

The Practice of Authority in Academic Leadership/Management

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Abstract

This study sought to advance understanding of authority in higher education academic management/leadership. Although there is rich literature on education management and leadership, the role of authority in this area has received less attention. Drawing on an understanding of authority as social, multiple, changeable and contested, this study had three broad aims: to understand contextualised authority practices; to conceptualise authority in academic leadership/management and to investigate the value of practice-focused constructivist grounded theory methodology in educational research. Data were collected from the Education Departments of two, post 1992, UK universities over a period of eighteen months and analysed using elements of practices as a sensitising framework. The study shows how elements combine in construction of authority. Three practices: overseeing, deciding and challenging, are considered.

The study contributes to the discussion on academic leadership and management. Findings demonstrate the complexity of authority practices in this domain. Four ideas in particular stand out: that access to knowledge and material resources confers or restricts authority; that elements and everyday practices combine to create a 'toolkit' from which authority practices can be constructed; that grouping multiple authorities into a triad of structuring, relational and knowledge-based authorities can cast light on constructions and contestations of authority; and that knowledge-based authorities in higher education have multiple and conflicting sources that draw on different higher education discourses.

Finally, the study suggests the value of practice focused grounded theory methodology in shifting focus from an agentic understanding of academic leadership/management.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my eldest son, Ollie Jarvis (1984 - 2010). Ollie, at your funeral Dad said, "Do something you like and think of Ollie." This is for you.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Focus for the Research

This is a study about authority in higher education - about the ways in which academic middle managers/leaders assert or defer to authority and about the kinds of authority that are asserted or deferred to. It is a study about decisions that are made and challenged and about the actions of managed and managers/leaders as they respond to the demands of working in higher education. It is also a study that is personal, borne out of a lifelong political interest in power, authority, autonomy and voice but also out of the fact that, over the last ten years, I have held academic positions ranging from lecturer to Pro Vice Chancellor.

Data were collected and analysed using constructivist grounded theory methodology over a period of eighteen months. Using a social practice theory perspective, I analysed data from the Education Departments of two, post 1992, universities. I focused on actions and routines of staff and the knowledge and material resources they drew on in asserting or deferring to authority. Although the majority of my data came from interviews, I also drew on document analysis and observation.

In line with constructivist grounded theory methodology, I did not start with a complete literature review, but read, interviewed and coded in parallel. And what I realised as I did so was that, while authority in HE management/leadership

remains largely unexplored, my participants (and participants in other studies) drew frequently (tacitly or explicitly) on notions of authority. Two Associate Heads of School raised different aspects of authority, unasked:

“And do you see that when I was associate dean I was at a higher level of authority in the university than I am now? It’s exactly the same job. I’ve got the same people to deal with in my School, it’s the same size, the same complexity of work, but the impact of it [the restructure] is that I don’t automatically sit on university level committees and have a say and a knowledge of what’s going on at a higher level. It’s much more, erm, how can I say it, it’s much more... I feel less... central to the work of the University as an associate head than I did as an associate dean.”

“Shared experience [gives you] I think the bit of authority. To be able to talk to somebody as a module leader. ‘I’m a module leader, you’re a module leader, this is the difficulty you’re having, this is the way I’ve solved it.’ Or sharing really good practice and saying ‘yes, I’ll take that on and pass it on.’”

In this study my aim has been to interrogate aspects of this authority through construction of the practical ways in which authority is established, asserted and deferred to in higher education academic leadership and management.

1.2 Overview of the chapter

This chapter provides an overview of the focus and context for the research. I outline some changes in higher education, including the growth of regulation

and standardisation alongside marketisation, consumerism and performativity. I then consider the relevance of the concept of authority in higher education academic management/leadership. I move on to outline my theoretical perspective, Social Practice Theory, and briefly explain the appropriateness of my methodology, Constructivist Grounded Theory. I conclude by suggesting the contribution I hope this study will make to HE educational research and by outlining the structure of this thesis.

1.3 The growth of new public management and marketisation in HE

Over the last sixty years or so higher education (HE) in the UK has changed significantly. Massification has led to a higher proportion of young people attending university: from around 7% in the 1960s (Robbins 1963) to 48% in 2014-15 (ONS 2015). The Robbins Report (1963:4-6) identified drivers for the need to review Higher Education:

- Financial oversight (following the provision of 'large grants from the state' as universities' private income fell)
- Public interest in 'the general direction of [universities'] development' as a consequence of increasing cost
- Demand ('the desire for higher education on the part of young people')
- Economic ('this country's economic dependence on the education of its population').

These drivers, and the changes that followed them, were mirrored in similar changes worldwide (for an international comparison across ten countries, see Meek et al. (2010)). However, Watson (2011:411), setting out eleven major UK

changes between 1963 and 2010, argues that the UK stands out because the: 'degree of legislative hyper-activity is extraordinary'.

