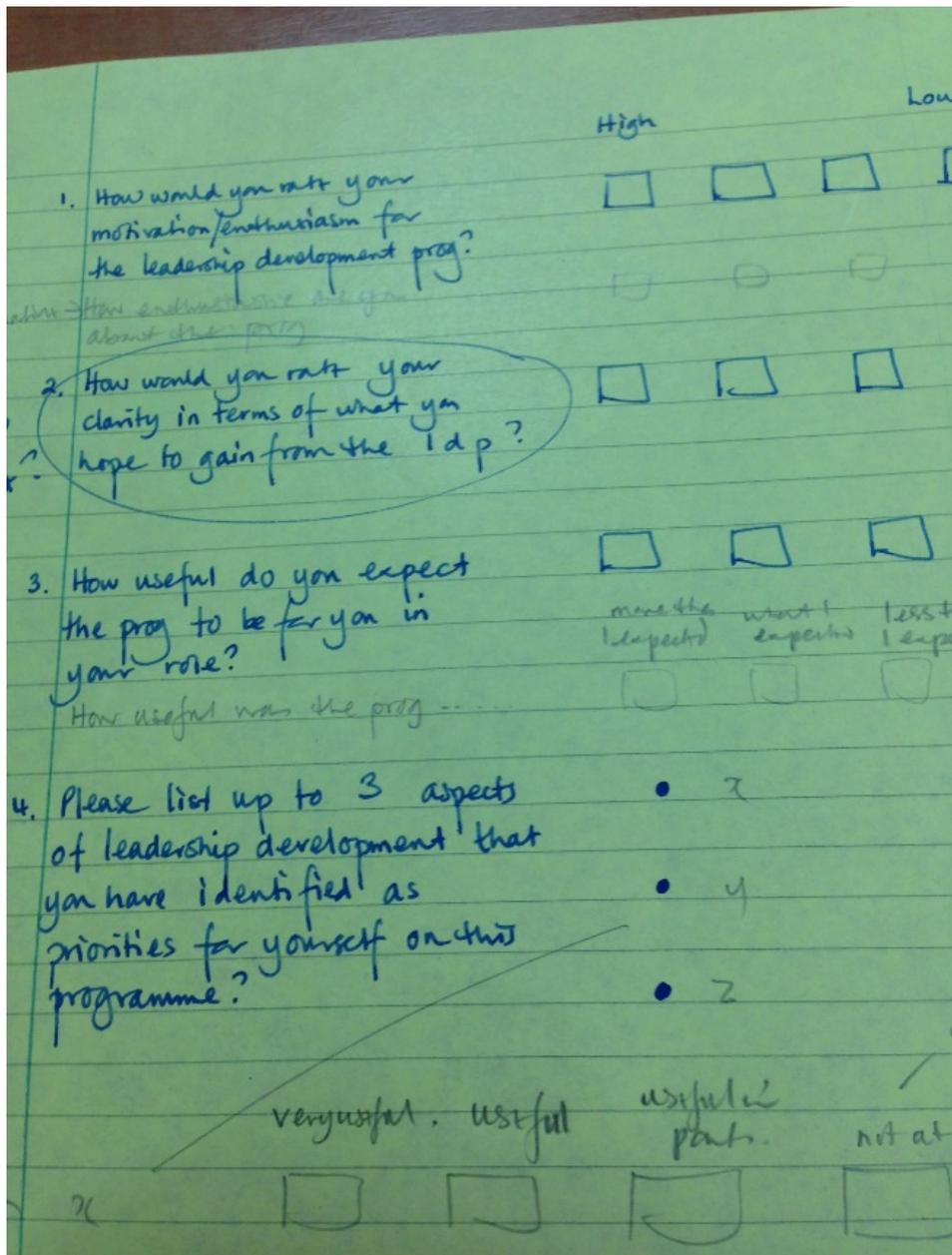


Figure 4.12 Draft Questionnaire Version 2

The pilot group liked the new format and suggested keeping to a maximum of 10 questions so that the questionnaire did not look too daunting and they also suggested that for 2 or 3 key questions I could give participants the opportunity to write some free text explaining why they had given a particular rating to a question.

## 4.11 Data Analysis

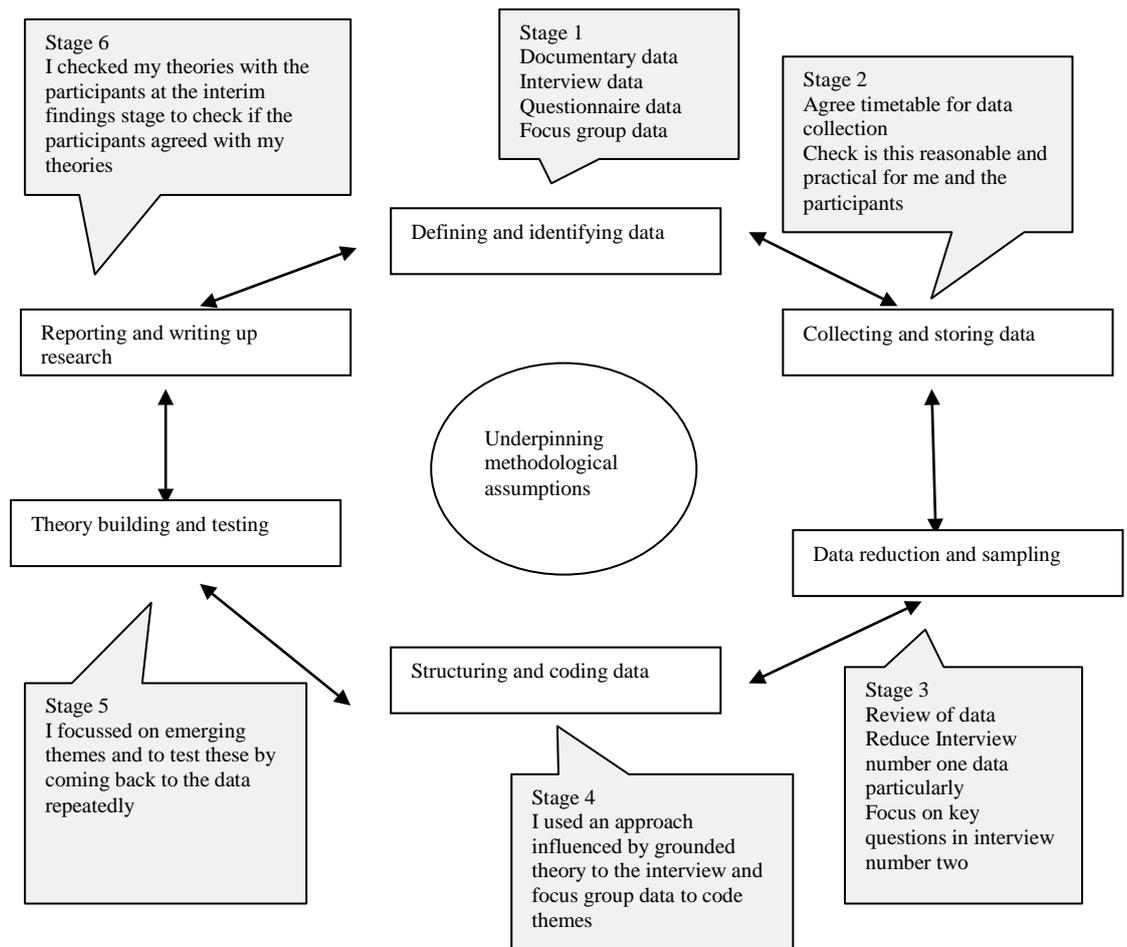
Yin (2009) usefully summarised data analysis as:

*“Examining, categorising, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to draw empirically based conclusions” (Yin 2009, p.126).*

He particularly pointed out, however, the trap a researcher can fall into when carrying out case study research. It is too easy to start a case study without any idea how the evidence should be analysed (Yin 2009). One of the main limitations of case study research is that there is often too much data for easy analysis (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001). The challenge was how to draw the individual stories together to analyse issues across the stories (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001). The difficulties highlighted above made it even more essential for me to consider carefully and early in the planning a strategy for analysing the case study data and to identify a range of analytical techniques to support the strategy. A key point of the research was aiming to probe the ‘why’ rather than the ‘what’ (Denscombe 2007). Watling and James compared the analysis of qualitative data to alchemy as:

*“the elusive process by which you hope you can turn your raw data into nuggets of pure gold” (Denscombe 2007, p.350).*

Most importantly it was simply not possible or desirable to treat analysis as a separate activity which can only be carried out at the end of the project. It was an iterative and persistent part of the research process (Watling and James 2007). I used Watling and James’ six stages of data analysis that should be considered for qualitative analysis, to structure my approach (figure 4.13).



**Figure 4.13 Six elements of qualitative data analysis (Adapted from Watling and James 2007, p.350)**

Yin (2009) particularly recommended four particular analytical strategies that the case study researcher may use. The strategy I chose to analyse the case study evidence was the first in Yin's list. I adapted Yin's (2009) model of relying on theoretical propositions to following theoretical propositions that led to my research. I set out some basic research questions at the start of the study and the analytical strategy followed these questions through the data. I used explanation building and cross case synthesis as the two main analytical techniques to support my data analysis strategy. Using word tables as part of the cross case synthesis in particular provided a simple but clear view of the case evidence highlighting key points arising from the study.

The research questions and research objectives provided me with a structure with which to review the evidence gathered in the study and to give priority to

data that answered my research question. The theoretical proposition approach focused my attention on certain data and helped me organise the entire case study. The theory development took time however and was difficult to synthesise (Yin 2009; Eisenhardt 1989).

#### ***4.11.1 Interview and Focus Group Data Analysis***

Given the dialogic nature of the interviews with the participants, senior leaders, staff development manager and the coach I considered carefully how to analyse the leader-researcher dialogues. Markova et al. (2007) provided a useful guide to analysing dialogue in focus groups which provided a template for my analysis:

- Dialogue as a communicative activity: content of discourse cannot be separated from the interaction in which the content is made manifest
- Who is speaking?: heterogeneity of speaker, internal dialogue and positioning of speaker in relation to these multiple voices
- Circulation of ideas: how topics are progressed in dialogue
- Themata: cultural assumptions emerging through dialogue.

Markova et al. (2007) said that in any one study it would be impossible to focus on all of these areas however the third and fourth threads provided a useful template for analysing the data from the interviews. I focused on how key topics progressed in the dialogue and this led to themata that arose from these topics in the discussion. Clear topics and themata came from each interview. It was particularly interesting to see how different topics and themes arose despite using standard questions. I was also careful to consider the dangers of fracturing the dialogue when coding it, given that dialogue is a dynamic process (Grossen 2010). I also recognised that in carrying out the coding I was temporarily freezing the dialogue and my perspective (Markova et al. 2007).

The analysis process started with transcribing the interview data. Transcription is recognised as part of the analysis process and involves an amount of researcher construction (Gillies and Aldred 2002). The transcription was

produced in a clear template so it could be easily read. It was important to consider that transcripts only provide a partial record as they cannot faithfully reproduce every aspect of talk (Ochs 1979). Taking this into account I listened again to the audio recordings of the interviews after I had coded the data and selected my topics and themes. This was a sense check to establish whether I had captured the essence of the key issues. Revisiting the topics and themata in this way revised my analysis refocusing my priorities. In my first attempt at coding the data my key themes included ‘time management’ however when I revisited the recordings I concluded that this was not a theme but a part of a larger point about the individualised approach to coaching. The analytical process is outlined in table 4.4 below.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Analytic task</b>
<i>Stage one</i>	<i>Transcripts of interview with participants, senior leaders, staff development manager and coach produced from taped interviews</i>
<i>Stage two</i>	<i>Transcripts coded for topics – a summary sheet was provided of each transcript highlighting topics identified</i>
<i>Stage three</i>	<i>Transcripts coded for themata</i>
<i>Stage four</i>	<i>Review audio recordings again after coding for themata to test the themes identified</i>
<i>Stage five</i>	<i>Summaries constructed of key topics and themata and how they interrelate and contrast with the policy context</i>

**Table 4.4 Process of analysis**

Further consideration was given to analysing the talk of interviews by recognising that interviews are best thought of as dialogues in which both participants contribute to the responses that are recorded (Kvale 1996). It was important to note that the responses in the interviews would be influenced by the speaker’s conception of their audience. Taking this into account I considered both mine (the interviewer) and the interviewee’s talk in my analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1994).

I used an approach influenced by grounded theory to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews. The grounded theory approach to qualitative data analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s. Theory developed and evolved during the research process due to the interplay between data collection and analysis phases. Hayes (2000) highlighted that:

*“The theory which is produced using a grounded theory analysis may sometimes be very context-specific, applying only in a relatively small number of situations; but because it is always grounded in data collected from the real world, it can serve as a very strong basis for further investigations, as well as being a research finding in its own right.” (Hayes 2000, p. 184).*

What most differentiated grounded theory from other analytical strategies was that it was explicitly emergent. It did not test a hypothesis. It set out to find what theory accounted for the research situation as it was. The aim, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) in particular stated it, was to *discover* the theory. The challenge for me as researcher was that as a practitioner in FE I inevitably have a large amount of knowledge about the cultures and influences on colleges therefore it would be impossible to be completely removed from forming even a basic hypothesis. Although my approaches were aligned with grounded theory my starting point in analysing the data would inevitably be influenced by my background and knowledge. I tried to remain open to seeing the data differently but I had quite strong constructs that were informing my reading of the data. The transcribing of the interviews was particularly time consuming (Edwards and Westgate 1994). Interview number one took over two hours for each participant and produced on average 20 pages each per transcript. I tried to ask too many questions (20) and ended up with quite repetitive answers from the participants that were not very incisive. This experience shaped my approach to interview two. In the second interview I limited my questions to only five and focused on having open questions designed to draw out more in-depth thoughts from the participants. In order to reduce ‘many words into fewer categories’ I used content analysis to shape the interview responses (Weber 1990). The goal was to reduce the interview responses in different ways (Flick 1998). I used Denscombe’s (2007) content analysis (figure 4.14) framework to help me code and quantify the data from the interviews.

<b>Content analysis</b>	
<b>... reveals</b>	<b>... by measuring</b>
1. <i>What the text establishes as relevant</i>	<i>What is contained (e.g. particular relevant words, ideas)</i>
2. <i>The priorities portrayed through the text</i>	<i>How frequently it occurs; in what order it occurs</i>
3. <i>The values conveyed in the text</i>	<i>Positive and negative views on things</i>
4. <i>How ideas are related</i>	<i>Proximity of ideas within the text, logical association</i>

**Figure 4.14 Content Analysis (Denscombe 2007, p.238)**

This structured approach provided a template from which to generate themes and issues and provided rigour to the analysis that would stand up to tests of auditors for trustworthiness.

In order to provide a structure to the focus group data analysis I adopted a series of approaches to ensure full coverage of all points and removing moderator bias (Bryman 2008). I collated the focus group text into a basic template based on each individual response. I then changed the order of the data and grouped it chronologically and by theme/concept. The basic template allowed me to consider the best way to start coding the qualitative text. I rearranged the evidence into themed blocks following the research objectives to see how the blocks compared. I drew up a matrix of categories and cut up the evidence sheets placing each piece of evidence in the block in the matrix. The rearranged blocks gave a wider picture of the evidence range that I had for each theme.

It was interesting to see the strength of some key themes and some weaker areas where evidence seemed less significant in volume. There were also some pieces of evidence that did not fit easily into my identified themes – this made me rethink the themes and research questions. I used flip charts to create graphical displays of evidence and themes and moved ideas around until I could establish some useful flow charts of how the evidence tied together. Using a visual mapping exercise really focused me on the key themes and then how they linked to each other.

I started with a very basic coding and counting of the basic themes for the evidence gathered to see how these themes equated to the research questions. I was pleased to see that the initial planning that went into the focus groups

meant that the data gathered had a strong correlation to the themes I wanted to explore in my research question and objectives. There were some new areas that arose from the interviews and over time this highlighted the changing dynamic of the research and the need for me to capture this in my analysis.

Using the basic coding I carried out some simple counting and second order calculations to see any particular themes arising that were the strongest and the times when they were the strongest. Two key themes arose from this second order counting the strength of comment from participants that they were reluctant initially to take part in coaching and then the feeling from participants that the coaching had changed their views on using this type of development. This simple chronological approach provided me with a good starting point and focused my mind on identifying key themes and how they evolved over the time of the study. The approach highlighted how the scope and range of the case study evolved over the time of the leadership development programme and how new themes emerged on the timeline.

#### ***4.11.2 Questionnaire Analysis***

There were 18 responses to the questionnaire from the sample of 18. The questionnaire template is shown in Appendix G. The results were collated in two ways. The rating scale allowed me to analyse the collective responses of participants as to the value of what they learned at the introductory day and then the relevance of what they learned. I also followed advice from Cohen and Manion (1985) who recommended assigning a code number to each question in order to make the subsequent data analysis and handling more efficient.

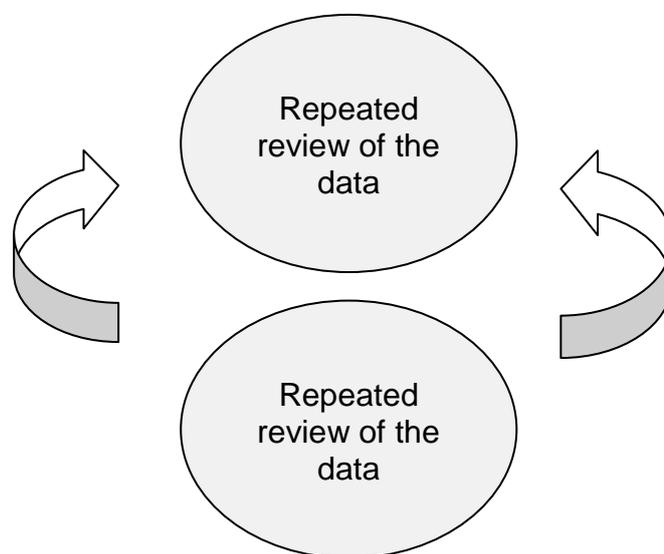
#### ***4.11.3 Bringing together the data from all the units of analysis to provide the 'Case' analysis***

The analysis of case study evidence “is one of the least developed and most challenging aspects of carrying out a case study” (Yin 2009, p.127). There were three strands to the data collection and analysis in the study. Strand one was the collection and analysis of the data on the college context. Strand two

was the collection and analysis of data on each of the units of analysis (the participants). Strand three was the biggest challenge for me in using the single-case (embedded) research design - it was how to bring together all the data from each of the units of analysis to explore the overall case themes.

For strands one and two I carried out a preliminary review of the data to provide some basic structure to the text and ideas gathered from the documents, interviews, focus group and questionnaires. This initial 'playing' provided me with basic codes with which to start grouping and analysing the data only – the answering of the 'how' and 'why' questions from the case study data required the next stage of the analytical strategy.

I used the constant comparative model (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Miles and Huberman 1994) to support the iterative model outlined above to support my explanation building (figure 4.15). This allowed me to review themes and ideas as they arose in the individual units of analysis and then in stage three to reflect as to the frequency and commonality of themes across the whole study.



**Figure 4.15 Constant Comparative Method (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Miles and Huberman 1994)**

There were, of course, potential problems with explanation building. The main problem was that much emphasis is placed on the analytical insight of the

explanation builder (Yin 2009). There was the danger in drifting away from the original topic of interest and this was countered by my constant referral back to the original purpose of the inquiry and other possible alternative explanations (Yin 2009).

In stage three my approach was to revisit the analysis for a third key time bringing together the themes from the context and the participants and looking at competing ideas and key synergies from all the data. To help overcome the difficulty in bringing together the wide range of data, I used one of Yin's five analytical techniques to provide structure to my analytic repertoire. I used the explanation building model (Yin 2009) to structure my approach. A useful starting point for me in analysing the larger data set was to play with the data. (Yin 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest ways of playing with data as:

- Putting information into different arrays
- Making a matrix of categories and placing the evidence within such categories
- Creating data displays – flow charts and other graphics – for examining the data
- Tabulating the frequency of different events
- Examining the complexity of such tabulations and their relationships by calculating second-order numbers such as means and variances
- Putting information in chronological order or using some other temporal scheme

As expected the data gathered was rich and complex but very enlightening. Key themes were identified from the data, the method provided a structured process that sense checked the findings as they arose. In order to minimise the potential pitfalls in analysing the case data overall I used Yin's criteria for high quality analysis as a stress test for my analysis process (figure 4.16).

- ❖ *My analysis should show that I had attended to all the evidence*
- ❖ *My analysis should address, if possible, all major rival interpretations*
- ❖ *My analysis should address the most significant aspect of my case*
- ❖ *I should use my own prior, expert knowledge in my case study*

**Figure 4.16 Pressing for a High Quality Analysis adapted from (Yin 2009, p.160-161)**

Using this iterative process and the three key stages I was able to carry out a thorough analysis of each individual unit of data and then an overall meta-analysis of the case to identify the key themes emerging from the research.

#### **4.12 Summary**

Designing the methodology was the most challenging part of the research study. The design and methods seemed at first simple and straightforward yet the notes of caution in the research texts turned out to be justified and a useful guide to developing a robust framework. In shaping my research methodology I reflected on the fundamental points that shaped my own research stance and consequently my research design. I naturally leant towards the position that the reality of the participants was multi-dimensional and shaped by the policy context in which they were operating. Thinking in this way meant I leant towards an interpretive stance in my data collection methods seeking deeper knowledge from the participants. A key factor for me also in designing the research was my role as participant and manager then later as external researcher. The challenge in the research design was how to mitigate my influence as an insider at the start of the programme then as an outsider as the programme and the research developed.

I needed to acknowledge that, in this research, I was not seeking to prove or disprove a hypothesis or provide extensive generalisations. Instead I was seeking to provide an insight into how one particular leadership programme shaped the views, attitudes and actions of middle managers in an FE college. In this research the knowledge was co-constructed between the researcher and

the participants. The influence of the policy context was also key to the sector and the college and was therefore essential to the research.