In his report Robbins (1963:4) suggested that it was a misnomer, at that time, to talk about a system of higher education since HE provision had developed separately in universities, independently of the state, and provision was therefore largely uncoordinated. The report recommended that a system was needed to meet the new demands. However, the report also highlighted the importance of academic autonomy:

“In recommending that there should be a system and co-ordination we are not demanding that all the activities concerned should be planned and controlled from the centre. We set great value upon the freedom of individuals and institutions in any academic system. But this does not conflict with our view that, where there is common provision, there should be coordinating principles.” (Robbins 1963:5)

Despite these intentions, Robbins' call for a system was part of a trajectory of increasingly centralised control of HE. Today the idea of a system seems embedded in the discourse: for example, the 2010-2015 Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government's White Paper on higher education was entitled: Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). Deem et al (2007: 2) suggest that HEIs have been transformed “from ‘communities of scholars’ into ‘workplaces’.” In this conception, ‘business facing’ universities are required to demonstrate value for money; students (fee paying and entitled to information and choice) are positioned as customers of the university (Browne 2010, Maringe 2011); and

targets for example, in the National Student Survey (NSS) and arising from the Research Excellence Framework (REF), shape the nature of academic work. Smith (2012) highlights the prevalence, in *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS 2011) and in the Browne Review (Browne 2010), of the language of the market, for example:

“To be successful, institutions will have to appeal to prospective students and be respected by employers. Putting financial power into the hands of learners makes student choice meaningful.” (BIS 2011:5).

Molesworth et al. (2009:277-279) suggest that this market orientation in higher education results in commodification and branding of an ‘educational offering’ by universities, leading to competition among producers for customers (students). This competition is encouraged by governments as a mechanism to improve ‘products’ and drive down costs. Ball (2012a:25) comments that:

“Increasingly exchange value has become the medium of university discourse and decision-making.”

These changes are about systematization as well as marketisation. Robbins’ (1963) suggestion that there is proper public interest in the efficacy of investment in HE has grown into a regulatory system of some complexity (Gibbs 2012) in which performativity targets, league tables and quality assurance mechanisms are used to ensure efficient operation and ‘value for money’. Furthermore, government interventions ensure that HE is, at best, a quasi-market. Watson (2011) identifies fixed fees, government incentives to study courses, and financial penalties for HEIs that don’t meet widening participation measures as just some of the ways in which the market is distorted by

government intervention. The Teaching Excellence Framework (BIS 2016) adds a further layer of regulation and measurement to education in universities. Two different models have been used to describe these changes: new managerialism (NM) (Deem and Brehony 2005) and new public management (NPM) (Meek 2003).

New public management is a pragmatic solution to issues highlighted by the Robbins report (1963). NPM aims to drive, in public institutions, the 'business-like' behaviour advocated by Browne (2010). NPM is 'a new international and technical administrative orthodoxy' (Deem and Brehony 2005:220) which aims to limit bureaucracy to an efficient minimum and develop a quasi-market in which HEIs compete with each other as well as with other organisations (Brennan and Shah 2011), to ensure efficient operation and maximum impact. Meek (2003:11) suggests that:

“NPM's guiding principle states that while public actors such as government should maintain core public service values they should place greater emphasis on achieving the desired results or outcomes than on the processes and rules of service delivery.”

Although New Public Management (NPM) aims to reduce reliance on bureaucracy it is arguable that the consequent increased focus on standardisation of efficient systems has had the opposite effect.

New managerialism (NM), by contrast, is associated with neo-liberal ideology (Meek 2003, Trowler 2010), which Deem and Brehony (2005) suggest incorporates particular beliefs about power and control and espouse an individualist agenda. Neo-liberalism is most strongly associated with the work

of Nozick (1974), Friedman (2009), and Hayek (2012) who advocated minimum governance and regulation coupled with a free market and rational individual choice. For Deem and Brehony, new managerialism is a more useful lens than new public management, because it acknowledges an ideological underpinning to the changes. They suggest this enables analysis of power relations and of whose interests are protected in the current situation. They argue that, alongside the agencies driving change, one group that gain power from new managerialism are manager-academics who are:

“...very interested indeed in maintaining relationships of power and domination.” (Deem and Brehony 2005:231)

While new managerialism has the advantage of making space for a discussion of power relations behind the changes, new public management can accommodate aspects that new managerialism can't. Firstly, neo-liberal ideology was particularly dominant in the 1970s, nearly a decade after the changes recommended by Robbins, which suggests that the changes did not, at least, originate in a neo-liberal agenda. Secondly, it is an ideology that pertains, globally, mainly to the North and West while the HE changes outlined above extend to countries without a neo-liberal tradition (Meek et al. 2010). Finally, focus on university structures; on an increased regulatory system and on government quality assurance measures sits awkwardly with a neo-liberal ideology, whose proponents advocated a minimalist state and reduced governmentality (Nozick 1974).