In shaping the research design I used the case study method as it recognised that the research looks at the how and why, focusing on contemporary events but without any intervention by the researcher – it looked at the events as they unfolded rather than controlling the behavioural event. The emphasis of a case, in fact, tended to be upon an intensive examination of the setting (Bryman 2008). Having established a design and process for the case study the next challenge was to consider the how to overcome the traditional questions of reliability, replicability and validity raised with case studies. The key for me was to recognise that qualitative research can be judged in many ways and it can be used in many different contexts. I was particularly keen to consider how I could design the case study to provide high quality research in my method, outcomes, reliability and replicability? From a practice based perspective the quality of the research also depended on the generalisability, trustworthiness, level of triangulation and the ethics of the approach.

The research methods used in the study followed recommendations from Yin (2009), Bryman (2008) and Cohen et al. (2007) for case studies. Multiple sources provided evidence, including written documents on policy, interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather the data however given the rich nature of the case study, the aims of the research and my stance as a researcher, the majority of the data collected was qualitative. The research questions and research objectives provided me with a structure with which to review the evidence gathered in the study and to give priority to data that answered my research question. The theoretical proposition approach focused my attention on certain data and helped me organise the entire case study.

## Chapter 5. Case Study Stories

### 5.1 Profile of Participants

Information about the participants was gathered from a proforma with information on the college obtained from secondary sources such as strategic documents, prospectuses and public brochures. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the profiles of the participants in the programme.

Id	Type of manager	Length of service in FE	Length of service as manager	Male/female	Age
1	Curriculum/SEG	30	15	F	57
2	Curriculum	25	10	F	55
3	Curriculum	24	12	M	54
4	Curriculum	26	7	F	58
5	Curriculum	28	14	F	52
6	Support	10	8	F	55
7	Curriculum/SEG	18	9	M	45
8	Support/SEG	29	11	M	56
9	Curriculum/SEG	19	7	M	47
10	Support	6	6	M	53
11	Support/SEG	10	10	M	44
12	Curriculum/SEG	10	5	M	41
13	Support/SEG	5	5	M	39
14	Support/SEG	16	7	M	49
15	Curriculum/SEG	14	8	F	40
16	Curriculum	28	17	M	58
17	Support/SEG	18	14	M	53
18	Support	9	5	F	36

**Table 5.1 Profile of whole Leadership development group (longer term case study managers shaded) (SEG – senior executive group)**

The balance of male and female managers in the group was skewed towards male managers at 61%. In curriculum management the balance of male and female managers was equal, whereas in support the number of male managers far outweighed females (75%). The overall average age of managers in the training group was 49. The average age of curriculum managers was 51 and of support managers was 48. The average length of service that all participants had in FE was considerable at 18 years. Curriculum managers had a notably longer average FE length of service of 22 years with support managers less at 13 years. This was understandable as most curriculum managers had substantial teaching service in the sector before becoming managers and a

considerable number of support managers came from other professional roles and organisations not necessarily connected with education. The average managerial experience for the group was 9 years with curriculum managers having an average of 10 years management experience compared to 8 years for support managers.

## 5.2 Educational Training Background of Participants

The lack of management and leadership qualifications in the team provided evidence supporting the college's view of wanting to enhance management and leadership skills more formally (table 5.2).

General Education					Professional Educational and Management Training				
	Curr	%	Supp	%		Curr	%	Supp	%
GCE 'O' Level	10	100	8	100	C&G 7307	10	100	0	0
GCE 'A' Level or equiv.	10	100	8	100	Cert Ed	10	100	0	0
Bachelor Degree or higher	10	100	6	75	Level 5 + Management Quals	2	20	1	12.5

**Table 5.2 Educational Background**

## 5.3 Professional Development in Coaching

In their initial interviews virtually all the managers highlighted their lack of knowledge or experience of leadership coaching. Three managers who had experienced coaching had one session with a leadership coach and they spoke extremely positively of the session (Table 5.3). All three managers were looking forward to the coaching as a result of this previous experience. The managers who had no experience were generally positive about the potential for the coaching suggesting they were looking forward to experiencing this new technique and that it was different to the usual staff development days.

Coverage of Coaching	Responses from Managers		
	Curr	Supp	Comments
a. Not covered	8	7	Most curriculum and support managers had no previous experience of coaching as a development programme.
b. Somewhat covered	2	1	Two curriculum managers and one support staff manager had experience with the coach before but only for one session each. They were very positive about the new programme and rated their session highly.
c. Fair coverage	0	0	
<b>Sub-total (b&amp;c)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	
d. Comprehensive coverage	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	

**Table 5.3 Professional Development of participants**

#### **5.4 Profiles of the Senior Team, Participants and Longitudinal Managers**

The senior leadership were interviewed to establish their views on the policy context in which the college was operating and the future challenges that they would be facing (Table 5.4). The two senior leaders (principal and deputy principal) had a significant amount of leadership experience in FE and other public sector bodies. Their views and approaches formed part of the college policy context in that they shaped the environment in which the managers operated and the culture of the college. The staff development manager was instrumental in the design of the programme and a strong advocate of coaching as a developmental tool. The leadership coach was interviewed to establish his perspective on the programme and his views on what he was expecting to achieve.

Id	Type of manager	Length of service in FE	Length of service as manager	Male/female	Age
P	Senior Leadership	27	23	M	53
DP	Senior Leadership	10	10	M	47
SD	Staff Development	8	8	F	44
C	Leadership Coach	0	15	M	50

**Table 5.4 Profile of College Senior Leadership and Staff Development Manager**

## 5.5 Profiles of Longitudinal Participant Managers

Four managers were identified six months into the programme to be involved in a longer term review of the impact of the leadership development programme. The managers were selected to reflect both curriculum and support sides of the college, senior executive group membership and lower manager membership. Their individual stories are outlined in this chapter. A cross case analysis is carried out in chapter six under the thematic review.

<b>Participant 1</b>	<b>Michael</b>
<b>Participant details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Id7</li> <li>• Curriculum manager and senior executive group member</li> <li>• 18 years FE experience</li> <li>• 9 years management experience</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Aged 45 at start of development programme</li> </ul> <p>Michael had been a middle manager at the college for 9 years and prior to this had been a lecturer and curriculum leader in the same organisation. He had progressed in his career in the college and continued to see his future as developing his role and responsibilities in the organisation.</p>

### Michael's Story

In his first interview Michael outlined the particular aspects of his role as a head of school and in particular the very operational context in which he felt he operated:

*"Its a demanding role you spend a lot of time fire-fighting" (I1, p.1)*

Michael was keen to stress the difficulty he felt in moving away from day to day issues. The nature of the head of school role to Michael meant that he felt the core of his role was to solve others' problems and keep things generally running smoothly. He was aware how little time he spent thinking strategically due to

the pressures he placed on himself in his role. Michael didn't consider early on in the study that perhaps he was the limiting factor in enabling his strategic thinking development. He saw his role as very much a day to day job and in effect did not see his day job as being strategic. Michael felt that he was so busy doing what he saw as the key elements of his role that he did not have much time to think strategically:

*"I think if you spend alot of time in your room doing your day to day job then you don't get alot of time to think about strategic things" (I1, p.2).*

While he recognised that time was a key barrier to thinking strategically in his mind, in his early interview Michael did show an awareness that he should be looking more outwardly and considering the wider landscape. The main barrier seemed to be the emphasis he placed on what he saw as the key things he ought to be doing in his role:

*"Just time to do it. It's difficult to make time, you know you should make time but you still tend to fall back into the day to day role of what you should be doing" (I1, p.3).*

This contrasted with the principal's view (discussed in chapter 6) that the key managers such as heads of school should, as a matter of routine, be integrating strategic thinking into their daily routine. Or at least they should be considering strategic issues at some points in the academic year.

It was most interesting to note how Michael felt a year into the programme. He had developed a different outlook partly shaped by moving into a new more senior role in the college. Whilst Michael had clearly focused on his individual leadership skills he did talk more of the strategic influences on the sector and how he would need to shape his style to meet these demands:

*"When I met the coach for the first time it was just after that I changed from being a head of school to a director. So what I was trying to work through with him was the difference with regards to the strategic developments I would need to make with regards to my own leadership skills, thinking skills, whatever they would be" (I2, p.1).*

He highlighted a key strength of the leadership development programme for him was the time away from day to day operations:

*"I think the advantage to this one is you have got time to reflect and do things differently" (I2, p.8).*

It was clear from Michael's interview that the time and space away from the daily grind was highly valued by Michael and this time afforded him the opportunity to reflect on his personal development more fully.

Michael focused on the fact that this programme was different from the previous development programmes that concentrated on the nuts and bolts of managing a curriculum area. The individual nature of the development and the free form of the coaching were very much a key difference in this programme for Michael:

*"1-2-1 s were very good – given dedicated time to spend with you" (I2, p. 9).*

He reflected that the coaching – focused on different approaches leaders could adopt:

*"it was very much well there's different things you can do from here, different pathways you can go down, different objectives. Sort of left it up to me to decide on what I wanted to do" (I2, p.4).*

Michael particularly commented on how good the coach was at stimulating his own responses to issues:

*"He's very good at not answering your questions but getting you to answer them for yourselves" (I2, p.4).*

There was a clear shift in Michael over the course of the programme in developing his personal skills and adapting to his new role. Very much a company man he had embraced the opportunity to take development time and was particularly keen to stress how the individual nature of the coaching had allowed him the opportunity to develop the skills he felt he needed at that time.

<b>Participant 2</b>	<b>Mary</b>
<b>Participant details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Id15</li> <li>• Curriculum manager</li> <li>• 14 years FE experience</li> <li>• 8 years management experience</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Aged 40 at start of development programme</li> </ul> <p>Mary came to the college from a nearby high performing college in the region. She already had management experience in other colleges. Mary was keen on leadership development and keen to progress in the college or externally.</p>

### **Mary's Story**

Mary was the least excited by the programme initially in her first interview. Having come from a particularly high performing college with a strong autocratic culture she focused mainly on the differences in culture in the college in her first interview. Mary highlighted that she found the college leadership style quite vague and this meant she sometimes struggled to find her way through the systems and cultures:

*"its difficult to try and work within a system when you are not quite sure what is going on" (I1, p.6).*

She was particularly frustrated by the leadership style that promised one thing then delayed responding:

*"You know I think that if you have sat in a meeting where you have been told that this is going to happen, it will be next week, and it gets to Friday at five o'clock and you just... nothing. So I think that sometimes can be a bit frustrating" (I1, p.12).*

Mary's focus in the interviews was more around culture and seeking something that was a bit more collaborative. Unlike Michael her aims for the development

were less individual but more about bringing the managers closer together. She liked the group development concept at the start of the programme:

*"I find it nice to be with other managers in the college...we don't spend a lot of time discussing how you deal with different things" (I1, p.19).*

Of the four participants Mary was the only one that spoke in detail about the group development session and how she enjoyed working with the other managers and how little they came together in every day college situations.

In terms of leadership Mary highlighted early on that it was easy to follow the same route and approach and it could be hard to break the mould:

*"I think you get so wrapped up in what you are doing that you do it the same way don't you" (I1, p.15).*

Mary highlighted her particular area of concern as a middle manager was how to influence upwards:

*"I think in terms of communicating upwards, that's more difficult" (I1, p.9).*

A key point for her was how to get things done in the college culture. She reflected that using the coach to advise her on alternative routes was something she was looking forward to doing:

*"I think it would be nice to spend time with someone to say – well in this situation this is what I did or what do you think I should do or what would be your perception of this, how would you handle this?" (I1, p.18).*

Mary also said her personal goals for the coaching focused on very practical management issues:

*"I'd like to look at general things, whether it's time management" (I1, p.19).*

Of the four participants Mary was the least enthused about the development a year into the programme. Like Michael she said the thinking hats (De Bono 2009) model had been something she had used in the college:

*“It has been quite useful to look at it from their point of view” (I2, p.1)...I have felt calmer in dealing with stuff...I have felt that maybe looking at it from their point of view it’s less confrontational” (I2, p.2).*

She was positive about the style of the coach but couldn’t pinpoint any big issues that she had personally been dealing with:

*“He just made me think about things in a different way” (I2, p.4).*

She highlighted the common feedback from all participants that the coach challenged her to think of her own answers to questions:

*“He doesn’t say loads, but he pushes it back to you all of the time...he sort of prods away and pushes and makes you talk about yourself, which makes you think” (I2, p.4).*

Mary’s interview was the shortest of the participants, whilst she was positive about the development she offered very little about the issues she had discussed with her coach. She certainly did not focus on strategic issues facing the college nor did she provide any insight into the individual areas she had covered in her coaching sessions.

<b>Participant 3</b>	<b>Brian</b>
<b>Participant details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Id12</li> <li>• Curriculum manager and senior executive group member</li> <li>• 10 years FE experience</li> <li>• 5 years management experience</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Aged 41 at start of development programme</li> </ul> <p>Brian came from a non FE background to be a lecturer in the college and quickly became a middle manager. He was promoted further onto the senior executive group after 3 years in a middle management role and was keen to use the development programme to shape his leadership skills for his current role and for promotion prospects.</p>

## Brian's Story

Brian was very confident at the start of the programme and was looking forward to a different approach to leadership development:

*"I have quite natural creative tendencies anyway. And as such, I tend to think a little out of the box" (I1, p.3). "I just like the fact that it's different, I like change" (I1, p.17).*

He was the most forthright in his opinions on the development programme. He raised concerns about two particular things hampering the development programme:

*"The first obvious barrier for me is the job's always very operational, probably 80% operational...the second one is people ring fence their little areas" (I1, p.4).*

The continued theme arose from Brian around the need to move away from operational issues but with the recognition that all of the middle managers spent the majority of their time in the college on day to day issues. Brian also highlighted a similar cultural theme about managers working in their own areas and the lack of collaboration amongst the team.

He was positive about the coaching and particularly focussed on the role of the coach in challenging him more than he would himself:

*"There's a third party, somebody else being objective and perhaps prodding me and making me look into those dark corners where normally I just skirt over it and not admit" (I1, p.15).*

The mention of looking at those darker areas highlighted Brian's willingness to engage with the coach to dig below the surface and tackle some deeper leadership issues he felt he had. It also highlighted his willingness to embrace the confidential nature of the coaching and that he was willing to open up to this. He admitted that he was going to try to use the programme fully and not to present himself in a false way for promotional purposes:

*“So I’m quite prepared to engage with it fully and what I’m trying to do is not naturally do what I want to do which is skew the outcome. I shouldn’t admit that though, but that’s the truth” (I1, p.17).*

Brian’s reflections were more personal a year into the programme. He shared the depth of personal discussion he had with the coach and how this had helped him develop his confidence:

*“The discussion I had in relation to my performance as a manager was very effective in identifying I think one particular block that I had in relation to how I performed. And through the discussion I was able to come up with ways of realising that to some extent there were self-imposed parameters that I was putting in place and that really I was just as capable of removing those as putting them in place (I2, p.1) ...And in my case a lot of it was to do with self-confidence and self-belief in that you were capable of delivering in the way that was expected” (I2, p.3).*

The very individual nature of the development programme was clear from Brian’s story. In his interviews he did not mention the external issues facing the college at all but focussed solely on his individual development areas and how the coaching had challenged him to face these:

*“Then before you know where you are you are discussing things which are issues, which you didn’t think were issues” (I2, p.3).*

The personal development of the coaching was very much the key point that Brian made a year into the programme:

*“I had the same mental block that most people did where there are certain darker areas which I just didn’t look at. And of course through the discussion I ended up looking at those and realising there were things that I wasn’t necessarily performing correctly” (I2, p.3).*

He flagged up the essential criteria for him on the programme had been the confidential nature of the discussion and the fact that the coach was external to the college:

*“But because I could talk to this person knowing that he wasn’t going to influence my next promotion....then you were able to talk about those areas that were slight concerns that you wouldn’t necessarily be at home discussing with colleagues” (I2, p.4).*

There was no emphasis by Brian on the culture of the college or developing a college style. This was particularly interesting considering that Brian was the most senior person on the development programme and in fact could have shaped his and others development in his capacity to engage others and work with the talents and qualities of others on a common cause. There was a mismatch here between the aims of the principal in developing a college style and changing culture (outlined in chapter 6) and how Brian and others had used the programme for far more individual issues and development.

<b>Participant 4</b>	<b>Robert</b>
<b>Participant details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Id17</li> <li>• Support manager and senior executive group member</li> <li>• 18 years FE experience</li> <li>• 14 years management experience</li> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Aged 53 at start of development programme</li> </ul> <p>Robert had a wide range of management experience in three colleges and other institutions. Robert was an experienced senior manager and was keen to experience the new 'challenges' from the programme. Robert was the most experienced manager in the case study and was looking for personal development and learning rather than promotion.</p>

### **Robert's Story**

Robert saw the coaching programme as an opportunity to bring forward new leadership thinking both individually and cross college. He was very clear in his role in that even though he was a senior executive group member he felt he supported the strategic thinkers rather than being strategic himself:

*"I feel that I have a lot of freedom, but in terms of the tier where I am, I am supporting the strategic thinkers" (I1, p.2).*

It was particularly interesting to note how Robert saw the culture of the college. He focused on the tensions between the curriculum and the non-curriculum sides of the college highlighting the friction between the managers:

*“If anything, I would want to find ways, now this is a huge challenge, to reduce the adversariness we have here” (I1, p.8).*

He saw the programme as an opportunity for both sides to come closer together:

*“maybe we would do well to have some understanding of each other’s issues, this is going to sound desperately hard, that the curriculum is king” (I1, p.9).*

Robert was the most focused of the participants on effecting cultural change through the development programme. He looked at the opportunities the coaching approach could have in bringing managers together in a more collaborative culture. Robert also understood most the changing and conflicting external demands on the college:

*“Because if we are really committed to employer responsiveness then it is a commercial world, in a commercial world it has got different constraints criteria to the protected world that we live in where we have direct government funding” (I1, p.8).*

Robert was also positive about the individual nature of the coaching:

*“there are other issues that need to be developed and that will be better done individually , so I think, individual coaching is the best approach” (I1, p.14).*

Robert highlighted the same barrier to learning as Michael – time:

*“Most looking forward to is the time... you are going to be taking yourself out of yourself and deal with the issues” (I1, p.14).*

Robert outlined how coaching made him reflect. He saw the coaching as encouraging him to think about what he did – it made him reflect. It was good development – ‘as we don’t have a lot of time to do that sort of thing’ (I2, p3)

Robert interestingly was keen to stress the need to be ambitious in what he and the college was doing. He was the only participant that considered taking more risks:

*"Its best to be ambitious and go backwards than not to be ambitious and do nothing at all. Need to take some risks" (I2, p.4).*

Robert also highlighted that although the individualised nature of the coaching was excellent he was not used to this approach and he felt guilty about talking about himself. The different approach was a challenge for him, to accept that this was time purely for him.

Robert focused on the challenge provided by the coach and the facility for reflection that the programme had brought him:

*"He's a good listener...he just tweaks you a little bit, asking you what you really mean. Because as you are talking you are reflecting on things. And he would also say do you think this would be a better way of doing it?" (I2, p.5).*

Interestingly Robert did not feel he had made as much progress as he would have liked in his objectives, he showed an understanding of the complexity of what he was trying to achieve:

*"No because it was culture change...it was just too ambitious at the time. But then again, its best to be ambitious and go backwards than not to be ambitious and do nothing at all" (I2, p.4).*

Robert's aims around culture change clearly had not been achieved because the other participants had in effect focused on individual goals and had very little focus on common cultural goals. There had been no guidance by the senior postholders to the coach or participants on culture, external issues and reshaping the organisation to meet the new challenges and consequently the individuals used the development programme to focus on what they individually perceived as key for them.

## **5.6 Summary**

Although it was clear that each participant was very different to each of the others there was a common theme arising from the stories. The key common theme was the distinctly personal outcomes portrayed by each participant from

the coaching. The text of all four participants was dominated by the use of 'I' as opposed to 'we' in their commentaries. Analysis of the text of the interviews showed the four participants used the term 'I' 1762 times and 'we' 429 times in interview one, and 'I' 655 times and 'we' 106 times in interview two. All four participants stressed the importance to them of the one to one coaching and the confidentiality they genuinely felt they had with the coach. The personal nature of the development programme ran throughout each of the participants' stories in stark contrast to the principal's stated vision of creating a collective college culture from the coaching programme (outlined in chapter 6).

A second key theme common to the participants in the longitudinal study was the value they attributed to the time and space they were given by the programme away from the daily grind and operational matters. The time to pause and reflect had a strong impact on all four participants. It was clear that the college managers were running to stand still and it was not until they took the time out for the coaching that they really considered the value and validity of their actions and contemplated the new horizons they were facing.

With these strong common themes however it was of particular interest to the study that all four of the participants had very different goals for the coaching. The opportunity for personal development had been used differently and uniquely by each individual. Michael focused particularly on adapting to his new more senior role in the college and developing his interpersonal skills and his emotional intelligence. Robert was most interested in cultural change as he saw this as important to doing things differently and interestingly he felt that he did not make as much progress as he wanted (because the coaching focused on individuals and not culture). Brian was outwardly confident but the coaching seemed to get below this and he had a sense of increasing personal agency (although none of the participants mentioned relating to relational agency - the capacity to engage others and work with the talents and qualities of others on common cause). The mention of darker areas suggested he confronted some very personal issues. Mary, for whom the coaching had possibly the most limited impact was looking for something that was more collaborative and consequently felt the coaching had the most limited impact.

## **Chapter 6. The Leadership Development of the Managers – “Its not so much what we do to me, it’s about the way we do it”**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to help develop an understanding of the impact of coaching on the leadership development of the managers in a high performing FE college. This chapter outlines the research findings responding to the issues and themes highlighted in chapters two (Policy Context) and three (Literature Review). The research aimed to find out:

- What were the consequences of introducing a leadership and management programme involving developmental coaching in an FE college?
  1. Why was the leadership coaching programme introduced in the college?
  2. How did participants respond to the group development day and early coaching?
  3. How did participants respond to the coaching experience over a two year period?
  4. How did the coaching programme shape the participants views of leadership?

The analysis was collated from data from 18 participants’ views over a period of six months then a longer study of four participants over a two year period. Chapter five outlined the individual participant stories and the particular impact the programme had on each manager. This chapter looks at the cross-case themes and overall findings from the coaching programme. As outlined in chapter four, data collection methods consisted of documentary analysis, interviews, questionnaires and focus groups. As expected the data gathered was rich and complex but very enlightening. Using an inductive theory approach the key themes were analysed and are discussed below.

## **6.2 Key Themes**

### ***6.2.1 Research Question 1 - Why was the leadership coaching programme introduced in the College?***

The college in the study was a medium to large FE college in the North of England. The documentary analysis highlighted the changing and conflicting policy drivers affecting managers in the FE sector. Incorporation of the college sector in 1993 increased the degree of autonomy of the college sector but alongside this, fundamentally shifted the roles and responsibilities of managers. Randle and Brady (1997) described this new landscape as the shift from the 'professional paradigm' to the 'managerial paradigm' (p128).

The college had grown and developed when funding and students were plentiful (full time student numbers had grown by 40% and adult income increased by over 500%). Over the period of the leadership development programme the landscape for all colleges shifted very dramatically due to the economic downturn and demands of more for less which challenged the leaders. The demands on leaders and managers moreover became increasingly complex and contradictory with the new coalition government agenda and radical funding cuts. In general education policy there was a sea change in perspective, models of delivery and priorities from the new government alongside a policy shift towards greater localism and accountability but in the context of reduced funding. Clearly there were strong contradictions in the policy drivers of the college. Key messages focused on meeting the needs of employers and local priorities but in a national context driving down funding per student and in some cases removing state funding altogether.

### ***6.2.2 Senior Team Aims for the Programme***

The principal highlighted the contradictory policy context in which the case study was embedded and suggested that the college managers needed to be far more responsive to the changing context, staying ahead of the game:

*“to me it is always thinking about the next one or two steps ahead, and not where we are going to be this year but where we are going to be next year and the year after. I think the longer term position we need is that we are not reactive but proactive” (P, p.16).*

In the initial interviews with the principal it was clear that he was seeking a development programme that challenged the norm and redefined the leadership style of the college. He also suggested that for him the programme was not about developing individuals for their own personal progression:

*“it might prepare them for promotion, progression, succession within the college, but that's not why it's there” (P, p.4).*

In his mind it was a much larger programme focusing on the college leadership style and facing up to the new policy landscape. He was seeking a remodelling of the thinking of managers, making them far more future focused, flexible and willing to embrace a completely new FE landscape:

*“so it actually equips them to be flexible in the future and more reflective in the future rather than training them to actually do what they need to do now” (P, p.3).*

The principal had a clear understanding of the policy context of the college and the challenges facing managers in the next five to ten years. He understood the strong quality drivers from Ofsted, the need to be responsive and to deliver the skills needs for the country. The influence of education policy in shaping the new landscape and the need to deliver highly efficient and successful outcomes was key for the principal in seeking to develop the confidence of college managers to think differently:

*“we are looking for that flexibility of mind and approach, the thought that they are going to have to take decisions themselves and be accountable for those decisions and the difficulty there is to make them confident to know that a potentially there is no right answer” (P, p.4).*

There was an understanding of the pressures and constraints placed on leaders in the sector and the need for senior teams to focus on external relationships, agencies and activities (Gleeson and Shain 1999). There was a clear understanding by the principal of the changing and contradictory demands of

the sector and a desire to change the culture of the college to facilitate new ways of working. He was keen to open up the thinking of the managers, to facilitate a change in culture in the college to allow managers the space and time to consider the factors influencing their 'agency' and to consider how the new context-for-action would allow them to reshape their confidence and leadership identity:

*"it's not so much what we do to me, it's about the way we do it... I think with all the changes you have to keep reinforcing and refreshing that confidence all of the time, so a set of skills and knowledge that was used five years ago is useless now" (P, p.8).*

Interestingly the principal did not describe the knowledge and skills he felt were needed in the management team. Of particular note was the focus by the principal on the long term nature of the development and the fact that he saw the programme as a process rather than a product:

*"so it would improve our long-term sustainability and productivity but I don't think when it's finished that will be automatic, I see it as part of the process rather than a product if you like" (P, p.6).*

The deputy principal was also mindful of the increased pressures on the sector outlined by Bush (1999) and Lumby (2005) and the significant amount of change the college would be facing in the next five years. He picked up a key point made by the principal that the development programme needed to prepare the college managers for managing in difficult times (Hammond 2005):

*"I think we have got individuals who are grasping all of the changes that are coming along. I think we are pretty good at that anyway, it can't do anything but help with that" (DP, p.14).*

The deputy principal was not as positive about the programme however, and its development. The first concern he raised was about the planning of the programme, the aims and how the college could measure the success of the programme:

*“It comes back we should have really thought about this before we embarked on it. But I don’t know how we would measure that, I suppose you could look at individual events and see how we handled it” (DP, p.15).*

In particular he felt that the development programme had not been planned enough, it should have been thought about more, and the measures by which it could be evaluated had not been articulated:

*“I don’t know how we would measure it. Because I don’t think we have sat down and thought about how we are going to measure it anyway” (DP, p.10).*

It was interesting to see his focus was more on hard outcomes and evaluation than the softer developmental ideas outlined by the principal. Perhaps that was because the principal was an educationalist and the deputy principal was an accountant. There was an understanding that change was complicated and because of this the processes for change should have been equally detailed and considered. He felt that the change would happen faster through turnover of staff rather than changing the attitudes and actions of current managers:

*“cultural change is something that takes a long time to do. I think the thing that probably changes that faster than anything is the turnover of staff and the fact we are getting younger staff through that are prepared to have new ideas”(DP, p.14).*

These comments highlighted the key differences between the approach and leadership style of the principal compared to the deputy principal. The principal believed in organic development and had a focus on the new external environment and a longer term view. The deputy principal however, was a clear systems person believing in structured development with clear aims, internally focused with measureable hard outcomes. The deputy principal felt there was no real object to the programme. He was also strong in his opinion that he did not feel the programme had been targeted enough – he felt it had been spread too thinly across the middle management team and that it should have been targeted more on those managers who ‘are going to take the organisation

forward'. The deputy principal was however positive about the potential individual impact of the programme:

*"for the individuals who are still going to be with us I think you will help a lot, because it shows we are prepared to invest in them and train them to do the job we are asking them to do and so again hopefully, it will help to retain them as well" (DP, p.13).*

Although the deputy principal did touch upon responding to challenging times in his interview he gave less emphasis than the principal to the changing environment and hard times. His focus was balanced between external and internal factors. He was keen to stress that he hoped the development would focus on team building and help the managers understand that they were part of the management and not staff members. A key theme from the deputy principal was about developing how the middle managers relate to each other and how they make difficult decisions:

*"it will be interesting how we will work as a team, there are decisions that we are going to have to make that are difficult decisions and we won't always know whether it is the right decision until we have made them, but we have got to do it, it's better than no decision at all... great when everything is going fine, but we have experienced when things were not fine and we have to make decisions that may come around again" (DP, p.6).*

The deputy principal was positive about coaching as a development tool but made a crucial point that the coach was key to how the development would work:

*"I think (coaching) is potentially powerful, but it depends on who the coach is" (DP, p.17).*

In contrast to the deputy principal the staff development manager stressed in her interview that she felt the college senior management had spent considerable time considering in detail the objectives of the programme:

*"we did seem to go around the houses a little bit at the beginning trying to find out what development we should do" (SD, p.1).*

She was clear that she considered much more thought had gone into this programme:

*“we were more clear about what we wanted people to achieve out of this than what I think we've been in the past” (SD, p.4).*

The staff development manager felt that college managers were looking for a new style of leadership development, different to the courses they had experienced before:

*“I think they all felt that they had been subjected to a lot of development. They didn't want off-the-shelf courses” (SD, p.2).*

She highlighted the desire to do something more creative, to really focus on developing the managers as strategic thinkers and leaders:

*“we needed to be able to give staff the development in order to take them, as individuals and the college further. And it meant perhaps being a bit more creative, it isn't just your routine management skills, delegation skills, time management all that kind of thing, it was much more about looking at them as leaders and I think we wanted them to be more strategic” (SD, p.3).*

The principal's desire to do something different with the managers had a strong influence on the staff development manager's views of the programme. She recognised the need to respond to the changing external environment:

*“I think that's a very important thing that we need to be able to respond to future needs of the business” (SD, p.4).*

Her main aims for the programme definitely reflected those of the principal in aiming to lift managers' heads up and focusing them more on strategic issues and building their confidence to make decisions rather than passing things upwards:

*“We wanted people to be more reflective, being able to be more strategic in their thinking rather than reactive...and that we wanted people to be able to solve problems more. More creatively perhaps and maybe not to be so reliant on the senior managers” (SD, p.2).*

She also recognised that the biggest barrier facing those managers was moving them away from the operational role that they were firmly embedded in:

*"I sometimes think it is quite hard because again in debate with the Heads of School, they were doing a lot of operational stuff a large portion of their job...one of the things that came out of that was they felt they were fully operational because they had to be, because that's their role and nature of the information, statistics and what have you, and some of them found it may be more easy to be strategic in their thinking than others. But I think they all recognised they would like to do that more but it wasn't always possible" (SD, p.2).*

She mirrored the principal's aims to develop managers to take more risks, to develop their confidence but also she wanted to develop the team culture:

*"if we were able to inspire people to take risks and take chances in developing, but also to listen to people" (SD, p.8).*

There was also an understanding of the risks the college was taking in the radical individualised approach to the coaching and the potential limited impact of the timespan of only one year:

*"you know we don't know what's going to come up in these individual coaching sessions and it is only for a year" (SD, p.6).*

The staff development manager saw the development programme as an opportunity to develop more people in the college than just the middle management team:

*"from my point of view, as leaders we should be spending more time developing other people, personally that's what I think. We should be learning and bringing everyone else on and that's a crucial thing" (SD, p.9).*

Although the staff development manager was much closer to the principal in her aims for the programme the lack of communication to the participants meant most of those aims were sometimes spoken but not heard. In his interview the coach also recognised the risks the college was taking in this very new type of development:

*"I think the college has taken a very brave step, really and hats off to you."(C, p.7).*

He felt particularly that in effect the college was not setting the agenda and this particularly contradicted the principal's aim of creating a college style:

*"I think, to have said ok, we want to try a new way of doing professional development, we don't want to restrict it by putting an agenda over the top of it, we want it to be about the people, so it is really personalised learning, that's what we want to do. I think, a number of other people thought, wow, this is extraordinary, some of us have said, but aren't the leadership going to miss out on being able to get some rich data back from you about your views and opinions on general trends..." (C, p.7).*

The length of the programme and the personalised nature of the coaching particularly appealed to the coach:

*"I think it is really powerful and more so this time than last, because last time there was an hour and that was it, and ok so, what you can do in an hour with that is very limited, you can get a long way but it is limited. Whereas what we have got here is a much longer term programme where, ok, in the first session we can look at that, and go through some of the detail and then set some personal goals about what we want to do about it and then come back"(C, p.9).*

The coach was confident that the programme was achieving the college goals although his ideas of what they were, differed to probably all the senior team. One goal he did mirror was that of the desire of the senior managers to do something different to what the college had done before:

*"And that's how it came about really, the college as represented by those two people didn't want to have the same kind of thing happening again they wanted to do something new"(C, p.10).*

### **6.2.3 Managers' views on the aims of the programme**

The interviewees who were part of the senior executive group (SEG) highlighted that the design and concept of the leadership development programme had been discussed however they did not highlight the changing policy context as key to them. Senior executive group members were much more comfortable than the middle managers with the planning of the programme as they were part of the discussions in designing the programme. The SEG members were

quite vague though in their interpretation of the actual aims and objectives of the programme. There was an understanding from some SEG members about trying to create more of a collaborative college culture:

*“so that everybody can work together just as that team approach rather than being separate entities themselves and constantly having to battle for bits of information that you want should improve things as well” (I1, Id1 p.36).*

One SEG member described her feelings as to why she was looking forward to the programme:

*“because I think it wasn't out of the blue, I mean we've talked about it for a long time” (I1 Id1, p.16).*

Another was positive because of his previous experience of coaching in particular:

*“the last time I found it very useful and it actually helped me to reflect and to change many practices and take a step back from some situations”(I1, Id11 p.12).*

It was interesting to see the different perspectives of the participants depending on the stage they were at in their careers. This contradicted the deputy principal's view that the programme could have been more targeted on newer managers:

*“I looked at the group collectively on Friday and I thought, well half of us are sort of creeping up to retirement and what else are we going to learn from this, and others also have not started on the road, but I've taken on more and more responsibility, and I think it will be useful for them to see how others perceive them” (I1, Id1 p.15).*

Another SEG member was particularly keen to focus on his own individual development rather than a college style:

*“I would like to develop a focus on me. By that I don't mean organisational focus.... I'm looking at this program as more than just developing certain skills and attributes, it's looking at long-term career coaching” (I1, Id11 p.21).*

Despite saying that SEG members had talked about the development programme for a long time only a few of them highlighted the significant external influences focused on by the principal and the need to change the culture and ecology to be able to respond to the vastly changing landscape. Only Robert and Michael made any reference to the external environment. Robert highlighted a need to have a greater commercial understanding of the world in the future and the relatively protected environment the managers had been operating in previously:

*“Because if we are really committed to employer responsiveness then it is a commercial world, in a commercial world it has got different constraints criteria to the protected world that we live in where we have direct government funding”(Robert I1, p.8).*

He recognised the need to look outside the college:

*“I haven’t got any great expectation from it apart from allowing me time to sit down and think, I suppose outside the box, instead of thinking about what is going on in ..... college, think outside the college and what are the challenges and have someone like ... an outside person give you an external perspective on what might be another way to do it” (Robert I1, p.12).*

In his initial interview Michael described his view of the sector and highlighted his understanding of some of the difficulties all colleges were facing. He valued networks amongst colleges that allowed discussions around problems and challenges. It was interesting to note very little debate was given to the future challenges and analysis of the wider environment. Michael highlighted a common theme from all participants that in their roles they were primarily focused on a day to day internal operational happenings:

*“Its a demanding role you spend a lot of time fire fighting” (I1, p.1) ...“I think if you spend a lot of time in your room doing your day to day job then you don’t get a lot of time to think about strategic things”(I1, p.2).*

Amongst the non SEG participants there was considerable confusion as to the aims of the programme generally. Early on issues arose around some

participants being ignorant of the reasons, aims and value of the programme (Clarke 1994; Buchanan and Boddy 1992; Plant 1987). One participant summarised the overall feeling of the middle managers:

*“I actually was a bit tentative about it at first, I was thinking what are we doing with it. I wasn't cynical about it, I was actually tentatively thinking what's this going to be like, what are the outcomes going to be like, what are we actually going to do” (I1 Id4, p.12).*

In the initial interviews respondents were asked how they, as individuals, felt about previous leadership development in the college and the new leadership development programme as a change initiative. There was a negative experience of the way previous leadership development was planned and implemented in the college that had affected the middle managers. It was clear from the responses from interviewees that had undertaken leadership development in 2002, that the way the programme had been designed, introduced and implemented had caused considerable negative feelings amongst participants. There were clear feelings that the programme had been ‘imposed’ upon them without consultation or discussion. Interviewees were keen to point out, however, that once into the programme they changed their perceptions and embraced the emotional intelligence training and in particular responded very positively to the trainer’s input. Respondent three summarised the 2002 experience saying:

*“Last time and I remember the first day that we all sat there and we actually said I don't know why I am here...we just looked at the bit of paper and said we want to go home...we wanted to get back to the desk and do the work, because we had days and days and days of this last time” (I1, Id3 p.3).*

Interviewees were keen to point out, however, that once into the programme they changed their perceptions and embraced the emotional intelligence training and in particular responded very positively to the trainer’s input. There was however a recognition by middle managers of a desire to use the development to improve further:

*“I still get frustrated that I am not getting enough done and there may well still be things that I can still improve on” (I1, Id4 p.13).*

Alongside this there was however a clear frustration shown by many participants of the lack of time to do things:

*“I do feel frustrated that there are things I would very much like to get my teeth into and that I don't get done”(I1, Id4 p.13).*

However the managers were looking forward to a new style of development and in particular the coaching. Several interviewees highlighted that they wanted to focus on time management as a theme in their coaching sessions. This highlighted some issues for the college in considering whether this was sufficiently leadership and strategically focussed and whether some participants need more development in their understanding of leadership and transformational behaviours. Interviewee nine was one of the few middle managers that suggested a deeper understanding of what the development should be about:

*“I think I might be managing very well but am I leading very well? I suppose it's being able to understand which aspects of leadership are different from the management” (I1, Id 9, p7).*

In the initial interviews it was particularly noticeable how little emphasis most of the non SEG participants placed on being prepared for a different and more challenging future compared to the principal. At the start of the programme whilst the principal recognised the need for a more radical approach the participants showed little understanding of the significant and contradictory policy challenges facing the sector and the college and the real need to adopt a step change in how the college approached its core business. The participants talked very little on policy issues in their initial interviews.

## 6.3 Contradictory Views on Models of Leadership

### 6.3.1 Senior Team Views – ‘Individual’ versus – ‘college style’

The principal recognised that the main challenge facing the college leaders was to change their mind-sets away from managerialism and competency based checklists encouraged by the Ofsted inspection regime and to become more strategic, innovative thinkers. The college leadership style was firmly fixed in ‘executing routines and maintaining organisational stability’ (Grint 2005, p.15). He was keen to stress that he saw the leadership development programme as developing managers’ ability and *confidence* to respond to change rather than giving them a toolbox of traditional FE management responses echoing Grint’s comparison of management and leadership (2005, p.15). He emphasised his desire for a type of corporate leadership style:

*“To me, it's not so much what we do, it's about the way we do it... I think with all the changes you have to keep reinforcing and refreshing that confidence all of the time, so a set of skills and knowledge that worked five years ago is useless now” (P, p.8).*

The group development was also a key for him:

*“it will make the members of the group who are subject to it more confident as leaders and secondly it will make them more coherent as a group” (P, p.1).*

The principal was particularly keen to develop a *college* leadership approach through the programme. A style that permeated through all the layers of the college. He recognised a certain layer of individuality from leaders but still focused on working within a set of boundaries:

*“they have got to find their own way of doing it, but within certain rules” (P, p.3).*

The principal was also clear that he felt the programme would overcome individual barriers to change because it was focused on the individual rather than the group learning. He echoed Fullan’s (1993) key point that you cannot force people to think differently or compel them to develop new skills:

*“but it does take that view of individual development” (P, p.3).*

There was an element of mixed messages, as the principal was clear about the individual nature of the development programme, however he wanted to see a common leadership style emerge as a result of the development. The programme was, in his mind, about developing a corporate leadership style, an inclusive leadership style similar to that outlined by Yukl (1989) and embracing the importance of people over policy (Day et al., 2000) and that this style would be passed on to the teaching teams. The principal said that he was looking for individual development, however he was looking for developing a consistency of leadership style within this individualised programme:

*“which really again future proofs what we are doing in the organisation, to some extent and helps to ensure consistency of style if nothing else, because quite often people that teach across the college get different styles of leadership in different areas” (P, p.1).*

The principal was also particularly keen to stress that he saw this programme as a longer term strategic development over 3 years. His emphasis was the development of the middle managers to be flexible, reflective in the future. Even though the college was high performing he was keen to point out that the managers still had much to learn and still had things to think about. In contradiction to his group development theme he also saw the programme as sharpening the sword meaning he felt the college managers were doing well but with individual development could do even better, make different judgements and think more strategically:

*“it doesn't deal with the nitty-gritty, we assume that will take place somewhere else or that they can do it... what this is, is a much longer, strategic process (about three years) but it does take that view of individual development” (P, p.3).*

The staff development manager's approach differed from the principal, however as she focused more on the development of the individual alongside the development of a college style. She highlighted that in order to deliver highly

efficient successful outcomes there was a need to develop the *individuals* and the team further:

*“we needed to be able to give staff the development in order to take them, as individuals further but the college further. And it meant perhaps being a bit more creative, it isn't just your routine management skills, delegation skills, time management all that kind of thing, it was much more about looking at them as leaders and I think we wanted them to be more strategic” (I1, SD, p.3).*

Of particular interest was the clarity of both the principal and the staff development manager in wanting to develop leadership skills and a new college style. She recognised the significance of leadership on school and college improvement (Daresh 1998). The staff development manager echoed strongly the principal's comments about trying to achieve a college style:

*“Its about saying, we need to know what do we want our college managers to look like? What should they be thinking and behaving and acting like without taking people's personalities away?” (I1, SD, p.2).*

She also recognised the need to develop their individuality more than the principal but also mirrored the principal's desire to develop the managers' confidence:

*“I would hope that if individuals are working more, they are more confident in what they're doing” (I1, SD, p.6).*

The staff development manager was particularly keen to point out the need for college managers to move away from the day to day running of their areas to develop a greater perspective on the policy context and the future demands on the college:

*“I sometimes think it's quite hard because again in debate with the Heads of School, they were doing a lot of operational stuff, a large portion of their job” (I1, SD, p.2).*

She stressed that the college senior management recognised the complexity and tension between the demands of day to day operational management and

the need for the key middle managers to broaden their expertise and outlook as outlined by Kelly et al. (2005):

*“we want them to be able to solve problems more, look at things more strategically” (I1, SD, p.2).*

She saw the programme as about people changing themselves needing to respond to the new policy context in particular to the new challenges outlined by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) chief executive (*Geoff Russell Speech – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010*); which in effect ignored any notion of the college community. Despite the clear aim of the principal and the staff development manager to develop a college leadership style the coach was the most focused on the individualised approach of the programme and whilst talking about the group of people his focus was more on each personalised programme and broadening their perspectives:

*“So it’s quite a varied approach but it is very much about the personalised stuff, it is very much about opening up people’s thinking, so that what you end up with is a group of people that are thinking much more broadly than they were originally” (C, p.13).*

### **6.3.2 Middle Manager views**

Whilst the senior leadership spoke at length about needing to create a ‘college leadership style’ there was very little evidence of the participants having received that message or their desire to use the programme for that collective goal. The participants mainly said they wanted to focus on those very individual managerial issues such as time management highlighted by the principal and staff development manager as wanting to move away from. Michael highlighted a common theme from all participants that in their roles they were primarily focused on day to day internal operational things:

*“It’s a demanding role you spend a lot of time fire fighting” (I1, p.1) ... “I think if you spend a lot of time in your room doing your day to day job then you don’t get a lot of time to think about strategic things” (I1, Michael, p.2).*

When asked what he felt were the barriers to thinking strategically he was quite clear at first:

*“Just time to do it. It is difficult to make time, you know you should make time but you still tend to fall back into the day to day role of what you should be doing” (I1, Michael, p.3).*

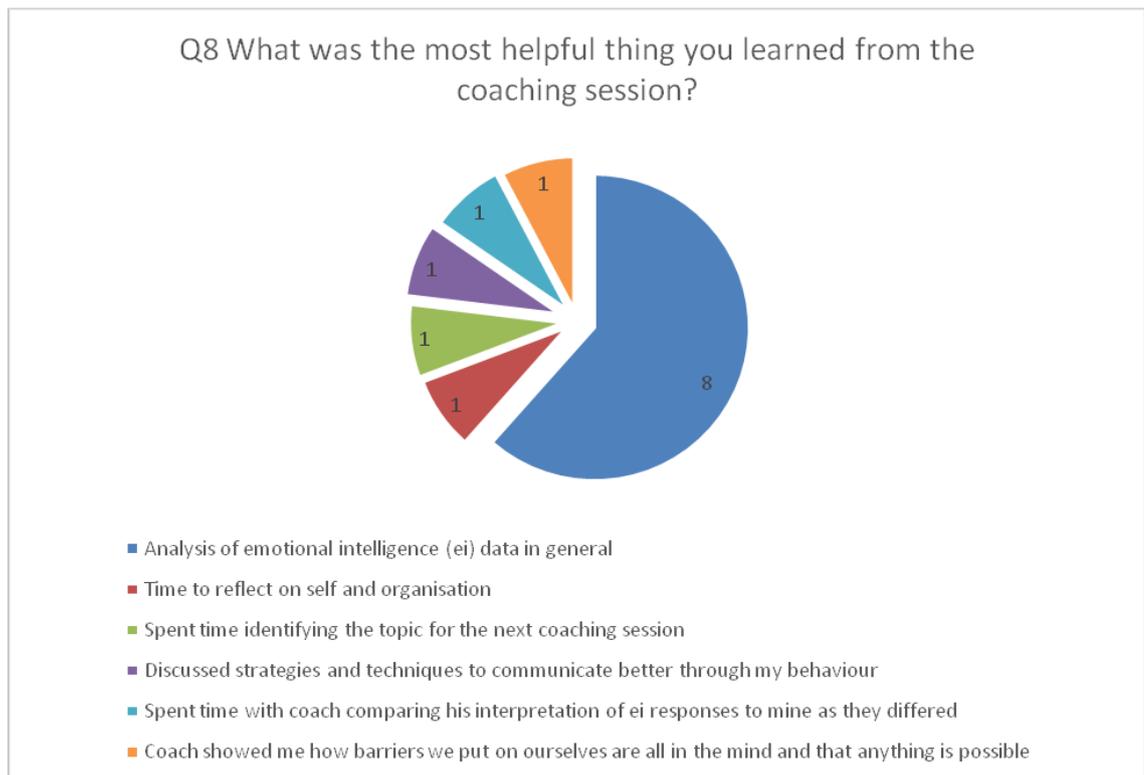
Mary also highlighted the difficulties in stepping away from traditional management thinking:

*“I think you get so wrapped up in what you are doing that you do it the same way don’t you” (I1, Mary, p.15).*

She believed that there was already a substantial amount of distributed leadership:

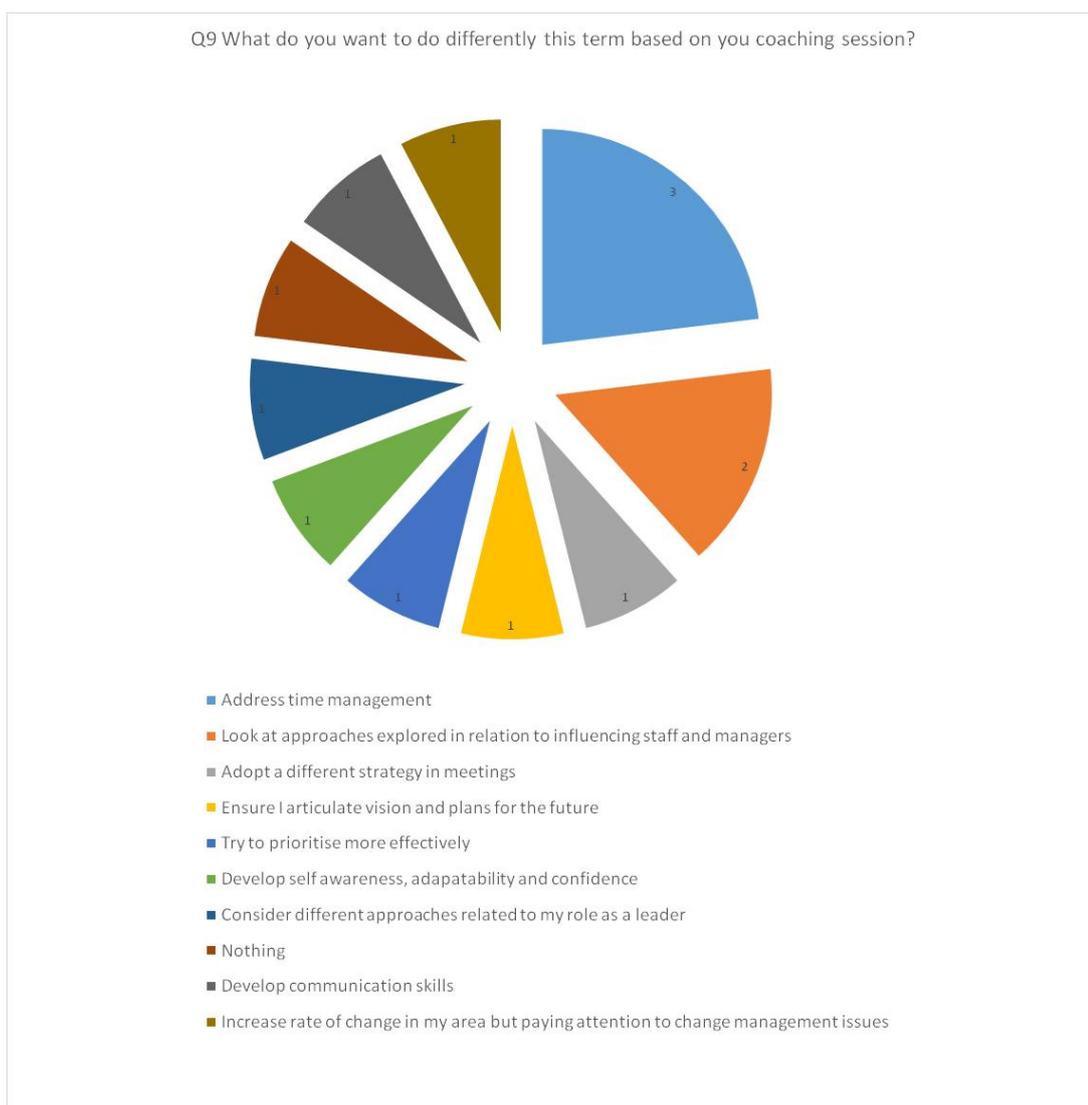
*“I think the college is quite flexible...they are quite amazed sometimes at how easy it is to get things done, which is good” (I1, Mary, p.13).*

Question 8 in the interim questionnaire extended the detailed view of coaching asking ‘What was the most helpful thing you learned from the coaching session?’ The general analysis of the emotional intelligence data was highlighted by eight respondents as the most helpful discussion in their first coaching session. The remaining five respondents highlighted specific areas on which they had focused, for example reflection on self and the organisation. One participant described how the coach helped her discover that barriers are often created by ourselves and we therefore have the ability to remove those barriers much more easily than we think. A summary of the themes identified is highlighted in figure 6.1.



**Figure 6.1 Responses to Question 8 ‘What was the most helpful thing you learned from the coaching session?’**

Question 9 asked respondents ‘What do you want to do differently this term based on your coaching session? As was to be expected the responses here were very individual and reinforced the concept of coaching focusing on very personal development needs. Three respondents highlighted focusing on time management. Two respondents highlighted developing their influencing skills more and other respondents outlined a variety of individual leadership developments. The responses are outlined in figure 6.2.



**Figure 6.2 Responses to Question 9 ‘What do you want to do differently this term based on your coaching session?’**

It was interesting to note that one respondent answered that they would do nothing differently. This suggests a synergy with one of the concerns raised by the deputy principal that the coaching would not have an impact on some managers. The questionnaire responses confirmed the summary position the principal felt the college style was in terms of being internally focused with few managers considering the wider policy environment and influences in their planning and decision making. Early on in the programme the influencers and issues identified by the participants focused on their internal issues and operational management development needs. The programme’s very individual focus and lack of steer meant that the middle managers were in fact focusing on

those very internal, traditional management issues such as time management and not looking to a new college style focusing on external factors.

One of the strongest themes from the interviews with the participants however was how they all used the development for their own individualised learning. Their own personal outcomes dominated all the interviews rather than a college collaborative development. In the questionnaire six months into the programme participants were asked what they were focusing on in their coaching sessions. The responses reinforced the individual development approach they were taking.

## **6.4 Contradictions facing the managers and the impact of the college culture**

### ***6.4.1 Senior leadership views***

A key theme that arose in the initial interviews with the senior leadership was the need to reshape the organisation and the managers to respond to a whole new FE world. The change highlighted the cultural shift the principal felt the institution needed to embrace and the challenges that this would pose. Previous management approaches were considered no longer suitable for the new policy context but changing the college culture would not be easy. There were strong cultural boundaries exhibited in the college and the cultural identity exhibited by the interviewees posed some interesting questions as to whether the programme would be able to break down the cultures that were well embedded in the college. Of particular note in the study was the attention paid to identifying emergent contradictions.

Whilst there was an understanding of cultural issues in the college early on in the programme, the extent to which they would constrain individuals changing and the contradictions that college managers were facing were not particularly evident to the senior team or participants. The principal did not see the contradictions that arose in aiming for a new college culture with managers shackled by the systems and structures of the traditional college culture. He

was optimistic that the programme would reshape the way the managers worked but he was oblivious to the cultural contradictions in the current college systems and practices:

*“For me, it's not so much what we do, it's about the way we do it... I think with all the changes you have to keep reinforcing and refreshing that confidence all of the time, so a set of skills and knowledge that was used five years ago is useless now” (P, p.8).*

The challenge for the leadership development programme was how to reshape the middle management team to lead culture change. This posed the key question of what should the development programme be focusing on to redefine leadership away from the traditional transactional culture to a more dynamic transformational culture? The deputy principal flagged up the biggest difficulty he felt the programme would face in effecting culture change and that culture was the main barrier to the development being effective:

*“my view has always been that way, that to some extent my experience has been that people don't generally apply it when they get back to the office. We have all been through all of these training things in the past, I've been through several and you pick things that you quite often need, we are all full of good intentions, I have been of course is where the whole senior management team has been away and they are great you know, to move all this forward and all that, come Monday morning we are back fighting each other and the rest of it” (DP, p.2).*

The college culture was also recognised as a key barrier to change in the college by the staff development manager:

*“Culture is such a difficult thing to analyse and we have got cultures within cultures here” (I1, SD, p.12).*

The tensions around culture change were also highlighted by the coach. He posed some really interesting questions about the existing culture in the college:

*“There are some interesting tensions arising around, the sensing which from the senior leadership ...this idea of distributed leadership that there's a significant number of people with enough autonomy within the constraints that are there in the organisation to do things and get on and do stuff and feel supported enough to take, you know, proper calculated risks, and if it doesn't work that's fine. So there is that sense and there is*

*another sense that's running through this about, yeah, they say that, but that's not really what happens" (C, p.11).*

His reflections highlighted the strength of the existing culture, the contradictions in the college and also the reality that some participants had flagged up around the lack of agency that they felt in the college. There was clearly a mismatch between the perceptions of the senior leadership about the amount of distributed leadership there was in the college compared to that of the middle managers. The cultural history of the college was strongly stated by the coach, he recognised the drive for change from the senior leadership but also the strong cultural bind in the college:

*"And so there's a tension I think within people and within the leadership of the College around that, that sense of yeah, there is a very strong sense of belonging, very strong sense from everybody that I have spoken to of this is great place to be, great place to work, so all of that is a given" (C, p.11).*

He definitely emphasised the individual nature of the development and how important he felt it was to work with the individual to influence cultural change:

*"So if you mess about with your filters you can see other things, so on an individual level it is very much about change, helping people to literally change the way they think about things and in some cases that has meant I have worked with people at quite a deep level in terms of understanding the way we structure thought, for other people it's been saying 'well maybe that's just your perspective on that' and suggesting and offering other alternatives" (C, p.12).*

#### **6.4.2 Middle Managers**

Of particular interest from the initial interviews with the middle managers was the common theme highlighted by participants that there were strong cultural contradictions in the college. There was a very traditional FE culture in the college but the programme was supposed to develop willingness to try new approaches by managers but still in this tightly controlled culture. Amongst the managers a significant number commented on culture as a barrier to the college development. Some managers expressed a desire to try new things:

*"it's well I've always done it this way and I know it works but here's something slightly different and hopefully that's what these different thinking hats will do" (I1, Id1, p.21).*

One head of school highlighted the contradictions she felt they faced as middle managers in the college culture:

*"I think Heads of School could make a useful contribution, because I see us as filling, if you like, in the middle of the sandwich. We know what's happening with the tutors and we know what sort of issues are coming from them. And we know what senior management feel, to a large extent and so we try to, obviously blend the two together" (I1, Id4, p.6).*

She suggested that the role of the middle manager was constantly looking downwards and upwards translating the messages to and from both teaching and support staff and senior managers. The difficulties of being in the middle of this sandwich (Briggs 2005) posed challenges for the development programme to move the managers out of these shackles imposed by the college culture.

Robert also highlighted interesting challenges around culture and agency:

*"I feel that I have a lot of freedom, but in terms of the tier where I am, I am supporting the strategic thinkers" (I1, p.2).*

He reinforced the emerging difference in opinion between the principal's view of the distributed leadership in the college and the middle managers' views that they had very little strategic influence or did very little strategic thinking. Mary focused on communication upwards as a key concern in the college culture:

*"I think in terms of communicating upwards, that's more difficult" (I1, p.9).*

She also suggested cultural issues that caused her frustration:

*"You know I think that if you have sat in a meeting where you have been told that this is going to happen, it will be next week, and it gets to Friday at five o'clock and you just... nothing. So I think that sometimes can be a bit frustrating" (I1, p.12).*

There was clearly a strong feeling from middle managers that the culture of the college was not distributed and the key barrier to a college style was the tension between the curriculum and support side of the college. A consistent theme from participants was that the existing culture in the college did not facilitate much team working and tended to set managers in league tables of performance in a competitive way. A key aim highlighted by participants was a desire to build a much stronger *team* culture:

*“so that everybody can work together just as that team approach rather than being separate entities themselves and constantly having to battle also bits of information that you want then that should improve things as well” (I1, Id1, p.36).*

This mirrored the desires of the principal and the deputy principal however the very individualised approach of the coaching meant opportunities for joint development of this theme with the coach seemed to be lost. Robert felt the culture of the college was a significant barrier to the development of a new college team style of leadership. He highlighted a common theme from the initial interviews around the lack of a supportive group culture:

*“If anything, I would want to find ways, now this is a huge challenge, in reducing the adversariness we have here” (I1, p.8).*

He was also keen to point out a tension between the curriculum side of the college and the support side:

*“maybe we would do well to have some understanding of each other’s issues, this is going to sound desperately hard, that the curriculum is king”(I1, p.9).*

There was a desire to develop a more collaborative culture improving the relational agency of the managers. This matched the principal’s desire to reshape the culture of the college – developing a single college style however the individual managers, whilst commenting strongly on group culture, focused on very individual factors in their coaching sessions. Another difficulty facing the development programme in responding to this key theme was that there was nothing planned or implemented to bring the managers back together at any point to share their learning and/or to consider group themes.

## 6.5 Conclusions

It was really interesting to see the contradictory themes arising from the research findings. The principal and staff development manager had a synergy in focusing on the new challenges that would be facing the college in the next five years and the need to equip the managers with the skills they needed to think more strategically and differently. The principal and staff development manager also talked about the need to develop a college style of leadership, creating a culture of innovation and responsiveness across the management team. Despite the clear aims of the principal to reshape the collective leadership style and the desire to transform the individual leadership skills of the managers the coach and participants focused manifestly on each individual's issues and goals. The findings showed that the participants were not clear that the college was wanting to move to a more collective leadership style and used the coaching to focus on their own individual goals. The findings did show, however that the college culture was a strong barrier to developing a new leadership style. There were strong contradictions between what the principal wanted to develop and the systems and cultures in the college that considerably constrained the managers. The strength of the college culture and the contradictions facing the middle managers were underestimated by the principal and the different aims for the programme clearly caused confusion and a divergence between the senior leadership goals and the goals of the participants.

Despite these contradictions what was emergent from the findings was the collective commitment to the leadership coaching and the feeling from the participants that they had really gained from the programme. The research found that despite there being widely differing aims between the senior leadership, the coach and the participants the programme had effected a considerable change in the individual managers and consequently an organic change in the culture of the college. These themes will be explored in the Discussion chapter next.

## Chapter 7. Setting the Hares Running

### 7.1 Introduction

The findings outlined in chapter six showed that the senior team, the staff development manager, the coach and the participants themselves all had different aims for the leadership development programme. The research showed tensions between the desire for an individual and a college leadership style amongst the senior team and the participants. Alongside these contradictions the cultural issues facing the participants provided further challenges for the managers. Despite these contradictions it was evident that there were some significant areas where the participants and the college experienced changes in approach, outlook and attitudes both individually but also collectively. The participants were actors who began to reflect on their own agentic orientations as the coaching programme developed. The human agency of the participants started to be redefined as the cultural context of the college was reshaped through the challenges of the new funding environment and the shifting power relationships of the managers themselves. Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) chordal triad of agency was reflected in how the participants' agency showed characteristics of iterative, projective and practical evaluative elements and how these elements shifted as the programme developed over time. There was a shift in both the individual and ecological agency of the participants and the college, however, the relational agency of the participants did not develop as markedly.

What also emerged from the findings was how much impact the coaching had as a form of leadership development and the factors that were important in the implementation of coaching. The participants were locked into a cycle of performativity (Ball 2013) driven by government, Ofsted and funding agency priorities and targets. The power relationship was strongly driven by the government policies at the start of the programme, however as the coaching freed the minds of the participants they began to exhibit characteristics of challenging the existing patterns of behaviour or governmentality strongly

embedded in the FE psyche. The key discussion points arising from the research are outlined below.

## **7.2 Coaching**

The first key theme arising from the research was the powerful impact the coaching had on all the participants and the particular and diverse ways in which they used the coaching to support their development. Common points of interest were the importance of trust in the development of the coaching relationship and the way in which coaching was different to any previous continuing professional development the participants had experienced.

### ***7.2.1 Coaching – An Institutional disruption?***

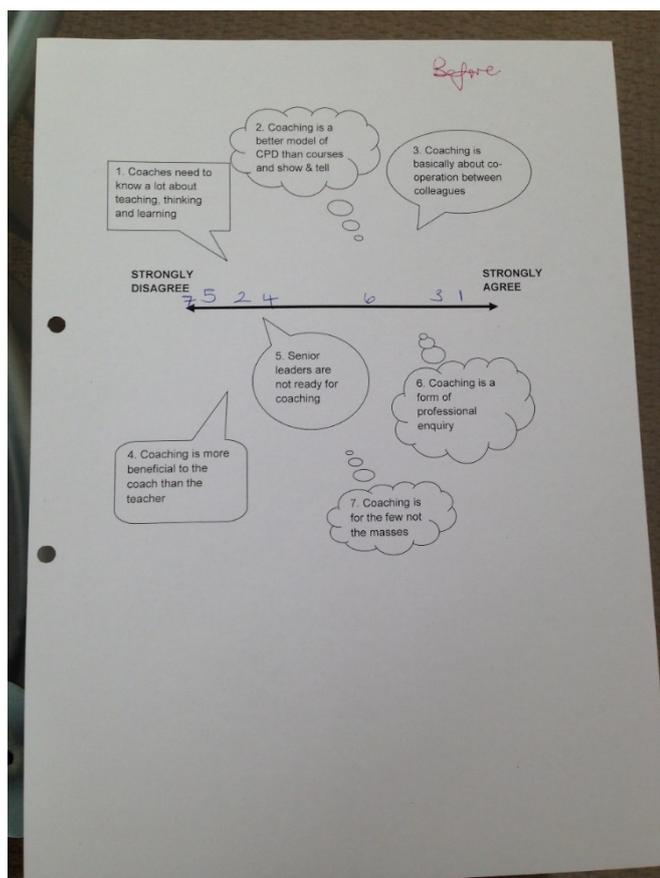
The use of coaching for leadership development in the college was a particularly new initiative and a significant departure from the preceding model of group training days on particular leadership themes. The coaching approach aimed to improve the performance of the participants although the confusion as to the aims of the coaching programme from all parties meant it was hard to clarify what performance was to be improved. The principal clearly stated that he did not see the coaching programme as a deficit model. This was similar to the concern raised in Eaton and Johnson (2001) that some coachees could form the negative impression that being assigned a coach was for the purpose of improving poor performance. The participants all agreed with the principal's view and despite a few early concerns about what the coaching would be like they all agreed that the coaching was aimed at developing their skills rather than rectifying issues. Simkins et al.'s view of coaching (2006) was that it was a narrower concept than mentoring, focusing on the improvement of skills and performance in relation to job-specific tasks rather than on broader aspects of personal, professional and career development however this was not the principal's view – he saw the coaching as developing the wider aspects of the individual *and* the college. Some of the individual participants saw the coaching initially as focusing on job-specific tasks but it was interesting to see that, as the

programme progressed, the broader developmental themes that the principal talked about started to emerge.