The changes to HE have been critiqued by academics. They have argued against the positioning of students as consumers (Molesworth et al. 2009), the

commodification of knowledge (Deem et al. 2007), quality measures designed to drive performance (Gibbs 2012); the dominance of the language of economics (Smith 2012) and have suggested that management of change is wrongly conceived of as top-down and rational-purposive (Trowler 2002).

Closely connected to this critique is a sense of loss of academic autonomy and collegiality (Burnes et al. 2014). Central to the concept of collegiality is, 'the idea that that decisions in universities and colleges can be made collectively by the academics affected' (Tight 2014:294). It is argued that regulation and a loss of trust (Deem et al. 2007) may lead to a culture of central decision making, surveillance, commodification and performativity that undermines academics' commitment to their own work (Ball 2012a). Academics operate in a speeded up timeframe in which they are required to work ever harder to access scarce resources (Clegg 2010). As researchers' agendas are limited to a 'utility cost-benefit perspective' (Ball 2007:453) research that is focused on new knowledge development and viewpoints which might challenge the status quo may be more difficult to sustain. This may determine, not only what knowledge is legitimate, but also who is authorised to create knowledge.

However, there is a case to be made that the critique of NM and NPM is itself driven by vested interests. Hellawell and Hancock (2001) found middle managers/leaders believed that some staff could dominate collegial decisions. If Deem and Brehony (2005) are correct that manager academics are the group whose interests are now promoted, it is pertinent to ask whose interests were protected and who had power before the changes. It could be argued that the beneficiaries were largely a privileged section of the HE community, who held

the majority of professorships and publications while other voices, newer to academia, had little authority. As Tight (2014) points out, some of those, therefore, who are the fiercest critics of managerialism, may have most to lose from the changes. In a cross-cultural study of HE, Bagilhole and White (2011:198) suggested:

“While the way this [new managerialism] may impact on gender relations inside academia was far from clear, it was evident that the women in this study- and some of the men– were looking towards new leadership models as the old ones were deemed to be ineffective. These respondents disliked the macho, 'boys club' style of [the old collegial style] to manage teams.”

To sum up: massification of HE in the UK has led to an increase in both systematisation/regulation and marketisation/consumerism, with a parallel increase in managerial control, performativity, surveillance and loss of academic autonomy. These changes have arguably led to a privileging of academic management/leadership positions at the expense of the collegial authority of academics. Two alternative and somewhat conflicting perspectives; new managerialism and new public management offer lenses through which to view the changes and issues of power and authorisation run through these debates: the discourses of exchange and bureaucracy coexist uneasily.

The following sections briefly outline strands of argument considered in more depth in the thesis. These are: issues of power and authority in academia (Ch4); the implications of marketisation for academic leadership/management (Ch3)

and the value of a practice perspective in researching academic leadership and management. (Ch5).

1.4 Power

“There’s a god up there who makes decisions without consultation” (Deputy Head of Department)

As Deem and Brehony (2005) suggested, questions about power are threaded through consideration of the changes in HE. Should universities be regulated by a central system? How autonomous should the academics who work there be? What are the consequences if the language of the market dominates? Whose interests are served or neglected by the growth of NM and NPM?

Theories of power can illuminate these questions. Compulsion (Dahl 1957) may seem to have little place in universities, but in a managerial system in which there is an increase in zero hours academic contracts it may seem more relevant now than before. Agenda setting is a less direct form of power. The ability of some individuals, groups or organisations to agenda set (Bachrach and Baratz 1962) - effectively including or excluding topics from discussion seems very relevant to a discussion of academic freedom. For this reason, Barnett and Duvall (2005) describe agenda-setting as institutional power. Finally, academics may be captured by the discourse of managerialism (Trowler 2001) so that, in Ball’s (2013:141) words: ‘we come to want for ourselves what is wanted from us.’ This is an example of the third type of power (Lukes 2005) - the power of hegemony (Gramsci 1971).

Agenda setting is visible in the changes in Higher Education. For example, the UK Labour Government introduced student tuition fees in 1998 (increased first in 2004 and again in 2010). This drove focus on student satisfaction with the introduction of the NSS (National Student Survey), a government led survey of all final year undergraduates in the UK. This was launched in 2005 with annual results that publicly rank UK universities. League tables, such as the Good University Guide first published in 2007, now proliferate.

In turn, this legislation and regulation has driven discourse – and action- in universities. The post I currently hold is 'PVC Education and Student Experience'. At a recent HEA Teaching and Learning network meeting 16 colleagues had 'student experience' as a part of their title. Sabri (2011: 658) argues that the notion of 'the student experience' and of 'the student' as a homogenised customer of higher education has proliferated in literature only since 2009, although Tight (2003) highlights its use as an organising concept prevalent in current HE research some years earlier.