It was particularly interesting to see the participants' varying views of coaching as continuing professional development. Mary summarised the participants' initial goals when she said her aims for the coaching were very practical management issues. Like all the participants at the start of the programme the managers were focusing on very managerial aspects of their role:

*"I'd like to look at general things, whether it's time management" (Mary, I1 p.19).*

The research highlighted that there was a general lack of understanding of what coaching was by the participants at the start of the programme. The focus group gave their views on coaching at the start of the programme shown in figure 7.1 below.

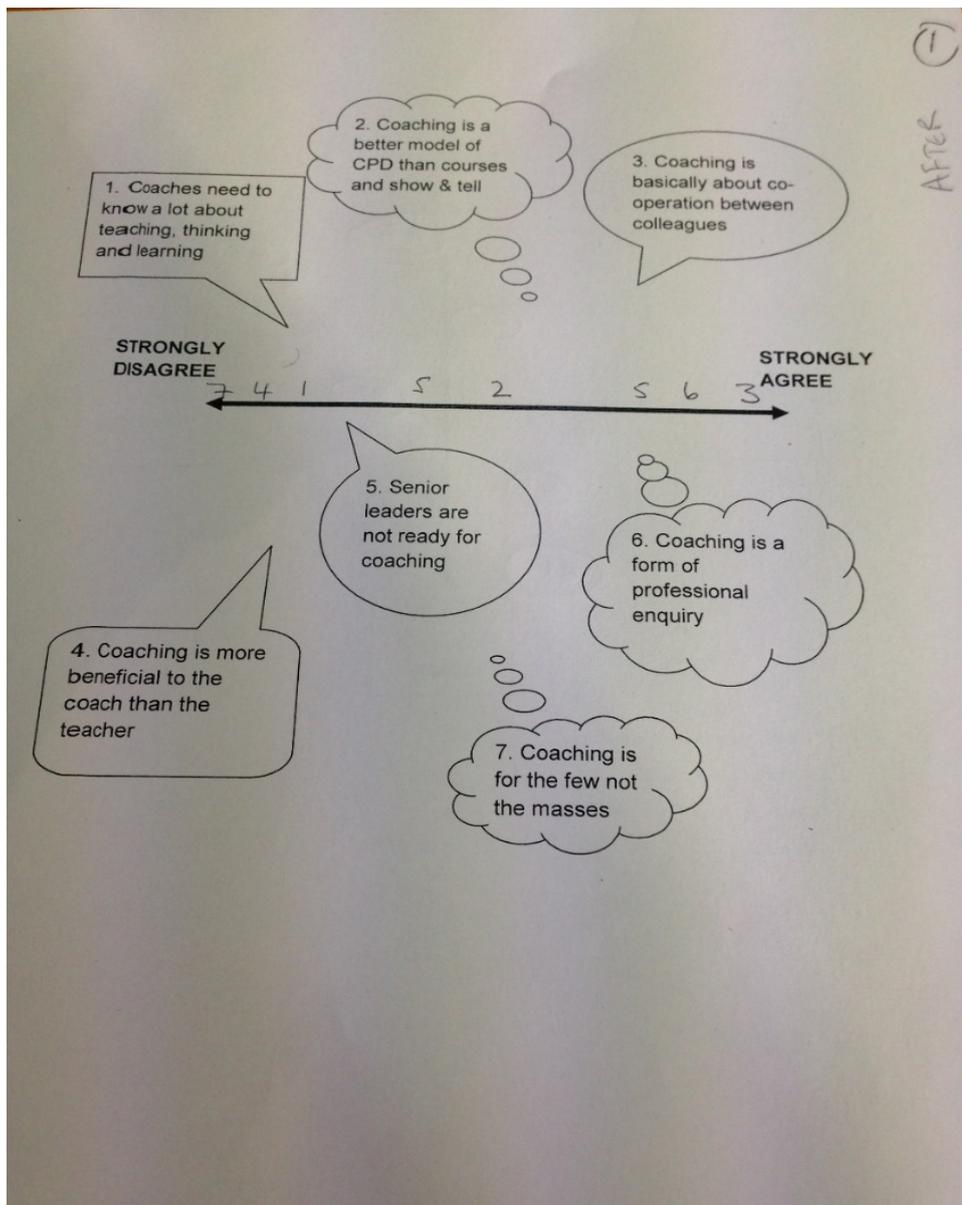


The participants were asked to mark on the Likert scale their group response to the cloud statements. For example the focus group collectively put statement number 1 'Coaches need to know a lot about teaching, thinking and learning' near the end of the scale – saying they strongly agreed with this statement at the start of the programme. In contrast the focus group strongly disagreed with statement 7 'Coaching is for the few not the masses'.

**Figure 7.1 Views on Coaching at the Start of the Programme**

Of particular interest was how the focus group disagreed with statement 2 that 'coaching is a better model of continuing professional development than courses and show and tell' at the beginning of the programme, and that they rated statement 6 'coaching is a form of professional enquiry' near to the middle of the scale. The focus group described a general lack of understanding in what the coaching programme would entail and how, as this was different to previous more traditional forms of management development, they were unsure of its effectiveness.

The views of the focus group after experiencing the coaching showed a significant change in both their understanding of coaching as a form of continuing professional development but also their opinions as to its effectiveness as a development tool. There was a strong feeling from the focus group that the coaching had significantly changed their thoughts and feelings about leadership and their views on issues, culture and relationships in the college. Figure 7.2 shows the focus group views on coaching at the *end* of the programme.



The participants were asked to mark on the Likert scale their group response to the cloud statements at the end of the programme. The differences in the ratings between the start of the programme and the end are outlined below.

**Figure 7.2 Views on Coaching at the End of the Programme**

It was particularly noticeable how the participants rated statement 1 'Coaches need to know a lot about teaching, thinking and learning' highly before the programme but they considered it far less important after the programme. This mirrors a particular area of note in the field of sports coaching in that sports coaches did not have to be as talented as the athletes they coach (Czigan 2008). The participants highlighted the value of having a context in which to explore their development needs. The participants were very keen to say how much the coaching had helped them develop their awareness, perspective, clarity of thought and emotional responsiveness and how this helped them think more creatively. There was also a dispute on where to rate the statement

'Senior leaders are not ready for coaching' – three members of the group placed this statement much further to the right of the scale towards 'strongly agree' but one focus group member felt that the support side of the college had not embraced the coaching as much as curriculum, and there was a definite split between the willingness of this team to engage, and that of the curriculum managers. It was noticeable that the deputy principal was not a strong advocate of coaching and this was also reflected in his team's attitude to the continuing professional development. The participants showed a change in view in particular to statement 2 'coaching is a better model of continuing professional development than courses and show and tell' and statement 6 'coaching is a form of professional enquiry' being much more in agreement. This showed how much more they valued coaching as a powerful and thought provoking form of continuing professional development. The original influence of the deputy principal on the support side participants had also been diminished as they had experienced the benefits of coaching. Zwart et al. (2008) in their research highlighted that a key outcome of a peer coaching project was that:

*"interaction with the dyad partner or colleagues in the form of asking and receiving help, advice or feedback, but also consultation in a coaching conference to provide teachers with greater self-confidence, increased capabilities ...and an increased sense of belonging" (Zwart et al. 2008, p.997).*

This greater self-confidence, increased capabilities and an increased sense of belonging links to my discussions of agency later in the chapter. Zwart et al. (2007) suggested that research literature proposed that peer coaching could improve the professional development of teachers through experimentation, observation, reflection and the exchange of professional ideas (Ackland 1991; Gottesman 2000; Joyce and Showers 2002; Robbins 1991). The focus group feedback highlighted the effectiveness of coaching as a form of professional development agreeing that a large and dramatic increase in transfer of training occurs when coaching is added to initial training. They highlighted the importance of the coaching providing opportunities for reflection and the exchange of professional ideas as key (Joyce and Showers 2002; Zwart et al. 2007):

*“But that’s more about the semantics isn’t it? The word as opposed to what it means in the context of the situation. Just because you’re called a coach you’re actually more mentoring than coaching when you do that because you’re talking about experience of doing it. Whereas coaching, per se, that’s twice I’ve used that expression, is more about getting that person to come to the solutions themselves. You don’t give them a solution. They do that ...” (FG, p.2).*

The members of the focus group were beginning to be aware of how the coaching was shaping them to reflect more and find solutions from within. This new found confidence in problem solving from the coaching suggested the participants exhibiting characteristics of increasing their agency (an argument developed later in this chapter).

Michael highlighted a key strength of the coaching for him was the time away from day to day operations to be able to reflect:

*“I think the advantage to this one is you have got time to reflect and do things differently” (Michael, I2 p.8).*

It was clear from Michael’s interview that the time and space away from the ‘daily grind’ was highly valued and this time afforded him the opportunity to reflect on his personal development more fully. Michael focused on the fact that this programme was different from the previous development programmes that concentrated on the nuts and bolts of managing a curriculum area. The individual nature of the development and the free form of the coaching were very much a key difference for Michael. He reflected that the coaching challenged him to think differently:

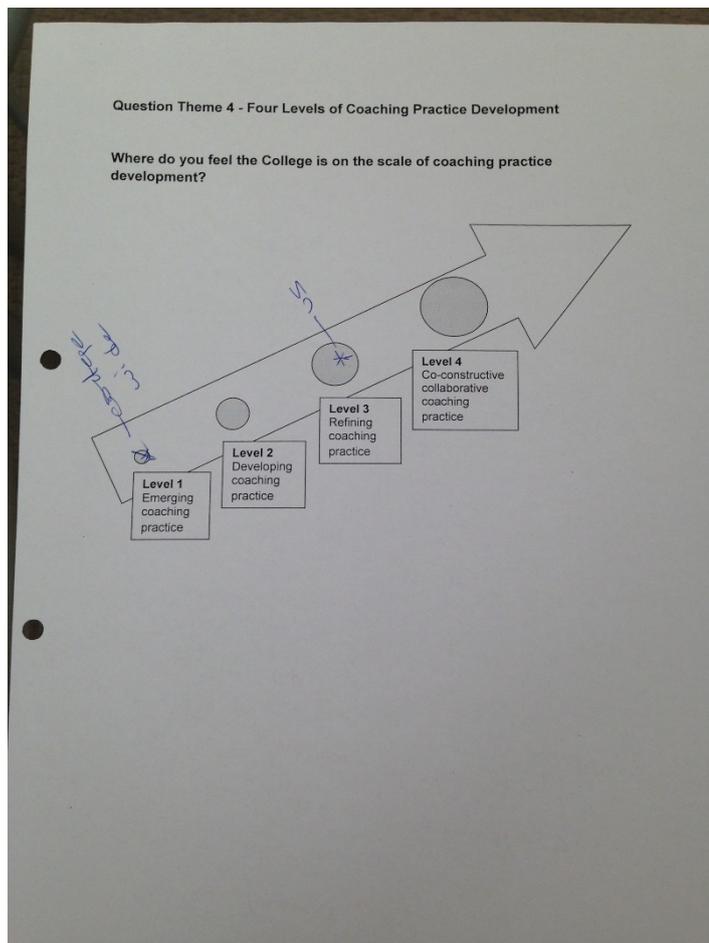
*“It was very much well there’s different things you can do from here, different pathways you can go down, and different objectives. Sort of left it up to me to decide on what I wanted to do” (Michael, I2, p.4).*

Michael particularly commented on how good the coach was at stimulating his own responses to issues:

*“He’s very good at not answering your questions but getting you to answer them for yourselves” (Michael, I2, p.4).*

Of particular note was how, through the coaching, the participants had grasped the need to look at the changing FE environment, and how they could reframe their own responses and actions to be more creative and innovative. The documentary analysis showed the significant challenges the managers were now facing and the need for much greater innovation in order to survive.

There was a clear shift in Michael over the course of the programme in developing his personal skills and adapting to his new role. Very much a company man he had embraced the opportunity to take development time and he was particularly keen to stress how valuable the individual nature of the coaching had allowed him the opportunity to develop the skills he felt he needed at that time. All the participants agreed with Michael and were strongly in favour of coaching, saying this was the most effective form of professional development that they had had in their careers. There was a clear transformation from the coaching, in that the participants were significantly more reflective and had found the coaching had challenged their thinking and usual approaches to leadership and management. Of particular interest was how the participants felt the college had moved in developing coaching practice over the term of the study (see fig 7.3 below). They all highlighted that they used some elements of coaching in their own role in the college and were keen to roll out a similar coaching programme for the next level of management in the college. All the participants agreed that coaching was the main form of continuing professional development that they wanted to use in the college (see figure 7.3).



**Figure 7.3 Scale of Coaching Practice**

There was a general consensus in the focus group that the coaching had changed their views of coaching, hence they placed themselves at level 3 on the scale. The group recognised however that across the college and particularly at the senior level coaching was still in its infancy (level 1 emerging coaching practice).

The coach was also very positive about the impact of the coaching as a new form of continuing professional development in FE:

*“And that’s how it came about really, the college as represented by those two people didn’t want to have the same kind of thing happening again they wanted to do something new and like I say it was a risky thing, turns out, because I have had four or five second coaching sessions already, and there has been some considerable progress between the first and second, so it wouldn’t have happened before, I am sure. So I am pretty confident that it has worked the way you have wanted it to” (C, p.10)*

One particularly striking aspect of the design of the coaching programme, however, was that it did not bring the participants together to exchange professional ideas and share problem solving. The coaching programme focussed very much on individuals working with the coach and the participants said they would have valued some time to come together to share practice and their learning but this had not happened. It was evident from the focus group that they enjoyed sharing their experiences and discovering the similarities of their development through the discussion but no group development had been planned other than the initial group day.

### **7.2.2 Fear and Trust in Coaching**

At the start of the programme two interviewees highlighted that they were not looking forward to finding out things that may have made them feel uncomfortable. However it was noticeable that they were still very positive about the concept of coaching and that, whilst they had some trepidation, they saw the individual nature of the development as a good thing in terms of working towards a more transformational approach to leadership. One participant highlighted the potential of being made to feel personally uncomfortable mirroring the literature findings that the personal nature and the challenge of any change and the fear of inadequacy or admissions of weakness cannot be underestimated (Bowman and Asch, 1987; Lofthouse and Leat 2013, Hobson 2012):

*“I suspect it's going to be at some points quite uncomfortable but I'm prepared to do that in terms of getting something out of the program” (I1, Id11, p.13).*

The participants in the study all focused on the relationship they forged with the coach and the impact this had on them and their ability to challenge themselves with his help (Kemp 2008). The study confirmed that good interpersonal relationships were a key element, in that the coaching relationship needed to emerge within an environment of trust (Lofthouse and Leat 2013; Hobson and Malderez 2013; Rogers 1957). The participants particularly highlighted the need for high-quality personal and interpersonal skills, mutual trust, confidence,

confidentiality and respect within successful coaching relationships echoing findings from earlier studies (West-Burnham and O'Sullivan 1998; Whitworth et al. 1998). They also confirmed that as the programme progressed the quality of this relationship developed over several sessions (Kemp 2008). Brian talked about his willingness to engage with the coach to dig below the surface and tackle some deeper leadership issues. He described that the confidential nature of the coaching encouraged this openness. He admitted that he was going to try to use the programme fully and not to present himself in a false way for promotional purposes:

*“So I'm prepared to engage with it fully and what I'm trying to do is not naturally do what I want to do which is skew the outcome. I shouldn't admit that though, but that's the truth” (Brian, I1, p.17).*

Brian's response highlighted the importance of trust in coaching and how much more effective coaching can be if it is not in a line management context. It was crucial for him that he was not being judged (Ives and Cox 2012; Hobson and Malderez 2013). The research showed that coaching was a complex human relationship building process that required both the coach and the coachee to enter into genuine ongoing dialogue of their beliefs in language learning and teaching as well as to develop an awareness of the individual's competence, the teaching contexts and the constraints that the coached are in (Li and Chan's 2007; Rhodes and Beneicke 2003, Ives and Cox 2012).

Of particular note was the recognition by the coach that the session content remained completely confidential and the design and content of the sessions were at the complete discretion of the coachee and how innovative they found this:

*“Now really it's about you and apart from that I'm not here with any agenda. We do write very brief reports on what is talked about, but it is all kept anonymous, so there is loads of protection in there, and actually the reaction, is a similar reaction to what I have had here from quite a large number of people is 'what you mean you're not going to go back and talk to anybody about this' and 'you're not going to do this and you're not going to do that', 'that's correct'. 'So what do you want to talk about?' 'Well I have no idea I will sit here for two hours and wait for you to come up with something if you like, but it's your time', and that for the heads I*

*have worked with as well, has been extremely liberating actually” (C, p.6).*

As this was such a crucial element of the coaching for participants it is useful to reflect on the importance of confidentiality, the fact that the coach was an external person to the organisation and the removal of the power relationship in the coaching model in the study. In the sector the traditional leadership development programmes have involved expert delivery and mentorship – mainly by senior managers who are part of the power structure, culture and leadership dynamic of the institution. The ability to reflect honestly on areas of weakness has been dampened by this close management relationship. Ives and Cox (2012) focussed on the centrality of trust in the context of workplace coaching and these findings were mirrored in my study as the participants were enthused and empowered by the freedom to explore their weaknesses in the safe environment of confidentiality with the coach.

It was clear from the participants that they felt that the coach was not judging them, (Hobson and Malderez 2013; Li and Chan 2007) as the programme developed they were very keen to highlight that the key strength of the programme was the strong trust relationship and the coach was not in any way passing comment on their responses or in a managerial role (Lofthouse and Leat 2013). Brian flagged up the essential criteria for him on the programme had been the confidential nature of the discussion and the fact that the coach was external to the college:

*“But because I could talk to this person knowing that he wasn’t going to influence my next promotion....then you were able to talk about those areas that were slight concerns that you wouldn’t necessarily be at home with colleagues” (Brian, I2, p.4).*

The focus group explained how they felt they were being freed from the boundaries of policy and practice and they were freed to be innovative and think differently. Their responses mirrored Foucault’s (1982) assertion that people are much freer than they feel (Martin et al. 1988, p.10). The participants exhibited the characteristics of understanding the constraints placed on them by the power relationships in the FE sector. The coaching programme had the

capacity to free them from the constraints of governmentality. Of particular interest in the research was how the coaching encouraged the participants to challenge their own role in constraining their actions as well as the role of government policy and FE culture. Foucault defined government conduct, as the conduct of conduct and thus as a term which ranges from governing the self to governing others:

*“He was interested in the ways in which power flows through architecture, organizational arrangements, professional expertise and knowledge, systems of classification and ‘dividing practices’, therapeutic procedures and how it comes to be written onto bodies and into our conduct - that is, power as totalizing and individualizing and as productive” (Foucault 1979, p.194 in Ball 2013 p.6).*

He described power as:

*“more than a structure but rather a complex arrangement of social forces that are exercised; it is a strategy, embedded in other kinds of relations” (Ball 2013, p.30).*

Bevir (1999) also highlighted the key to understanding governmentality was how the subject is influenced by the context:

*“The concept of governmentality requires us to pay more attention to the way in which the consciousness of the subject develops only under the influence of the social context” (Bevir 1999, p.12).*

Whilst Michael had clearly focused on his individual leadership skills he did talk more of the strategic influences on the sector and how he would need to shape his style to meet these demands:

*“When I met the coach for the first time it was just after that I changed from being a head of school to a director. So what I was trying to work through with him was the difference with regards to the strategic developments I would need to make with regards to my own leadership skills, thinking skills, whatever they would be” (Michael, I2, p.1).*

Michael was highlighting that the coaching helped him to engage with those different power relationships. Supporting Foucault's (1980) theory he exhibited

the characteristics that by understanding those power relationships we can change them:

*“Power operates in many different kinds of relationship, it is “always already there” (Foucault, 1980 a, page 141), we are never “outside it”. However, that does not mean it is a cage, rather it is a constituent of, and in path constitutes our relationships, even so it does not “answer everything”. We cannot be outside of power relations but we can change them” (Ball 2013, p.30).*

The essence of Foucault’s (1980) theory was exhibited in the outcomes of the coaching programme in that by understanding why we are as we are and the influences upon us we can reframe what and who we are. The discussion by the participants of how much more reflective they were at the end of the programme and how the coaching had challenged them to challenge themselves had synergy with Foucault’s (1980) assertions of subjectivity and Ball’s (2013) theory of performativity:

*“Because we have become, we can also become different” (Ball 2013, p.126).*

Ball (2013) extended the idea of governmentality by considering how the modern state and systems of power led to a target culture in the public sector describing this as performativity. He said:

*“In regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything. Last year’s efforts are a benchmark for improvement - more publications, more research grants, more students” (Ball 2013, p.137).*

Ball (2013) synthesised the impact of the target culture on education:

*“This was never more clear to me that in the work I have done on ‘performativity’, in looking at the ways in which lists, forms, grids and rankings work to change the meaning of educational practice - what it means to teach and learn - and our sense of who we are in terms of these practices” (Ball 2013, p.6).*

Of particular interest was his commentary on higher education and how the academic world was subject to the performativity culture. There was definitely a strong influence of governmentality and performativity culture in the college at

the start of the programme. The managerialist approaches of the participants were exhibited in their first interviews in how they were wanting to work on areas such as time management and communication skills. The noticeable change came in the focus group when the participants spoke of their new reflection and understanding of the challenges they were facing in unsettled times. Their focus on their ability now to be more innovative and their new found confidence to challenge the cultural habits of the college and the sector showed characteristics of Foucault's (1980) proposal that individuals are freer than they think. The coaching had challenged their mindsets and self-imposed boundaries and in turn made them challenge the contexts for action in which they were binding themselves.

### **7.3 Agency**

The theory of agency provided a critical lens through which to view the growth in personal confidence, the change in organisational creativity and culture and the development of relationships between the participants and other internal and external contacts. The developing agency of the participants is discussed in the context of their individual, ecological and relational agency. A general definition of agency is the capacity for autonomous social action (Calhoun 2002) or the 'ability of actors to operate independently of the determining constraints of social structure' and a more 'situated' definition is provided by Emirbayer and Mische (1998 p.971) as 'the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations'. The focus of agency according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998) was the complex interrelationship between individuals, their contexts, their own habits and their understanding of their own capacity to reshape these factors. Their three key aspects of agency described as the Chordal Triad also provided a useful method to assess the developing agency of the participants.

### **7.3.1 Individual Agency**

The coaching programme clearly developed the confidence of the participants and the interesting findings of the research were how this new confidence developed into an increasing sense of their individual agency. At the start of the programme the staff development co-ordinator was particularly alert to the factors that individuals faced in changing their approach to leadership and management and the opportunities for creative disturbance in the college:

*“Initially it could, people might think oh my God, and it might de motivate them because they might think it's too much of a job to change, because this is all about change isn't it, it's self-awareness in order for people to change themselves so I genuinely think it could go two ways couldn't it? You would hope that in a supportive environment” (I1, Sd, p.10).*

The coach also saw the programme as particularly focused on the individual and change and the power of recognising that it is through individuals that change could be facilitated or equally blocked (Thomas and Velthouse 1990). His vision focused primarily on the individual ignoring any notion of a college collective and the influence of government policy:

*“Now really it's about you and apart from that I'm not here with any agenda.... So they ask me what do you want to talk about? And I say well I have no idea I will sit here for two hours and wait for you to come up with something if you like, but it's your time” (C, p4).*

The participants however showed very little understanding of the potential for developing their own agency or the ecological agency in the college at the start of the programme. They were confused and uncertain of what the programme was aiming to do. As the programme developed, however, they began to comment on how much the coaching had made them reflect on their own performance and the blockages they were placing on themselves. Brian's reflections a year into the programme summed up the common stories that the managers were telling about the agentic influence of the coaching. He shared the depth of personal discussion he had with the coach and how this had increased his confidence:

*“The discussion I had in relation to my performance as a manager was very effective in identifying I think one particular block that I had in relation to how I performed. And through the discussion I was able to come up with ways of realising that to some extent there were self-imposed parameters that I was putting in place and that really I was just as capable of removing those as putting them in place...and in my case a lot of it was to do with self-confidence and self-belief in that you were capable of delivering in the way that was expected” (Brian, I2, p.3).*

The participants recognised the habits and routines that they adopted as managers in the college as described by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) as the iterational element:

*“the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.971).*

The strength of the culture and routines in the sector was clear in the initial interviews with participants. The college was a high performing institution driven by the prescriptive and formulaic Ofsted and funding agency quality frameworks, and the participants' habits were strongly embedded in the culture of outstanding performance criteria. One participant described how the college was very successful and that while we were doing well, could we do better? There was very little discussion at the start of the programme by managers of doing things differently. The principal, however, highlighted how he saw the programme as a chance to do things differently to sharpen the sword. He seemed keener to shift away from the stability of repeating past patterns of thought and felt the need to challenge those habits.

Two years into the programme there was a particular shift in the participants' views of their own roles and ability to influence in the college. It was clear from the focus group that the curriculum managers had seized the initiative, their personal agency had significantly grown and they felt the capacity to challenge and respond to the traditional culture of the college with significant success:

*“So we are setting an agenda so that when you get the smart (meaning awkward) email you don’t respond to it. You go and say what can I do to help? You know, a different approach. Far better feedback. Even the heads of school are noticing it” (FG, p.8).*

As the programme progressed it was possible to see a shift in the participants’ perspectives. They began to recognise the iterative nature of their previous management responses and spoke of how the coach challenged them to rethink their natural ‘habitual’ response to issues or problems. The key to the shift in the managers was how they described that they were far more reflective now.

The participants also exhibited characteristics of projectivity describing how the coaching challenged their preconceived ideas and models of management and encouraged them to visualise the future in a different form. Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) second proposition of projectivity encompassed:

*“the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors hopes, fears, and desires for the future” (Emirbayer and Mische’s 1998, p.971).*

The focus group described how they were now thinking differently and how they were using the coaching techniques to reflect more on the future and how their responses could be shaped towards it:

*“What’s interesting to me is I’ve done a lot of reflection on this recently...you have to stop and you go right well that’s what got you to where you are. That’s what gets you to the next part of the journey. And just because something’s got you where you are you keep doing the same thing but it doesn’t guarantee further success. So we’ve had a discussion a lot of the time, talked for the last year or so about so what do we have to do differently to where we were. And what we keep coming back to is if we don’t innovate we’re not going to stay ahead of the game. So we have to keep doing that. So what I’ve got to develop is innovative practice, doesn’t mean I come up with the ideas. Just means I talk a lot to people about so what are you doing that’s innovative? Not me, not my ideas but you. All the time because as an institution if we’re not innovative – so I see that as my role.” (FG, p.12)*

Interestingly this member of the group was very much focused on the need to provide a strong lead in the college on curriculum issues but his responses

showed a shift in orientation towards creating a more innovative team rather than providing innovative solutions himself. Thirdly the changing context in which the programme was embedded provided opportunities for the coaching to challenge the practical evaluative capacity of the managers to:

*“make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently unfolding situations” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p. 971).*

The focus group was very strong in their views of how the coaching as continuing professional development allowed them to question their capacity for autonomous innovative action over the period of time:

*“We haven’t got innovation in our KPIs in order to keep ahead of the game. In the disordered world we work....so therefore you need to innovate” (FG, p.12).*

The participants recognised much more at the end of the programme their capacity to make pragmatic evaluative judgements to respond to the dynamic shift in the FE landscape. The understanding of the managers was the key to their developing agency as Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggested:

*“The ways in which people understand their own relationship to the past, future, and present make a difference to their actions; changing conceptions of agentic possibility in relation to structural contexts profoundly influence how actors in different periods and places see their worlds as more or less responsive to human imagination, purpose, and effort” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.973).*

The focus group highlighted how they were able to think and respond differently to the new challenging FE environment due to the coaching programme. Their new found confidence showed characteristics of increased individual agency. The impact of the shift in policy and funding in FE also meant that the participants were experiencing a completely new and challenging education environment. It could be said that these unsettled times also contributed to the increased agency of the managers. As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) described:

*“during periods of upheaval, other forms of agentic activity may come into play. While certain sets of actors might resist change and hold tightly to past routines (such as local or national traditions) in an attempt to ward off uncertainty, others may be more likely to engage in projective activity (as expressed in ideologies and utopias) as they seek to imagine alternative futures for problematic present”(Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1006).*

The focus group spoke of how the economic downturn created a new FE environment. This had in turn created a new unsettled feel to the sector but that this had set them free to think and act differently to their established management norms. They exhibited the characteristics of increased agentic activity and they appreciated that they were thinking differently engaging in projective activity as a result of their coaching experiences. They were far more focused on the future than at the start of the programme and were able to distance themselves from previous management ‘habits’ and to embrace different models (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.984).

### **7.3.2 Ecological agency**

Alongside increasing individual agency it was important to consider the extent to which the ecological agency of those individuals was increased *or not* from the programme’s interventions. The ecological aspect of agency was paramount when agency was described by Biesta and Tedder (2007) as:

*“Not something people have; it is something that people do. It denotes a ‘quality’ of the engagement of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves” (Biesta and Tedder 2007, p.137).*

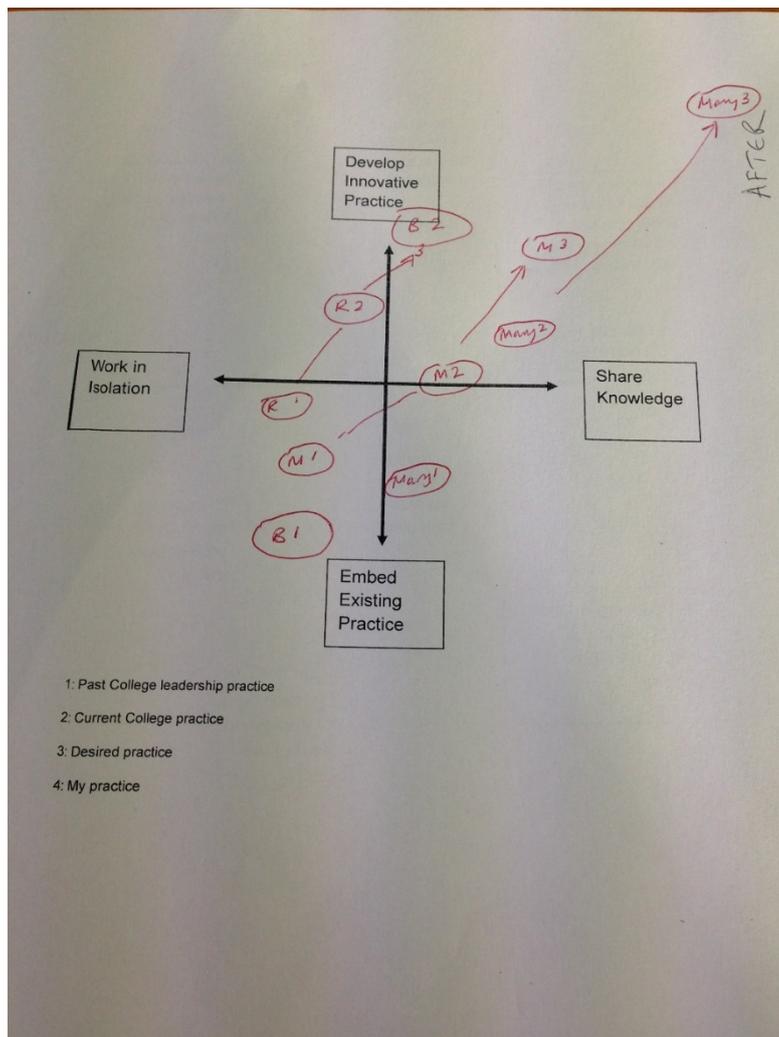
Increased ecological agency can be developed when human actors do not merely repeat past routines; they are also the inventors of new possibilities for thought and action (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Emirbayer and Mische also suggested that individuals and contexts cannot be fully separated and therefore one has an effect on the other:

*“We might therefore speak of the double constitution of agency and structure: temporal relational contexts support particular agentic orientations, which in turn constitute different structuring relationships of actors towards their environments” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1004).*

The coach highlighted the importance of developing the ecological agency of the college through the individuals on the programme:

*“Well in growing terms of confidence that, what they have got to say is important and they will get listened to”(C, p.12).*

In the focus group a grid was used to stimulate discussion around the ecological agency of the participants. The axes were used to provide extremes in which participants could then rate their position relatively to four poles. The horizontal axis focused on how much the participant worked in isolation (at one extreme of the scale) compared to whether they worked as part of a team sharing knowledge. The vertical axis provided a scale where participants could rate their position in terms of perpetuating old habits versus being innovative and creative (figure 7.4).



**Figure 7.4 Focus Group Stimulus Activity – developing practice ratings**

The grid used four extremes on the axes to challenge participants to consider their positions in a multidimensional way. The participants marked their starting position, where they felt they were at the end of the programme and where they wanted to be in the future. The activity allowed the group to consider, in particular, the change in their practice in terms of innovation but also alongside their style of individual versus group working. It was interesting to see the significant move all participants felt they had made away from working in isolation and embedded in existing practice more towards sharing knowledge but two of the participants focused more on developing innovative practice than moving along the axis of sharing knowledge:

*“the college has moved upwards from a grade 3 (satisfactory) to a grade 1 (outstanding) so allows for more innovation” (FG, p.3).*

The focus group highlighted that the college had been Ofsted graded 3 (satisfactory) but had improved to a grade 1 (outstanding) and because of this improvement they felt they were in a stronger position to break free from the rigid Ofsted framework to be more innovative. It was interesting to note however that although there had been some significant agentic development the group still measured themselves in terms of Ofsted ratings. There had not been a complete freeing from institutionalised routines and habits and the pull of governmentality (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Foucault 1979). The professional nature of the managers' role and the complexity of the college did however seem to afford opportunities for the managers to develop more freedom of thought (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

It was clear from the focus group that the managers had developed a new reflection in their approach to issues. Even more pertinent was the 'desired practice' points marked by the participants on the grid where they all acknowledged the desire to be towards the top right hand corner of the grid, working more closely together, and developing innovative practice. So whilst the participants recognised some movement in their individual practice they also acknowledged the desire to develop more as a group. It was evident that there had been a shift in the ecological agency of the participants and the college however the contradictions and barriers in the college were not completely removed. The issue in this study was that although there had been a shift in the micro ecological agency in the college ultimately macro ecological agency resides best when there are improved networked and dialogical conditions and this will be considered in the next section.

### **7.3.3 Relational Agency**

Alongside ecological and individual agency Edwards (2007) focused on a third type of relational agency arguing that:

*“The development of agency through joint action with others at the micro level involves both learning how to access the interpretations and support of others and importantly how to offer interpretations and support to others” (Edwards 2007, p. 258).*

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also stressed that individuals and agency do not exist in isolation:

*“So too is agency always agency toward something, by means of which actors enter into relationship with surrounding persons, places, meanings, and events” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.973).*

Edward’s (2007) study focused on how the relational agency aspects of the work in schools needed developing to prevent social exclusion. The coach in the college study recognised at the start of the programme the boundaries of power in the college and the barriers that individuals faced in working more closely together:

*“There are some managers who feel as if there is an influential group within the management team, you know there are 20 odd of them plus yourselves, there are a group of people whose voices seem to get heard and acted upon and there is a larger group of people who don’t. And that’s quite a strong perception, so in terms of individuals part of it is saying, yeah, well maybe if that is the case and we don’t know if it is or not, that’s your perception, if it’s your perception then at the moment that’s your reality, so part of the approach that we used to use in the NLP approaches for instance, is to help people change their perception and change their reality because it is all subjective, it’s all about interpreting what you’re seeing on the basis of all the filters you have got” (C, p.12).*

The coach highlighted his perception of the strength of the relationships and boundaries in the college and how a few managers had strong voices and influence and many more had a much lower influence in the hierarchy. Mary also highlighted her particular area of concern as a middle manager was how to influence upwards:

*“I think in terms of communicating upwards, that’s more difficult” (Mary, I1, p.9).*

A key point for her was how to get things done in the current college culture. She reflected that using the coach to advise her on alternative routes was something she was looking forward to doing:

*“I think it would be nice to spend time with someone to say – well in this situation this is what I did or what do you think I should do or what would be your perception of this, how would you handle this?” (Mary, I1, p.18).*

Of interest in the consideration of relational agency was whether the role of middle manager should have allowed greater opportunities for the participants to develop their relational agency. Briggs (2005) described the middle manager role as the sandwich between senior leaders and the teaching staff. This role in effect could allow them greater scope to increase their relational agency. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) described this sandwich role as:

*“actors who are positioned at the intersection of multiple temporal relational contexts can develop greater capacities for creative and critical intervention” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1008).*

The middle manager role could also be compared to the broker described by Emirbayer and Mische (1998):

*“Such social, political, and economic entrepreneurs seize opportunities for purposive invention by manoeuvring back and forth between different social networks as well as cultural or social psychological settings” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1008).*

The opportunities for the middle managers in exhibiting the characteristics of brokers were not exploited as much as they could have been in the development programme. The individual agency of the managers was increased but the relational opportunities were not developed to allow them to move backwards and forwards between the different social networks in the college. Despite the increase in the individual and ecological agency of the participants, there was still a lack of aspects of wider relational macro agentic development.

It was particularly interesting to note how Robert saw the contradictions in the college. He focused on the tensions between the curriculum and the non-curriculum sides of the college highlighting the friction between the managers and the difficulty in changing the macro ecological conditions:

*“If anything, I would want to find ways, now this is a huge challenge, in reducing the adversaryness we have here” (Robert, 11, p.8).*

Robert saw the programme as an opportunity for both sides to come closer together to develop their relational agency:

*“maybe we would do well to have some understanding of each other’s issues, this is going to sound desperately hard, that the curriculum is king” (Robert, 11, p.9).*

Interestingly Robert did not feel he had made as much progress as he would have liked in his objectives, he showed an understanding of the complexity of the barriers to what he was trying to achieve:

*“No because it was culture change...it was just too ambitious at the time. But then again, it’s best to be ambitious and go backwards than not to be ambitious and do nothing at all.” (Robert, 12, p.4).*

Robert recognised that some of these boundaries clearly had not been realigned because the other participants had in effect focused on individual goals and had very little focus on common cultural goals. The open format of the coaching and the individualised approach that all the participants took highlighted that the goals of the principal and to some extent of Robert were unlikely to be met. There had been no guidance or steer by the senior postholders to the coach or participants on culture, external issues and reshaping the organisation to increase the cross college working to meet the new challenges. Consequently the individuals used the development programme to focus on what they individually perceived as key for them.

Whilst the research showed shifts in the individual and ecological agency in the college there was much less evidence of increased relational agency in the college. As the college programme progressed the participants were noticeably

very positive about their experiences and in particular the longitudinal participants showed a new insight two years in the coaching of the challenges facing the college and the wider strategic challenges. There was a recognition that some managers' relational behaviours had changed a little:

*“Right, in the last couple of weeks at least two heads of school have said to me they’ve noticed a significant difference in the way \* talks to them, deals with them. And that is based on the way we, as a group, have talked about how we will interact with them” (FG, p.7).*

Despite this the relationships inside and outside the college still had strong boundaries and controls and these remained a constant barrier to change in the college. The participants highlighted that the coaching had created a new ecology for learning in the college, however the lack of developing relational agency of the participants was evident. There was a recognition by the members of the focus group that some managers, particularly support managers had not grasped the new dynamic of developing stronger relational agency as much as others:

*“The example I would give is if you now went back to people like \*, \*, \*, and some of the others who are part of that initial group and ask them if they want to be coached again I know what answer you’d get (meaning no). But I think from the curriculum side everyone found it really useful” (FG, p.4).*

The lack of emerging relational agency in the college threw up one of the most interesting contradictions in the study. Whilst the individual agency of the participants increased significantly as a result of the coaching, the ecological conditions in the college overall did not change significantly. In this study there was a clear difference between the *macro* ecology of the college as a whole and the *micro* ecologies of the curriculum and support sides of the college. The college macro ecology still had a distinct lack of relational agency between the curriculum and the support managers despite the coaching and a lack of relational agency between college managers and external bodies. At a micro level, however the curriculum managers were working better between themselves and in their own management groups – these micro ecologies had

developed through the coaching increasing the personal and relational agency of the participants. The coaching focused on the individual rather than a wider college leadership style and the lack of direction by the senior managers meant that the macro ecology of the college remained the same and in effect stifled the wider development of the college.

#### **7.4 Views of the Senior Leadership**

Of particular interest were the views of the senior leadership on the impact of the development programme. The principal was quite disappointed that the programme did not achieve his aim of developing a college style of leadership. He acknowledged that there had been some impact on the individuals but he did not think the programme had achieved its objectives. He did not recognise that the college ecology was in fact a block to the enhanced agency of the individuals, nor did he acknowledge the lack of any enhanced working together in the college at a micro level, perhaps because he could not see this. The deputy principal was particularly negative about the coaching programme saying that it was a very costly investment and that it had not worked as seven of the participants in the programme had left the college (4 retired and 3 left for promotion) and the remaining managers were behaving in the same way. It was interesting to note that neither the principal nor deputy felt that the college senior leadership style had in fact suppressed the individuals or discouraged the managers working more innovatively or more closely together. There were some positive outcomes from the coaching programme in the increase in individual agency and the development of micro ecological conditions supporting greater relational agency. Unfortunately the senior leaders did not see this level of development as they were focusing on the wider college context and developing a 'college' leadership style which did not happen. The ecological agency of the participants only developed at the micro level. The macro ecology in the college still dominated the existing organisational routines and little shift happened in this macro ecology over the time of the programme (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.983).

The staff development manager was the most insightful as to the outcomes of the programme. She felt the college had not created the conditions at a senior level to foster coaching and enhancing individuals:

*"I don't feel there is the coaching culture here....we have pockets of it but not at a senior level" (Sd, I2, p.1).*

She felt the programme did not achieve all its aims because of the lack of support from the senior leadership:

*"I feel they don't want to change, they want the status quo" (Sd, I2, p.1).*

She also highlighted that some of the managers had tried to do coaching but without much success. She suggested there was a lack of trust in coaching and that the managers were trying coaching within a line management structure:

*"\* thinks he knows it all, but he goes from being a rottweiler to trying to be a coach but people don't trust him so it doesn't work" (Sd, I2, p2).*

Her interview confirmed my findings that there had been increases in individual agency but little change in the college macro ecology:

*"I feel the managers have learned from the development but that learning hasn't moved out into the organisation" (Sd, I2, p2).*

The most interesting point was that she flagged up that the managers were still constrained by the environment in which they were operating:

*"people are being stymied because of the environment they are in. They are on a treadmill, it's all auditing and measuring, it's all they are bothered about. For example I have been told you can't do that kind of staff development on the college data because it would affect my performance figures" (Sd, I2, p2).*

The staff development manager's response suggested the performativity culture still seemed to dominate the college habits and routines and the coaching had changed very little at this level. The development programme had influenced the individual agency and the micro ecological agency of the participants but

had failed to break down the macro ecology in the college that was dominated by performativity.

## 7.5 Conclusions

It was clear that the individual agency of the participants had increased significantly due to the coaching programme. The focus group summed up the significant change in individual agency from the coaching programme and how the techniques used in the coaching developed their own ability to question their own boundaries:

*“So at first the things I talked about were the skills I wanted to develop as a leader and manager. It was very useful to be coached in coming up with ways that I could deal with that. But then what I’ve done is subsequently go through a sort of single coaching process where you do that to yourself. It’s like you’re sitting there and you think, “Well I haven’t got the skills. The example I’ll need, it’s got to be easier to do by example.” I find it very difficult in large groups to do networking. I don’t like wandering up and talking to people. So part of the coaching thing that’s being asked is who does it well and what do they do? And what could you do to be more like them? So that was about developing that skill” (FG, p.6.)*

Of particular interest was the development of the programme into a very individualised learning scheme. The negative aspect of this however was that there was no clear opportunity for a community of practice to develop, in which the managers would share their learning or develop a common understanding of a college leadership style. At the start of the programme there had been a determination from the principal and staff development manager to create a more dynamic, free flowing programme that challenged the managers to think differently. The principal in particular was also looking to redefine the college routines, in effect to reshape the college ecology. It was also evident that there was a shift in the ecological agency of the participants in the programme however the shift in ecology was less significant and particularly affected by the lack of developing relational agency.