Smith (2012) argues that a consequence of such dominance is loss of ability to define a good university other than in terms of economics and popularity. He cautions:

“The language of economics and the market has become exuberant and confident of its capacity to overshadow, and perhaps even make redundant, all other kinds of discourse.” (Smith 2012:651)

To what extent has this dominance moved from agenda-setting towards hegemony, leading neoliberalism to 'get into our minds and souls' (Ball 2012a:18)? Opinions vary – for some the discourse is all-encompassing:

“... some sections of the modern British University have become so embedded in a market economy they have lost the will – perhaps the capacity- to critique it.” (Brannen and Nilsen 2005:278)

Others consider that there is more room for agency. Trowler (2001) explores the extent to which academics are captured by neo-liberal discourse. He suggests that being embedded in alternative communities of practice offers opportunity to evade capture and that ‘displacement, resistance, reconstruction and negotiation do occur’ (Trowler 2001:196). Logically, the existence of critiques of neo-liberalism is de facto evidence that capture is not total; that at least, there are contradictory discourses.

1.5 Authority

“So only one... only two... members of staff outright refused... but it’s been quite interesting in the way that that’s been seen by other members of staff. That some people have been allowed to say, ‘I don’t want to do that.’ and get away with it, while others haven’t.” (Deputy Head of Dept. (DHoD) – my emphasis)

I have suggested that a regime of legislation and systematisation in HE has led to the development of power relations which are supported by a marketised discourse that competes with other discourses for dominance. One question, if this is the case, is: why have academics allowed this to happen? I am reminded of the A.A Milne poem in which the cow initially rejects the king’s demand for ‘a little bit of butter’ on his bread. Why don’t academics, faced with a complex system in which they often don’t believe, and which makes unrealistic workload

demands, simply, like the cow in the poem, politely refuse? And what enables a few to do it and (in the words of the DHoD at the start of this section) 'get away with it'?

It seemed to me that these questions were about authority: the ways in which enactment of power by academic managers/leaders was legitimated by staff in the two units (including the academic managers/leaders themselves). Weber (2004) defines authority as legitimated power. If that was the case, then from where did these authoritative acts gain their legitimacy?

Multiple sources of authority seemed possible. Arendt (1961) hypothesised the death of authority arguing that the foundationalist authority which drew its legitimacy from religion or tradition no longer commanded universal deference. Following Arendt, alternative sources of legitimacy for authority have been suggested, leading Furedi (2013) to argue that there has been an increase in the contested nature of authority as a consequence. Writing at the start of the last century Weber (2004) recognised the authority of tradition, but also proposed charisma – the authority vested in a person by virtue of their extraordinary characteristics - and rational-legal authority – the authority of bureaucracy as well as professional expertise - as sources of authority. Writing in the twenty-first century, other theorists have proposed a range of sources. Woods (2016) constructs a typology of five: rational, communal, exchange, democratic and interior authorities and Blencowe (2013) suggests that an inequality of knowledge (objectivity) underpins authority. It seemed to me that echoes of these different sources of authority can be heard in the debates over

bureaucracy, collegiality and autonomy rehearsed in the discussion of new managerialism and new public management above.

The place of practice is also important. The ambiguity that results from potential plural sources of authority (Brigstocke 2013) is captured by the concept of a social authority which:

“...emphasizes the continual creation of legitimized power through practice and social interactions.” (Woods 2016:156) (My emphasis).

Similarly, Brigstocke (2013) and Haugaard (2010b) emphasise the performance of authority and the ways in which authority is instantiated through practice.

These ideas are considered in more depth in Chapter Four as I explore the implications of a pluralistic understanding of authority for educational management and leadership.

1.6 Academic management and leadership in higher education

The massification, marketisation and systematisation of higher education created a role for those who would implement and audit the changes. It is suggested (Deem et al. 2007, Burnes et al. 2014) that there has been a shift from professional autonomy and collegiality to increasing managerial control and bureaucracy, with a growing role for professional experts who manage, which Smith (2005) suggests led an increase in career-manager academics and to a change in management style from a collegial to a hierarchical approach. Mignot-Gerard (2003:138) defines collegiality as:

“... decision making based on consensus seeking through long discussion within the community of academic peers: and a community that was able to regulate itself and co-ordinate its actions without any need for external, hierarchical authority.”

However, there is debate over the relationship between collegiality and managerialism (Tight 2014). Arguably managerialism changed this basis of academic authority from ‘voluntary association’ to ‘top-down hierarchical control.’ (Warren 1994:52) replacing the authority of professional expertise with the authority of bureaucracy and managerialism. However, some writers (Hellawell and Hancock 2001, Clegg and McAuley 2005) suggest that, at middle management level particularly, collegiality as well as managerialism is used by managers/leaders to implement change, leading Tight (2014) to argue that managerialism and collegiality as often described in the literature are ideal types which, in practice, are often elided.

A review of the literature on academic leadership and management (Chapter Four) over the last two decades highlights some possible sources of authority: positional leadership, bureaucracy and the value of expertise. There is a growing body of research on middle management/leadership, from programme leader level (Milburn 2010) to the level of deans (da Motta and Bolan 2008). Day-to-day tasks in leading/managing in academia form one area of focus. Research highlights workload and constraints: ‘doing emails’, going to meetings and dealing with difficult colleagues (Smith 2007); co-ordination, checking, reporting back and dealing with students (Milburn 2010); dealing with paper work, working to targets and putting in long hours (Inman 2011) so that

managers/leaders report finding time for leadership activity driven out by focus on bureaucracy. Staff at different levels, including managers/leaders, are controlled by audit and performance targets in a hierarchical system. Kallenberg (2007) reports on the dual facing nature of middle management, with managers seeking a balance between maintaining a collegial relationship with staff and securing their place in the managerial hierarchy. Clegg and McAuley (2005:30) describe middle managers as dependent on the esteem of their peers. Positional and social authorities are evident here. Middle managers/leaders defer to the authority of others rather than exercising agency and presumably delegate authority to those below them in the hierarchy in turn. This aligns well with a rational-purposive model of institutional change (Fullan 1999), in which policies are crafted by policy makers and 'handed on' to academics and administrators for implementation at a local level (Ball 2012b).

A second research strand focusses on the qualities of effective leaders, what they are and how to develop them. If universities are marketised (NM) or quasi-marketised (NPM) and driven by a managerial agenda, the argument goes, then it is important to have the best people in managerial positions. Much research (Martin et al. 2003, Bryman 2009, Inman 2011, Richards 2011, Bush 2014) therefore focusses on positional leadership, attempting to identify and classify the attributes of effective leaders. This focus on the 'hero-leader' aligns closely with Weber's (2004) charismatic authority in which a leader is followed because of their exceptional qualities.

A third strand (Becher and Trowler 1989, Simkins 2005, Ball 2007, Trowler et al. 2012) considers academic autonomy and the continuing value of disciplinary

knowledge. Arguments are made for the distinctiveness of different disciplines and the difficulty, therefore, of simply implementing a single approach to academic management/leadership across a whole university.

Context in leadership is important it is argued (Simkins 2005). What is needed in any educational leadership is an approach which enables leaders to make sense of the conflicting and contextual challenges in their area. Ball (2007) writing on the leadership of researchers, highlights the way that informal, self, and subject leadership may coexist with hierarchical line management of people. Approaches like these suggest that professional expertise may underpin authority in academic leadership and management.

Research also looks at models of leadership rather than at the leaders themselves. One strand of interest is distributed leadership (Crawford 2012, Lumby 2016), and associated models such as shared and democratic leadership (Woods 2004). There are normative and analytic versions of these theories. The analytic versions suggest that leadership is, de facto, shared among the individuals within an organisation and that understanding this is valuable, while the normative versions suggest that leadership should be so shared and that organisations would benefit from adopting these models. One criticism of the normative approach has been that distributed leadership, rather than empowering individual workers, may merely be one way in which institutional leaders convince employees that the institutional aims are their own (hegemonic power). Others argue this is not inevitable. Woods (2016) argues that distribution – rather than delegation- of authority is possible. He explores

the concept of multiple authorities in relation to distributed leadership in schools, suggesting that:

“Rather than there being a uniform hierarchy (relatively flat or otherwise) of formal authority, organizational members may be ‘high’ in some authorities and ‘low’ in others, and people’s positioning in relation to these authorities is dynamic and changeable.” (Woods 2016:155)

1.7 Contribution

In this chapter I have argued that the massification and marketisation of higher education in the UK has led to a change in the ways that universities are led and managed, with discourses of performativity and exchange challenging the more traditional university discourses of collegiality and autonomy. The question of how and why such changes are legitimated are questions of authority.

Literature on academic management/leadership in higher education seems to suggest that leadership/followership actions may be underpinned by different foundations of authority, for example charismatic authority, bureaucracy and professional expertise. Simkins (2005:23) writes that understanding leadership in educational organisations should include:

“Making sense of the ways in which power and authority are and should be constituted and distributed.”

This study contributes to this debate on academic leadership and management in a number of ways. By adopting a practice perspective, it responds to calls (Lumby 2012:11) for a focus on ways of working, rather than leadership

attributes. As a result, it casts light on what Lynch (2001:131) calls the 'substantive production of order' in academic leadership/management through the construction of specific practices of authority.

Authority in educational leadership/management research is a neglected area. The findings from this study begin to fill this gap. Findings suggest that a categorisation of multiple social authorities (Woods 2016) into structuring, knowledge based, and relational authorities can help to identify the ways in which different aspects of authority combine and conflict – at least in academic leadership and management. Analysis of the elements of authority practices evidence the role that access to knowledge and material resources play in establishing authority in academia and highlights the ways in which knowledge resources are more complex than typologies of authority suggest. Finally, it raises questions about the ways in which collegiality and managerialism co-exist and suggests some implications for higher education academic leadership and management.