Biesta and Tedder (2007, p.133) argued that 'learning about the particular composition of one's agentic orientations and how they play out in one's life can play an important role in the achievement of agency'. It was also reasonable to suggest that the structure and norms previously surrounding the managers had been stripped away over time by the coaching leaving a much more volatile and constantly changing set of circumstances facing these leaders. The erosion of these structuring traditions and frameworks also 'makes agency increasingly necessary' (Biesta and Tedder 2006, p.7). It was clear that the participants had learned to reflect on their own agency from the coaching and had definitely seized the opportunity to change their norms and habits.

The lack of development in the relational agency of the participants highlighted the biggest flaw in the impact of the coaching programme. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggested that individual, ecological and relational agency are more intertwined than we would at first believe. The ultimate ecological agency develops when individuals, contexts for action and relationships are all improved. Edwards (2007) saw substantial increases in the relational agency of the participants in her study in contrast to my research. The college development programme facilitated a realisation and reflectivity in the individuals and a different context for action in the college however there was very little shift in the interaction between the participants. The ecology of the college had been developed but it was a micro ecology where the participants felt more empowered in their own areas however the lack of relational agency meant that the macro ecology of the college remained firmly set in traditional habits.

## Chapter 8. Conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from my research in the context of the case study college, the FE policy environment, the literature review and how it has contributed to this field of knowledge and my learning and leadership identity. There is also consideration of how effective the research design was in enabling the collection and analysis of data. Of particular interest was how the case study design enabled the understanding of coaching in an FE college and contributed to knowledge in the sector of how coaching can be used for leadership development in an FE context. From these findings I have made some recommendations for future practice in colleges and these are outlined in this chapter.

The study was implemented to respond to the rising interest in coaching as a professional development tool in schools and colleges (Joyce and Showers 1982, 1995, 2002; Veenman and Denessen 2001; Czigan 2008; Hobson 2012; Hobson et al. 2012). The key question was what were the consequences of introducing a leadership and management programme involving developmental coaching in an FE college? As a senior leader in an FE college I had a vested interest in developing leaders and managers to respond to the changing and challenging environment facing the sector. During the course of my study I was appointed as a college principal in another college and this study has been significant in influencing my approaches to leadership and teaching and learning development in my new role. The need for managers to be innovative and creative increased as the economic downturn took hold of public sector spending and swathes of funding were sliced off college budgets. The cuts did not come with accompanying reductions in targets, quite the opposite, the policy demands were to do more for less (Geoff Russell Speech 2010; Skills Funding Agency Guidance Note 6 2010; HM Treasury Spending Review 2010). Furthermore managers were strongly conditioned in the college to follow the

policy steer from Ofsted and the funding bodies, the power of these policy drivers (as indicated in Chapter 2) could not be overestimated.

The literature explored the impact of the changing context for the sector and how leadership style was defined and reinforced through the policy context in which the college was immersed. Coaching was considered in the context of leadership development in education and the studies showed the capacity for coaching in schools to affect a shift in the leadership paradigm.

## **8.2 Using Coaching as Leadership Development**

In order to understand why the leadership coaching programme was introduced in the college it was crucial to understand the policy context of FE (outlined in Chapter 2) and the waves of government initiatives and quality regimes that shaped the environment in which college managers were immersed. It was clear from the policy analysis that there were many changing and conflicting policies affecting managers in the sector and that the change and dynamics of policy had accelerated in the last few years beyond everyone's expectations. The demands on leaders and managers were becoming increasingly complex and contradictory. Skills policy was strong in setting out what was needed to be achieved from government – but there were no guidelines as to expectations of how to achieve these policy drivers. Government policy focused on models of accountability that were bureaucratic and rigid while there were few models of professional recognition.

In general education policy there was a sea change in perspective, as new models of delivery and priorities were set out by the incoming government. There was a policy shift towards greater localism and accountability locally but in the context of *national* funding frameworks and bodies.

A culture of governmentality (Foucault 1982) and performativity (Ball 2013) was embedded in the college and individual managers' ways of working. Managers were obsessed with the language of skills, performance indicators and audits (Pring 2005). This target driven culture created a dichotomy between the desire

of managers to co-operate and work in partnership and the need to compete in a shrinking funding market.

The principal of the case study college spoke of the competing and challenging policy drivers in which the case study was embedded. The Foster Review proposals (2005) and the subsequent enactment of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 had redefined the role of colleges in their local areas, set out a new relationship with local authorities and had challenged colleges to meet local needs within a set of national priorities. This meant that colleges needed to reappraise their missions, their core markets, their funders and consequently their priorities.

The drive for leaders and managers to deliver high quality and highly efficient outcomes was clear. The governmentality cultures were strong in the college and the habits of managers were hard to break. The target driven performativity culture had grown in influence since incorporation and was accepted as the norm for the college. There were also significant pressures on the sector posed by a new policy context severely constrained by funding cuts and competing and contradictory priorities. The phenomenon in which the case was embedded was challenging at the start of the research and increased in complexity and financial severity beyond all expectations in the last two years.

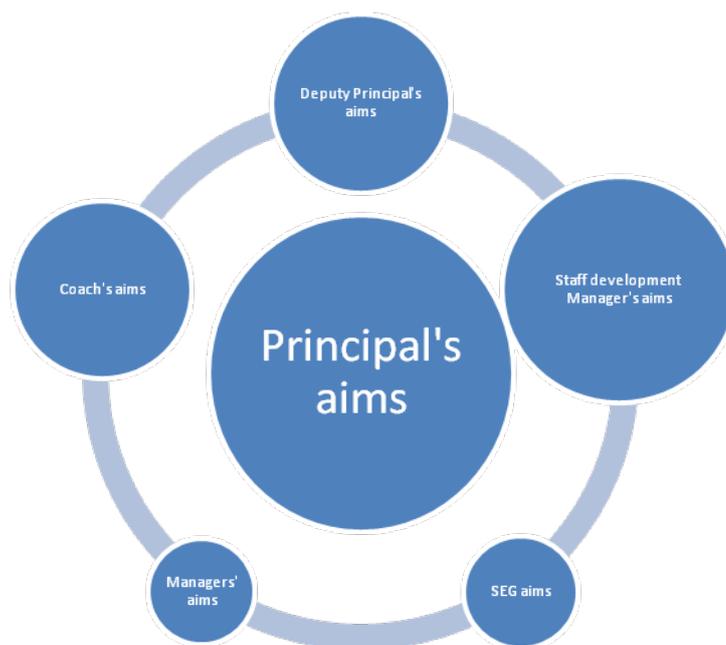
The three research sub questions will be considered together:

*How did participants respond to the group development day and early coaching?*

*How did participants respond to the coaching experience over a two year period?*

*How did the coaching programme shape the participants views of leadership?*

It was clear from the research that the participants were unsure of the aims and the reasons for the development at the start of the programme but they increasingly saw the benefits as time progressed. The diagram below (figure 8.1) shows the level of influence over the development of the programme at the start of the coaching.

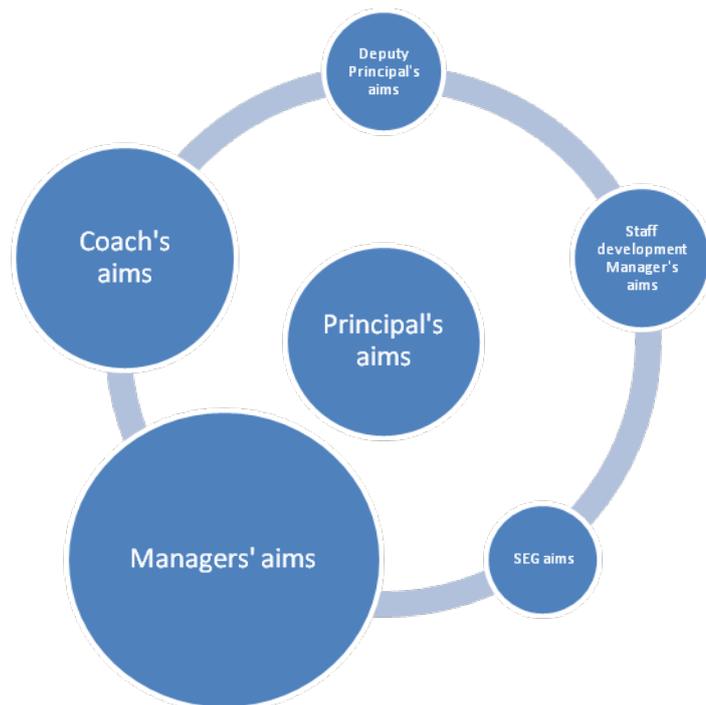


**Figure 8.1 Levels of influence at the start of the programme**

The principal's aims are at the centre of the diagram to show that his direction and priorities shaped the initial brief for the coaching programme (the size of the circles are indicative rather than a precise measure). There was a desire from the principal that the development programme would shape a new external focus and a common college leadership style. The research showed however, that even though the principal was clear in his own mind about what he wanted the programme to achieve, this was not fully communicated to the participants at the beginning of the development. The aims of the participants varied significantly to those of the principal, with each participant having a different very individual focus. Although the parties are all shown in a circle around the principal's aims there are no arrows showing any links between the aims of

each group or with the principal. The groups around the principal all had some lesser influence at the start of the programme and are shown as having some inter-relationships as they were able to shape the programme at the start to some small extent by their input at SEG or through the first group development day. The diagram shows, however, that the strongest influence on the aims of the programme at the start of the development was the principal but he did not communicate these aims with any of the parties or the coach hence no links are shown to the other satellites.

As the programme developed it was very clear that the coaching had embraced a very personalised approach and there was not a common leadership style developing in the college. This was in contradiction to the intended outcomes of the programme and the stated aims of the principal. A constant theme in the data was the difference in the aims outlined by the principal, the staff development manager, the deputy principal and the participants. Of particular note was that the principal was clear about first order outcomes but he was not clear about where it would lead. The contradictions highlighted in the research suggested there were tensions in the college between the desires of the principal to achieve a common leadership style embracing the new challenges and the very individual aims of the participants to focus on key issues they perceived as key to their development. As the programme progressed the aims of the principal which were very strong at the start of the programme were dominated more by the individual aims of the participants (see figure 8.2). The research showed that there was still very little focus on external issues by the managers at the start of the programme. Transformative learning had happened with the managers through the coaching but the college style that the principal said was key to the programme did not develop. The individual nature of the coaching was embraced by the participants but the group goal was never communicated and was therefore lost.



**Figure 8.2 Levels of intent as the programme developed**

The individualised approach adopted by the participants in the coaching contributed to a definite shift in the personal agency of the managers. In terms of agency Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggested that:

*“By subjecting [our] own agentic orientations to imaginative recomposition and critical judgement actors can loosen themselves from past patterns of interaction and reframe their relationships to existing constraints” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p.1010).*

The findings showed that the agentic orientations of the participants had been subjected to challenge through the coaching programme and the managers were definitely loosening themselves from past patterns of action. The coach helped the participants to develop their personal agency through challenging them to reflect on their thoughts and actions:

*“The coaching was about talking issues through rather than imposing and controlling” (FG, p.6).*

The coach provided a challenge to each participant as to why they did things a certain way. He redefined their thinking by helping them to reflect and to

consider a different approach. The participants had increased their personal agency as the quote below demonstrates:

*“But it’s really, really worked. The leadership and management programme from what I’ve seen people have learnt from it and are applying it and they’ve enjoyed it” (FG, p.13).*

A key issue from the research however was that the participants had ‘one to one’ sessions with the coach and clearly increased their personal and ecological agency but there was very little reference to any increase in their working together (relational agency, Edwards 2007). The research also highlighted the contradictions facing the managers and that they were at a variety of levels (Leont’ev 1978; Rieber and Wollock 1997; Engestrom 1999). These contradictions came from the college culture and were dictated largely by government policy. The impact of the coaching was to reframe the managers’ views of their own power and influence. It enabled them to challenge the cultural barriers in the college that were holding them back from being creative or innovative. What was missing however was the relational agency in the college that allowed the participants to reshape their working relationships in order to create a new dynamic environment in which to do things differently.

### **8.3 My Practitioner’s View of Coaching in Colleges**

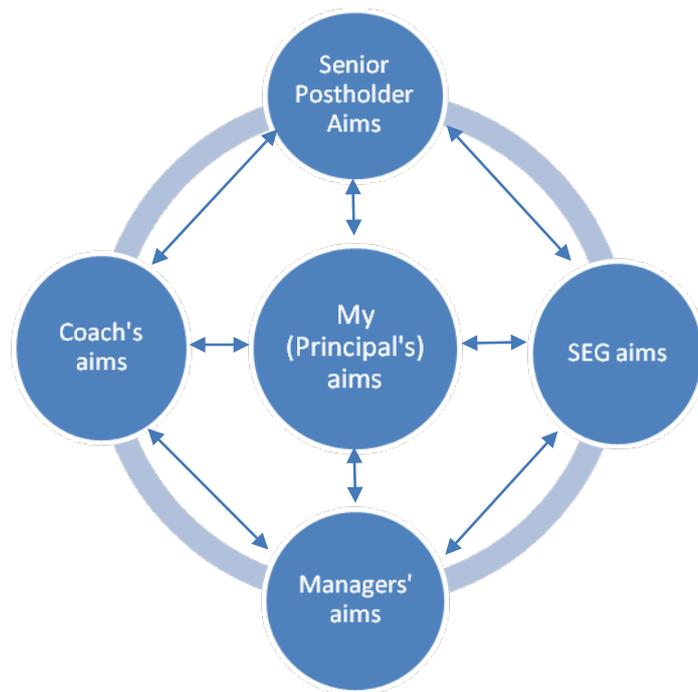
My research has shown that leadership development through coaching can influence managers to step away from the strong governmentality and performativity culture in colleges and to reconsider what they are doing and why. It was important to note as a principal, however that once the personal agency of managers was freed up then equally the ecology of the college needs to reshape to embrace new ways of working and new relationships. The research also highlighted the crucial role of the coach in challenging the norm. The coach flipped things on their head through repeatedly asking why? This was very probably because he was from outside the college environment and the performative culture. I personally still think about his style and over the time of the study that stance has become internalised. The powerful influence of the coach shaped how I have implemented coaching in my new college. It

encouraged me to take a strategic decision to focus coaching on teaching and learning as this was the most important priority for the college where I am principal. The impact of the coaching in my new college has left people feeling good: people want now to be part of it. The personalised nature of the coaching has also had a huge impact in gaining acceptance for the development and it has brought up the trailing edge of performance in my new college very quickly. A key lesson that can be learned from the research is that coaching can provide a powerful continuing professional development tool in both leadership development and in teaching and learning improvement, but in each case it is important to get the ecological conditions right so that personal development and individual development do not become out of kilter with institutional development.

The theoretical knowledge that I gained from the study as a researcher provided me with confirmation of the principle that coaching is a valuable form of professional development. It confirmed that coaching can free managers up to take the strategic leap needed to respond to the new challenging FE context. My experience as a deputy principal and then as a principal also provided valuable practical wisdom to allow me to supplement the theoretical learning with my judgement and experience of how things work in a college. This kind of practical reasoning was described by Eisner (2002) as 'phronesis' and can add to the theoretical knowledge or 'episteme' that researchers define as true and certain knowledge. The essence of phronesis is that 'in the world of the practical, things did not, by nature, need to be the way they were; they could be otherwise' (Eisner 2002, p.375). As a principal I know that in introducing a coaching programme there are practical matters to be considered and barriers to be overcome. Eisner (2002) stated that practical matters require practical reasoning:

*“practical reasoning is deliberative, it takes into account local circumstances, it weighs tradeoffs, it is riddled with uncertainties, it depends upon judgement, profits from wisdom, addresses particulars, it deals with contingencies, it is iterative and shifts aims in process when necessary. Practical reasoning is the stuff of practical life. It is not the stuff of theoretical science. It is not enduring and it is not foundational. Its aim is to arrive at good but imperfect decisions with respect to particular circumstances” (Eisner 2002, p.375).*

Eisner (2002) suggested that phronesis cannot be taught like geometry and that this practical wisdom can be acquired by a phronimos, a practically wise person, through experience. I used my own experience as a deputy principal and then principal to act as a phronimos to shape my own approach to coaching in my college. The essence of my practical knowledge and experience was how it could help shape the coaching to the particular needs of my organisation. The importance of 'particularity' (Eisner 2002) is that it recognises that each situation in an educational setting is unique and therefore abstract theory about general relationships would be of limited value (Schwab 1969). Of particular note however, was that my practical wisdom was significantly shaped by my theoretical knowledge on coaching gained from the research. My theoretical understanding of the importance of aligning personal agency with college development (ecology) and on developing relational agency gained from the research shaped my practical wisdom. My new theoretical understanding of learning, leading and policy reshaped my managerial performative approach and led me to reconsider the skills a college leader needs. Senior leaders and college principals would definitely benefit from a more theoretical understanding of learning, leading and policy. This theoretical knowledge would allow them to bring a more considered approach to their current performative thinking and approaches and would improve decision making in the sector. Figure 8.3 below shows my own approach to developing coaching in my college. I have tried to ensure a more balanced approach to meeting the aims of all key stakeholders but most importantly trying to link up all those aims to reshape the ecological conditions in the college and the relational agency of the participants.



**Figure 8.3 Levels of intent in my college coaching programme**

The college study provided two important aspects to consider in developing the agentic capabilities of the managers. The professional nature of the FE sector should provide managers with the freedom to question their current state, and equally the significant and far reaching changes to the sector could afford an environment never before experienced in colleges. The coaching programme supported the development of a professional learning environment in the college and developing the professional identity of the individuals and in turn could be said to have contributed to a greater critical discourse in the team. Whilst there had been some individual and organisational change there was also an intrinsic link between the agentic orientations of the individuals with the context of the college in which they were operating. Although the principal and staff development manager were seeking a change in college leadership style the college context was not really a focus of the coaching. There was some acknowledgement by the participants that the micro ecologies had changed in the college but this seemed more by accident rather than by design.

## 8.4 Evaluation of the Research Design

The biggest challenge for my research was finding a design that suited best the complexities and qualitative nature of a study into a group of managers, on a single leadership development programme, in one FE college. The research design was further complicated by my unusual position in the study as manager, participant, researcher then external ex-colleague. The case study approach used in the research provided some excellent in-depth insights into the shifting agency and power relationships in the college from the coaching programme. It was important however to acknowledge that this was one case study of one continuing professional development programme in one college. Had I undertaken action research or carried out the case study in a different way there would have been the possibility of other issues or findings. Where the case study really exhibited strength in the research findings was the depth of the study and the longitudinal element.

Having taken considerable time in the early stages of the study on an unsuitable research design – action research - I would approach the research design question much earlier in my research planning in the future and I would be extremely careful and even pilot a design template to test the suitability and applicability of the design with a small scale version of my research. Time spent considering the best design to meet the aims of the research is a good investment and should not be underestimated.

The embedded case study design fitted the complexities and nuances of the college study, however it provided a series challenges in the planning and implementation. Having established a design and process for the case study, the next challenge was to consider the questions of reliability, replicability and validity in my research design. Flyvbjerg (2004) challenged the perception that case studies cannot provide reliable information about a broader class because they are a detailed examination of a single example. His approach to the five misunderstandings of case study research provided a strong framework for me to follow. The framework helped me to recognise the potential limitations of the case study design and to focus me on ways to mitigate these limitations in the methods I adopted. Having considered the challenges to case study design the

key focus for me was how to structure my approach to respond to the misunderstandings outlined above to enhance the reliability, replicability and validity of the findings. The case study met the characteristics of Flyvbjerg's (2004) first misunderstanding. I felt that my case study research could fall into the category of helping the learning of other college leaders. The case study should help the learning in college staff development of how coaching can affect college management thinking and cultures. The research methods (interviews, questionnaires and focus groups) provided a great deal of in-depth qualitative data but again I would take longer in planning the interview schedules, as particularly in interview one I was not clear enough in the questions I wanted to answer and I gathered excess data which was time consuming to transcribe and to analyse.

The qualitative nature of the research and the case study design meant my findings were very personal and insightful on the impact of the programme on the particular college and participants in the study. A different approach to the research design may have afforded opportunities for more quantitative analysis, however the powerful findings from the study highlight that it is the richness of the qualitative study that drew out the feelings and shifts in influence of the participants – something that would be harder to capture from a more quantitative study.

The in-depth study and the length of time of the study really shaped the research findings. The research provided a unique insight into how the coaching programme redefined the roles and mindsets of the participant managers and redefined the context of the college. The research design provided a huge challenge in gathering and analysing complex qualitative data but provided a unique insight into a new development in continuing professional development in the sector. Despite the challenges of drawing generalisations from a case study it was possible to make the analytical generalisation that FE needs continuing professional development that encourages people to break free from the performative culture of the sector. The increased personal agency that the coaching produced created an institutional disruption that challenged the normal managerialist approaches. This creative continuing professional

development loosened managers from the performative culture and resulted in a new dynamic in the college.

## **8.5 Recommendations**

### ***8.5.1 What are the research implications?***

As this was one study in one FE college the research implications remain limited to focusing on the effect of coaching as a new form of leadership development in FE and the learning that can be taken from this case study. It is possible to conclude however, that we can make the analytical generalisation that coaching as a form of continuing professional development in FE can create a new dynamic and challenge the norm. Opportunities for further research lie in the impact of leadership coaching on the agency of managers and their ability to respond to cultural barriers in the college.

As a college principal I would be keen to see further research into the impact of coaching as a form of continuing professional development in leadership and in teaching and learning. The drive for the sector to be more innovative and creative and to do more for less means that shaping and supporting managers and teachers has never been more important. Coaching is being implemented gradually in the FE sector and is a newer more creative approach to continuing professional development but little focus has been placed on assessing the programmes and their elements in detail. The essence of coaching is that you cannot predict the outcomes, but you need to be open to the changes and ideas that are generated. Stronger research data would provide the most useful evidence for senior leaders to make the case for coaching in developing managers and teachers. As coaching can be seen to be an expensive and time consuming development method, the case for its potential to effect significant cultural and individual change would need to be proven in clear and accessible research data to encourage senior executives to make that investment.

The single case study is the beginning of potential studies into coaching in FE. Research that focuses on coaching in colleges will provide useful information to inform college leaders on the best way to effect real leadership change or teaching and learning improvements from a model that has been rarely used in the sector. As a practitioner I would like to see future studies focus on coaching practice in colleges and how policy unduly influences managerial practices in the sector. As all colleges are different with a range of leadership approaches and managers further studies into how coaching is implemented should focus on the college versus individual aims and the model of coaching used to enhance the practice of managers in FE.