1.8 Research Questions

This research addressed a number of specific questions.

- Are practices of authority evident in the data? If so, what are these?
- If practices of authority are evident, what are the elements of these practices?
- How can authority in academic leadership/management be conceptualised?
- What are the implications for higher education leadership/management?

Additionally, I aimed to understand the benefits and limitations of using a practice theory approach as a sensitising framework in educational research.

1.9 Overview of the thesis

This section outlines the remainder of the thesis, which is structured over eight chapters. The order of the chapters is, to some extent, interchangeable. Since this was a constructivist grounded theory study I was reading literature, collecting and analysing data contemporaneously. Although I contemplated dividing the literature and findings chapters into approximate chunks to highlight the order of the journey, in the end it became too complex. I have started with my theoretical perspective, social practice theory, because that provided the lens for everything I did. After that, the reader could probably tackle the chapters in any order they chose. The outline below offers a guide for navigation.

Chapter two introduces my theoretical perspective, Social Practice Theory, in depth. Starting with a discussion on the production of order (central to the question of authority), I outline practice theory and its use in my thesis and consider some challenges to it, including the charge that power relations in practice are not adequately addressed.

Chapter three explains what I actually did. I outline Constructivist Grounded theory (my methodological approach), my data collection and analysis methods, and discuss ethical considerations.

Chapter four is the literature review. I review the literature on academic management and leadership, focusing particularly on the practices involved and

considerations of authority. I review the literature on authority itself, considering the particular relevance to higher education.

Chapters five and six consider the findings. *Chapter five* focuses on analysis of the elements of the practice of authority, looking particularly at knowledge and resources. *Chapter six* uses these elements to construct and consider three authority practices: deciding, overseeing and challenging.

Chapter seven is the discussion. I focus on answers to my research questions and the substantive findings from this project.

Chapter eight, the conclusion, sums up the key aspects of the study, sets out the contribution which this study makes, highlights some limitations and points the way forward for future research.

2 Theoretical Perspective- a practice based approach

Different views of human agency underlie the debates over change in higher education. Reckwitz (2002) outlines opposing alternatives: either human behaviour is largely a product of societal structures and the scope for agency is therefore very constrained, or individuals make rational decisions based on the information available to them to achieve the best for themselves; leaving extensive scope for individual agency. Arguments which suggest academics are inevitably captured by a marketised discourse, or consider managers/leaders' actions constrained by institutional governance and structures seem predicated on a structuralist position, while arguments for importance of visionary leadership seem built on a more agentic notion. Neither viewpoint, however, quite captures the complexity of the situation. On the one hand, as Trowler (2001) has suggested, academics are not completely captured by the discourse of managerialism, on the other, neither is their escape complete. Ball (2012a:18) is surely right to say that dominance of a neo-liberal agenda in HE:

“...brings about a profound shift in our relationships, to ourselves, our practice, and the possibilities of being an academic.”

I adopted a social practice theory perspective because it seemed to me to offer an alternative to the structure-agency impasse through a focus, not on individuals, but on actions and the material and knowledge based contexts for these. This chapter explains my reasons for that choice in more depth. To do this it is necessary to address the structure-agency debate, at least briefly. I explore key aspects of practice theory, including some limitations, and argue

that it offers a useful lens through which to view authority in academic leadership and management. In arguing for the value of a practice theory approach, I claim only that viewing the problem of authority in academic management/leadership in universities in this way has the potential to generate useful insights, not that it is superior to any other.

2.1 The production of order

Hobbes (1651) linked the 'problem of authority' with the question of how social order is created and maintained. But as soon as one delves into the detail of that: why people act, or fail to act, in particular ways, then:

“...what is at stake is not the theoretical problem of order, but the substantive *production* (author's emphasis) of order on singular occasions.” (Lynch 2001:131)

It was this focus on the practical production of order that led me to adopt practice theory as my lens.

It has been argued by Smith (2007) that academic middle managers/leaders may find themselves managing competing claims for their allegiance, both exerting and submitting to authority, expected simultaneously to defend their disciplinary unit from the centre and to implement and defend central strategies and policy within their unit. So, what 'makes' managers/leaders act in the way they do? One answer is that their behaviour is constrained by external norms and structures. Their institution's policy is set within a national (and international) discourse of marketisation, commodification and performativity (Ball 2012a) which may be hard to resist. An alternative answer is that the characteristics of the managers/leaders themselves define the choices they

make. Lumby (2012) suggests that much literature into leadership in higher education is predicated on understanding individual leaders' behaviour and attributes suggesting a focus on individual agency.

Theories of human action and social order have traditionally adopted one or other of these positions. People are either positioned as autonomous, rational choosers or as cultural dupes bound by socially shared, normative rules (Reckwitz 2002:245). As Reckwitz says, the first approach takes a purpose oriented theory of action, in which individuals choose to act rationally in line with their own best interests, so that social order is produced out of the totality of many millions of individual rational choices. The second approach is a norm oriented theory of action which holds that individual choices are constrained by collective societal norms and values, and that consensus around these norms then creates social order.

Both of these approaches have shortcomings as a way of exploring the production of order. To place the individual at the centre of analysis and to argue that social structures are nothing more than the practical consequences of many individual choices ignores the relational and social nature of those choices. This 'individualisation thesis' (Brannen and Nilsen 2005:425) ignores factors such as gender, social class and ethnicity which may constrain available choices. As Lukes (2005) points out it is not only coercive power which shapes individual choices but also the ways in which certain actions and topics for discussion are excluded from the range of choices. But the alternative, normative, theory of action that sees such macro structures as determining action struggles to

explain both local variation and individual autonomy. If societal norms determine action, how is change possible? As Archer (1982:455) argued:

“On the one hand structuralist Marxism and normative functionalism virtually snuffed out agency, the acting subject became increasingly lifeless whilst the structural or cultural components enjoyed a life of their own, self-propelling or self-maintaining. On the other hand, interpretative sociology busily banished the structural to the realm of objectification and facticity – human agency became sovereign whilst social structure was reduced to supine plasticity because of its constructed nature.”

2.2 (Social) practice theory

Practice theory offered an alternative to this dilemma, although not one with which Archer (1982) concurs. It focused attention on situated actions and understandings at a local level. Instead of seeing individuals and organisations practice theorists see social processes (Nicolini 2012). For practice theorists, social structures are neither disembodied norms nor epiphenomenon of individual actions, but are to be found in patterned arrangements of related physical and mental actions, resources, meanings and emotions. As (Nicolini 2017 :107) remarks, practices “are always manifest in empirically accessible social sites of activity”. He adopts a ‘flat ontology’ (2017:99) which does not grant a special ontological status to macro social structures, but considers these constituted from everyday actions, objects and relations. Existing practices shape and constrain the actions of the people who carry those practices, but are in turn changed by the actions of the carriers. Reckwitz says:

“Social order then does not appear as a product of compliance of mutual normative expectations, but embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures in a ‘shared knowledge’ which enables a socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world.” Reckwitz (2002:246)

This ‘practice turn’, as Schatzki et al (2001) have described it, draws from the work of seminal theorists. Nicolini (2012) cites Nietzsche, Heidegger, Giddens, Bourdieu, Marx, Engeström, Garfinkel, Schatzki, Foucault, Lave and Wenger as contributing to a turn to practice in various ways. Clearly there is much that separates them, but what these authors have in common is a focus on activities, both physical (including speech acts) and mental. It is the way that these separate activities are connected that forms a practice:

“...a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements interconnected to one another.... A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating ... forms so to speak a ‘block’ whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and interconnectedness of these elements...” (Reckwitz 2002:249)

These ‘routinized blocks’ can be any number of everyday activities, connected both internally and to other ‘blocks’. For example, Shove et al (2012:31) discuss driving a car:

“If we take the practice of driving a car rather than the car or the driver as the central unit of enquiry, it becomes clear that relations between the vehicle (along with the road and other traffic), the know-how required to keep it in motion and the meaning and significance of driving and

passenger are intimately related, so much so that they constitute what Reckwitz refers to as a 'block' of interconnected elements."

The elements in the block are of various types and, while different authors focus on different aspects and may describe them rather differently, there is a reasonable degree of agreement about the classes of elements involved. By way of illustration, the table below sets out elements of practice as described by different writers. It will be seen that, although the language varies somewhat, the elements remain relatively constant.

	(Schatzki 2001Ch3)	(Reckwitz 2002:249)	(Shove et al. 2012:416)	(Trowler 2013:3-4)
Routines	organised human activity;	routinized behaviour		'an organised constellation of activities'
Material resources	artefacts, organisms and things	things and their uses	materials: things, technologies, physical entities,	artefacts; 'the engagement of materiality'
Knowledge resources	practical intelligibility; general understandings	know-how, knowledge/ understanding,	competencies: skill, know-how, technique	practical skills; knowing how to go on; a feel for the game
Actions	bodily doings/ behaviour; Mental phenomena/ behaviour language	bodily activities; mental activities		behaviour
Meanings (denotative and connotative)	a teleoaffective structure	states of emotion	meanings: symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations	embodied, emotions and assumptions

Table 2-1 Elements of Social Practices

Whilst there are nuanced differences, there is also considerable commonality. For the purposes of this research, I follow Shove et al (2012) in adopting a simplified typology which I have labelled knowledge resources, material resources, actions and meanings.