### ***8.5.2 What are the policy implications?***

In terms of policy the key implications from the study were how strongly Ofsted and the funding bodies influenced the managerial style and thinking of FE managers and how hard it is to break managers out of this mould. This is the hardest challenge for college senior managers as the strong themes from these powerful bodies have shaped college strategies since incorporation. The research showed that coaching challenged managers to reflect on these policy drivers and encouraged them to think more creatively.

The dissolution of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership has left a vacuum in terms of a national framework for leadership development in the sector and there is a clear lack of national policy on continuing professional development for managers in FE. The new FE Guild has the remit for the professionalism of the sector, policy guidance on implementing coaching in leadership and teaching and learning would encourage college leaders to rethink more traditional approaches to management courses and improving teaching and learning. Ofsted policy guidance on using coaching to improve leadership and teaching and learning would also serve to highlight the good practice in colleges and encourage leaders to move away from the previous guidance provided in seminal documents such as *'Why Colleges Succeed'* (Ofsted 2004b) and *'Why Colleges Fail'* (Ofsted 2004a). The impact of Ofsted on policy in the sector still remains the strongest example of 'power' in the governmentality (Foucault

1980) and performativity (Ball 2013) culture. Studies by Ofsted into examples of coaching effecting improvement in the sector would provide a persuasive argument to FE leaders to break free from their traditional continuing professional development habits (Lemke 2000; Foucault 1980). Sector leaders are still very bound by these constraints and more needs to be done to challenge sector norms.

The freedoms and flexibilities in the sector provided by the '*New Challenges, New Chances*' policy document (BIS 2011) were championed as setting the sector free, giving college leaders more scope to shape provision and the future of their organisations. These freedoms, however, have been accompanied by a raft of policy initiatives that closely prescribe how reducing public sector funds can be spent on training and make the ability to innovate virtually impossible. These funding and policy strait jackets make using coaching for leadership or teaching and learning development less likely as senior leaders are further constrained in income and delivery terms. A significant national policy change is needed to loosen the shackles of performativity on the sector to allow senior leaders the freedom to experiment with new forms of continuing professional development. This research has made me reflect as a college principal on the habits and routines that I have developed and has made me reconsider my attitudes, beliefs and my own agentic boundaries. More should be done in the sector to bring college leaders together to think differently and consider ideas such as Foucault (1980) and Ball (2013) rather than developing leadership clones of current practice.

### **8.5.3 What are the practice implications?**

The case study offered the opportunity to generalise findings to a theory. The theory developed a useful opportunity for learning for any FE college seeking to embark on leadership development. Key learning points from the study were:

- Time spent considering and clearly formulating the aims of the programme before the start of any development would ensure clarity of purpose for all participants
- Careful consideration should be given to who is appointed as coach as the role and relationship is crucial to the success of the programme
- An external neutral coach helps to ensure a feeling of trust and confidentiality
- Allowing participants to focus on their own individual development goals helps to ensure a much stronger buy in to the coaching
- Not focusing on a college goal can mean the coaching programme takes many divergent paths and can be like herding cats for senior managers
- Consider creating a community of enquiry for the coaching programme to enable the individual participants to come together to share learning.

In terms of my own personal practice the key implication for me has been to reflect on the need for a new culture of trust and talent development in the sector rather than policy led pressurisation of leaders and managers. Alongside this the following practical points have shaped my own use of coaching:

- Appointing three teaching and learning coaches in my own college has impacted significantly on the rapid improvement in teaching and learning in the organisation
- The teaching and learning coaches are all peer appointments with an outstanding teaching grade profile but have the personal characteristics to support good coaching

- The coaches are highly trusted in the college, the coaching is confidential and oriented around support for improvement rather than a deficit model
- Significant time was spent planning the coaching programme involving managers, staff and the teaching unions to secure buy-in to the programme
- Other staff are now coming forward wanting to train as a coaches as the development has been seen as positive in organisational and personal development
- A leadership coaching programme is currently being planned in my college with a small representative group being set the task to discuss and agree organisational and individual goals for the programme and particularly to consider how a community of practice can be incorporated into the programme to support group development alongside individual goals.

## **8.6 Final Reflections**

The research showed the importance and impact of coaching in leadership development in the college case study. My own experience of introducing coaching to support teaching and learning in my new college also supported the findings that this kind of continuing professional development can have a significant impact on the participants. The research showed however that being very clear about the aims of the coaching programme and setting the right ecological conditions in the institution are crucial to ensure that personal development and organisational development do not become out of kilter.

In the last 21 years colleges have undergone a continued period of policy change and funding turmoil. Incorporation, Ofsted inspection regimes, free market competition and the many and varied government initiatives to improve skills, employability and quality have challenged colleges to respond, evolve and survive. Middle managers have been at the forefront of these initiatives with little or no training in leadership and management. It is evident from this research that newer styles of continuing professional development involving coaching can provide challenge and opportunities for new thinking in colleges

which can give institutions the capacity to make a strategic leap. In conclusion, the use of coaching to support leadership and teaching and learning development in FE is still evolving. Against a cultural backdrop of governmentality and performativity, college leadership and teaching and learning can be transformed if managers and teachers are challenged to break old habits and move away from an obsessive focus on targets and policy drivers. Individual and college approaches can be enhanced particularly if the planning of development and the ecology is right in the institution to support both developments.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Initial Criteria for inclusion in Documentary review:

1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
2. Education policy
3. Funding environments
4. Economic policy and pressures
5. The college context

	Document	Year of publication	Initial criteria for inclusion
1	Office for Standards in Education, 2003. <u>Leadership and Management: What inspection tells us</u> . HMI 1646:	2003	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
2	Why Colleges Fail – Ofsted, November 2004 HMI 2408	2004	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
3	Why Colleges Succeed – Ofsted, November 2004 HMI 2409	2004	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
4	Office for Standards in Education, 2005. <u>Further Education Matters: the first four years of Ofsted/ALI college inspections</u> . HMI 2532:	2005	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
5	Realising the Potential – A Review of the Future Role of Further Education Colleges, Sir Andrew Foster, November 2005	2005	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy 2. Education policy 3. Funding environments
6	Case Study College 3 year Development plan	2005	5. The College context
7	Case Study College Lifelong Learning Policy	2006	5. The College context
8	Office for Standards in Education (2007) ' <i>The Annual Report of her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2006/07</i> ', October 2007, HC 1002:	2007	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
9	Case Study College Strategic Plan	2008	5. The College context
10	The Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training, Education for All – The Future of Education and Training for 14-19 year olds,	2009	2. Education policy

	Routledge, 2009.		
11	Skills for Growth – The National Skills Strategy – November 2009, BIS	2009	2. Education policy
12	Skills Funding Agency Guidance Note 6 – December 2010	2010	Funding environments Economic policy and pressures
13	Geoff Russell Speech – 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2010	2010	3. Funding environments 4. Economic policy and pressures
14	Spending Review 2010, HM Treasury, October 2010, CM7942, Executive Summary	2010	4. Economic policy and pressures
15	The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2009/10, November 2010, No.100218.	2010	1. Leadership, Management and Quality policy
16	The Schools White Paper 2010 – The Importance of Teaching, Department for Education – November 2010	2010	2. Education policy
17	YPLA 16-19 Funding Statement – December 2010	2010	3. Funding environments
18	Wolf Report – March 2011	2011	2. Education policy

## Appendix B

### The Analysis of Documentary Research Checklist (Bell, J, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. p.133)

<p>1. Decide how you want to use documentary evidence.</p>	<p>Will it be used to supplement other sources of evidence or will you use it as the exclusive method of gathering data?</p> <p>In gathering evidence for the Policy Review section of my research I will be using documentary evidence as my sole evidence source on policy. I considered interviews with key stakeholders but realistically the documents provide the key driver information I need.</p>
<p>2. Decide on your approach to the documents.</p>	<p>You can let the source material determine your research or, more commonly, you will formulate your research questions after reading the literature on the subject and then take these questions to the sources.</p>
<p>3. Undertake a document search to ascertain the existence of different sources of information.</p>	<p>These may be found in different places in an organisation so it is important to be persistent. Always negotiate access to the documents and do not assume that you can consult them; some information may be confidential.</p>
<p>4. Analyse the nature of the sources used.</p>	<p>Some sources will be deliberately produced for the attention of future researchers but, more usually, sources will be inadvertently produced by everyday working of the system/organisation you are researching.</p>
<p>5. If the documents are bulky, it may be necessary to decide on a sampling strategy.</p>	<p>Try to read a balanced selection of documents in the time you have available. The strategy must be appropriate to the purposes of your research and capable of being justified in the report.</p>
<p>6. Be aware that there may be different kinds of evidence in each document.</p>	<p>Look for 'witting' and 'unwitting' evidence.</p>
<p>7. Subject each document to the critical method and ask a range of questions.</p>	<p>What does it say? Who wrote it? Why? How did it come into existence? Is it typical of its kind? Is it complete?</p>
<p>8. Compare the document with other sources to see if it is accurate or representative.</p>	<p>I used a range of document from Ofsted, DfE, BIS and the funding agencies to see if there were any inaccuracies.</p>
<p>9. Then ask further questions about the authors of the document.</p>	<p>What is their background? And what are their social and political views? Did they experience or observe what they were writing about? Did they usually tell the truth?</p>

10. Look for signs of bias in the document.	Remember that biased evidence can be very valuable.
11. Decide whether the document is reliable for a particular purpose.	Check it against other sources to ascertain its truthfulness but remember that although it may not be an accurate account of an event or development, it may be a reliable expression of the author's views.
12. Strive to gain full appreciation of the value of a source.	Use your accumulating knowledge to gain insights and try to make the critical method a habit in your research methods.

**Appendix C Definitions of Coaching (Adapted from Hamlin et al. 2008 p.292)**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Definition/concept/role</b>
Clutterbuck (2001)	Coaching lies where the relationship is to direct and stretch as opposed to non direct and nurture. A pragmatic approach to help people manage their acquisition or improvement of skills.
Whitmore (2002)	Considers coaching to be much less directive – the relationship between the coach and the coachee must be one of partnership in the endeavour of trust, of safety and of minimal pressure The coach is not a problem solver, a teacher or expert, he or she is a sounding board, a facilitator, an awareness raiser
West and Milan (2001)	Distinguish between three types of coaching: skills, performance, development Hierarchical aspects of who each type is appropriate for Skills: Relatively short term with the coach imparting expertise Performance: emphasis on broader aspects of the coachee's performance Development: complex, emergent and longer term objectives relating to the coachee's goals and aspirations (suggested most useful for executives).
Whitmore (2002)	A widely adopted coaching model is the GROW model (goal-reality-options-will). The model is widely used and simple to understand.
Goleman et al. (1996)	Coaching as one of six styles of leadership. Suggests a set of behaviours rather than skills. From coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic and pace-setting.
Whitmore (2009)	Coaching as an aspect of culture: a way of managing, a way of treating people, a way of thinking, a way of being. A way of unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance.
Fournies (1987)	A process for improving problem work performance
Evered and Selman (1989)	Coaching refers to the managerial activity of creating, by communication only, the climate, environment, and context that empowers individuals and teams to generate results
Orth et al.(1987)	Coaching is a hands on process of helping employees to recognise opportunities to improve their performance and capabilities.
Popper and Lipshitz (1992)	A process of creating a culture of development, an atmosphere of learning. It has two components: improving performance at the skill level; and establishing relations allowing a coach to enhance his trainee's psychological development.
Mink et al. (1993)	The process by which one individual, the coach, creates enabling relationships with others that make it easier to learn.
Hargrove (1995)	About interacting with people in a way that teaches them to produce often spectacular results in their business. Coaching is about challenging and supporting people, giving them the gift of your presence.
Burdett (1998)	Coaching is exclusively a process focusing on enhanced performance.
Hudson (1999)	A coach is a person who facilitates experiential learning that results in future-oriented abilities and who is trained and devoted to guiding others to increased competence, commitment and

	confidence.
Redshaw (2000)	A process of giving guidance, encouragement and support to the learner.
Grant (2000)	A collaborative solution-focused, results oriented and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth for individuals and organisations.
Peterson (1996)	The process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective.
Kampa-Kokesch (2002)	A form of systematic feedback intervention aimed at enhancing professional skills, interpersonal awareness and personal effectiveness.
Parsloe (1995)	A process that enables learning and development to occur and performance to improve.
Grant and Cavanagh (2004)	A theoretically grounded systematic, goal directed process designed to facilitate sustained change and foster the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee and is aimed at skills development, performance enhancement and personal development.
Veenmann et al. (1998)	A form of in-class support to enhance and renew teacher craftsmanship on the basis of systematic reflection on professional practice. The coaching is directed at strengthening the instructional competence of teachers. This implies professional growth and autonomy or what is called empowerment.

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Schedule 1 for Heads**

#### **1. Role**

1.1 What is your role in the college? (What are the main areas that you manage/lead?)

1.2 What is your involvement in cross college issues/areas?

1.3 What is your involvement with external organisations/partners/stakeholders?

1.4 Is there anything further you wish to add about your role in the college?

#### **2. Strategic, Creative and Analytical thinking including problem solving**

2.1 How would you define strategic thinking – what do you see strategic thinking as?

2.2 How strategic do you feel you are in your role?

2.3 How analytical and creative do you feel you are in your role?

2.4 Do you feel you have opportunities to think strategically, analytically and or creatively?

2.5 What are the barriers/opportunities in the College for you to think strategically or creatively?

2.6 How much do you feel involved in the College strategic process? (Who do you think should be involved and why?)

2.7 Anything else on strategy, analysis, creativity?

### **3. Delegation**

3.1 How effective do you feel you are at delegation?

3.2 Do you delegate many tasks to colleagues in your team?

3.3 What do you see are the opportunities and barriers to delegation in the college?

### **4. Influencing/political/communication skills**

4.1 How developed do you feel your communication/influencing skills are?

4.2 How important do you see these skills as being?

4.3 What type of development would you feel would be useful in this area?

### **5. Leading Change and Managing Conflict**

5.1 What skills do you think you have in leading change?

5.2 What are the barriers/opportunities for you in leading change?

5.3 What type of development do you feel would be useful to you in this area?

5.4 How effective do you feel you are at managing conflict?

5.5 What are the barriers/opportunities for managing conflict?

5.6 What type of development do you feel would be useful to you and the College in this area?

## **6. Service Expectations and Interrelationships between support and academic functions**

6.1 How effectively do you feel that support and academic functions work together to share best practice and problem solve?

6.2 What do you think are the barriers/opportunities for the managers to work together more closely to achieve college objectives?

6.3 What type of development do you feel would be useful to you and the leadership team in this area?

## **7. Emotional Intelligence**

7.1 Have you undertaken any emotional intelligence development previously?

7.2 If so when and where did you do it and what were your experiences of it?

7.3 What type of development do you feel would be useful to you in this area?

## **8. Coaching Skills**

8.1 Have you had any coaching previously?

8.2 If so when and where did you do it and what were your experiences of it?

8.3 What type of development do you feel would be useful to you in this area?

## **9. Leadership Skills**

9.1 In terms of leadership what do you see are your strengths now and what areas are you looking to develop through this programme?

9.2 What are you most looking forward to from the programme and what are you least looking forward to?

## **10. Measuring the success of the programme**

10.1 What measures do you think would be useful to assess the impact of the leadership programme on performance either individually, in your section or in the college overall?

## **Interview 2 Heads (September 09) Semi-Structured Interview**

### **Interview Schedule**

1. To what extent has your effectiveness as a leader within the College been improved due to your participation on the programme?
2. What aspects of your job have been influenced by your experience gained through the programme? How were they influenced?
3. How clear were the expectations/objectives of the programme to you?
  - For the group day?
  - For your individual coaching sessions?
4. Did you set yourself objectives for the programme? Can you outline them?
5. What specific aspects of the coaching process led to you meeting the objectives you set for yourself?
6. What did your coach do that was particularly helpful? (Note to interviewer: push for specific behaviours as well as more tangible characteristics such as credibility, empathy etc.)
7. What did your coach do that was not helpful or fail to do that would have been helpful? What would you like to see done differently?
8. Overall how satisfied are you with your progress at this point in time?

9. What has contributed to or detracted from your satisfaction?
10. How was the percentage of time spent with your coach balanced between discussing individual and organisational issues? (e.g. 20:80, 50:50 etc)
- What kind of organisational issues were discussed?
  - What kind of individual issues were discussed?
11. Emotional Intelligence – how valuable was the emotional intelligence analysis that you undertook? Did it inform your objectives for coaching or your development?
12. Coaching Skills – how useful was the coaching component of the programme?
- What was useful/what wasn't useful?
13. How useful was the group day in the programme?
14. What changes would you recommend to the programme overall?

## Appendix E

### Denscombe's Interview Checklist (2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. p.205)

Checklist	My experience/what I learnt from using this advice
Field notes were written to provide supplementary information about the interaction during the interview	I kept a research diary to highlight issues and themes that arose when planning and conducting the interviews. My diary helped me to reshape the second interviews and focus group in light of reactions and responses received in the first interviews. The first interviews particularly were too long and too structured. I devised far too many questions and this led to repetition and some participants feeling they were being led too much in the interviews.
Relevant details were collected about the context within which the interviews took place (location, prior events, ambience)	In my research diary I kept a log of each interview, location, any particular events that happened. For example when one participant was late for an interview I noted how I tried to settle him into the situation and gave him extra time to relax.
I gave consideration given to the effects of the recording equipment on the openness with which informants replied	I used a very small dicta phone in the interviews and focus group to be as unobtrusive as possible and tried to ensure participants forgot about it being there as much as possible. My aim was to achieve the feeling of a relaxed conversation.
During the interviews the discussion was monitored appropriately in terms of informants key points	I kept notes during the interviews to highlight any key points.
I aimed to read between the lines of what was said	In analysing the interview transcripts I used <b>grounded theory as an influence</b> to pick out themes from the text.
I tried to identify any inconsistencies	In the analysis I highlighted themes but also contradictions. I particularly focused on inconsistencies in the individual interviews – this could show where answers are not authentic.
I was aware of the fob off answer	A particular risk here was the fob off answer because I was the line manager of some participants. My position of power posed a particular challenge for me – I tried to ensure that it did not influence the answers
I looked for boastful or exaggerated answers	I noted in my research diary that I felt one participant was particularly keen to highlight his strengths in the interviews and all the things he was doing as a manager. I looked in the second interview for any similarities but did see a more relaxed approach in the second interview with what I felt were more genuine answers. My position as the line manager had

	definitely influenced this participant particularly at the beginning of the programme.
I looked for answers intended simply to please the interviewer	Again one participant gave very mechanical answers that were wholly positive about the college and the programme. I tried to shape my questions more with this participant to let him open up more.
During the interview I used prompts, probes and checks to gain worthwhile, detailed insights	I used an interview schedule for both interviews. Interview 1 was too detailed with too many questions that made the process a little repetitive. I learned from this and produced a much more concise and focused interview schedule for interview 2.
Consideration was given to the way the researchers self-identity may have affected the interaction during the interview	This was a key factor in the research – my role as the line manager of the participants was always a factor in shaping the responses from them. I kept mindful of this and tried to distance myself from my role in the college during the interviews. I reminded participants that their responses were confidential and were only to be used for my research.
Informed consent was obtained from interviewees and the College	All participants were invited to an initial group discussion about the project where I outlined my research proposal and aims. They were able to ask questions and were given a consent form to sign if they were happy with participating. One college manager decided in the group session that she did not want to participate and I made this offer openly to the rest of the group. I obtained formal consent for the research from the principal of the college.
All documents and recordings were stored securely with appropriate measures to protect the confidentiality of the data	All recordings and transcripts were logged and stored in a locked filing cabinet.

## Appendix F

### Interview Schedule – Senior Leadership and Staff Development Manager

1. One of the key objectives of this research is to review the impact of the leadership development programme at the college. As part of the research I am keen to establish how the programme is adding value to participants and to the college?
2. The college states in its submission for the Training Quality Standard that “Training and education should add value to the individual and provide value for money to the employer.” Thinking about what you want to achieve from the programme provides` a focus for the research and a framework for discussion?
3. Following from that can you broadly outline what you want the programme to achieve?
4. How well do you expect the programme to develop employees to respond to future business needs of the college?
5. How well do you expect the programme to respond to specific college challenges and issues?
6. How well do you expect the programme to prepare individuals for promotion?

How well do you expect the programme to prepare the college for succession planning?

7. How well do you expect the programme to effect/improve:

- Productivity and efficiency
  - Recruitment and contribution
  - Quality of provision
  - Learner/employer satisfaction
  - Learning and development in the college
  - Job satisfaction and working practices
8. How much do you expect the programme to contribute to staff morale and retention?
9. How much do you expect the programme to contribute to staff commitment and motivation?
10. How much do you expect the programme to contribute to cultural alignment in the college?
11. How much do you expect the programme to contribute to knowledge management in the college?
12. How much do you expect the programme to contribute to organisational agility?
13. How would you measure the impact of the programme?

## Appendix G

### Leadership Development Programme

Name:

Date:

The on programme evaluation process is designed to provide a source of reflection for you and will provide the lifelong learning staff with feedback about the programme. Your candid responses are important and appreciated, especially your additional written comments.

Your answers will be confidential and all answers will be grouped together.

#### Group Development Day – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2008

	Not at all				Very great
	1	2	3	4	5
Q1. Please rate the group development day in terms of the <i>value</i> of what you learned					
Q2. Please rate the group development day in terms of the <i>relevance</i> of what you learned					

Q3. What was the most helpful thing you learned? Why?

Q4. What, if anything, should have been added to the session?

Q5. What recommendations do you have to improve the session?

### Coaching Session 1

	Not at all				Very great
	1	2	3	4	5
Q6. Please rate the Coaching Session in terms of the <i>value</i> of what you learned					
Q7. Please rate the Coaching Session in terms of the <i>relevance</i> of what you learned					

Q8. What was the most helpful thing you learned from the coaching session?  
Why?

Q9. What do you want to do differently this term based on your coaching session?

Q10. What recommendations do you have to improve the session?

Many thanks.

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