One implication of linking blocks of activities is that specific instantiations of practices are situated in specific contexts. The context bound nature of practices is crucial in understanding them. For example, the learning of teachers in the extract below is situated (Lave and Wenger 1991) in the particular context of that school's CPD programme at that particular time. It is the relations between the different elements that fill out a particular practice; social and shared doesn't happen in abstract. Given that the actions undertaken in performances of practice will never be identical, it follows that practices are the site of change as well as routine (Hui 2017).

Nevertheless, it is clearly possible to talk with understanding about 'driving', 'teaching' and 'leading' in the abstract. Shove et al (2012) distinguish practices as entities from practices as performances and suggest that, existing as an abstract entity, practices also become a resource – a pattern – that can be drawn on as individual instantiations of a practice occur. Schatzki (1996) adds a further layer of complexity by differentiating what he calls 'integrated' from 'dispersed' practices. While both are situated, the former are clearly situated in a specific context and would commonly – like teaching or football- utilise a familiar set of material resources. The latter – like questioning or ordering- may

occur in a wide range of situations but are, he argues, recognisable nevertheless as an instantiation of that particular practice. Practising authority, I submit, is of the latter type.

Performances of practices therefore connect situated knowledge and material resources, actions and meanings in a routinized way. An example helps to illustrate. Consider the following description of regular professional development in a school:

“All executives and teachers in staff meetings engaged in reading and then discussing shared professional development readings... Crucially, as relations of trust were built amongst staff and as a greater sense of collective responsibility for learning and leading emerged, readings were variously sourced by the principal, executive team members and teachers. As such, a shared language or set of ‘sayings’, i.e. ideas and understandings about particular pedagogical practices.... was gradually embedded over time.” (Wilkinson and Kennis 2015:350)

In this case the particular staff development practice brings together resources (the texts) and physical and mental actions (the act of reading and discussing the readings) together with teleoaffective meanings (trust and a sense of responsibility). This grows two aspects of shared knowledge: understanding of specific pedagogies as well as a feel for this particular mode of professional development: in Wittgensteinian terms (Wittgenstein 1953) the carriers of this particular practice know how to play the game. Analysis of practice can therefore help to explain social action and order in this situation – for example why an established staff member who fails to bring a reading might attract

criticism, while a newcomer might not, at least initially. Collectively these many actions, understandings, meanings and resources work together over time to create the routinized patterns of behaviour that Reckwitz identified. Gherardi suggests:

“What people produce in their situated practices is not only work, but also the (re)production of society.” (Gherardi 2009:536)

Practitioners – the people who carry the practices- may engage in the same practice in different ways (Hui 2017). In the example above from Wilkinson and Kennis (2015) the ways in which new and experienced teachers, principal and executive team members engage in the practice will differ at any one moment and will also change over time: for instance, newcomers’ ways of participating in staff development will develop and change as they become expert (Lave and Wenger 1991). This too underlines the situated and dynamic nature of practices.

It is also important to say that what constitutes a practice is a matter of where the analytic definitions are drawn. Hui (2017:55) discusses making a sandwich. This is a performance of a particular practice entity – but which one? It might be an instantiation of making a sandwich or, alternatively, of making lunch depending on how the boundaries are drawn. Practices are therefore constructed devices rather than objects – useful ways of considering the world rather than reified things.

2.3 Some challenges to practice theory

While practice theory has considerable power to analyse action and to provide a lens through which to understand social order, it has been critiqued. In this section I consider three key arguments: that it is difficult to sustain a concept of practices as shared and social (Turner 2001); that power is often ignored when practice theory is applied to organisations (Contu and Willmott 2003, Huzzard 2004) and that practice theory needs to focus on a theory of change as well as stasis (Shove et al 2012). An understanding of the force of these is important in considering why social practice theory might offer an interesting lens through which to examine authority.

Turner (1994, 2001) suggests that a difficulty for the notion of practices as shared and social is the question of what it is that is actually shared. He argues that the notion of sharing presupposes the existence of a 'tacit rule book': (2001:125) something which exists separately from individuals and which they have to master. He argues against the objective existence of such a thing and suggests instead a connectionist model which relies on multiple individual learning experiences. Where Nicolini (2012) suggests that the 'social' in social practice theory is superfluous, because all practices are necessarily social, Turner dismisses the social altogether. He argues that:

“...what people acquire that sociologists call practices are lessons that enable them to do particular things...” (Turner 2001:130).

The problem with dismantling practices in this way is that we are once again driven back to the individual choices of single agents and, once again, struggle to explain the way that the social shapes action. The notion of practices as

individual learned habits fails to take account of the normative force of practices (Rouse 2001, Watson 2017). In identifying a practice, we are not simply describing situated routinized actions, but recognising that mastery of it entails a level of skill: for any given task- teaching, managing, snowboarding, cooking - there are right and wrong ways to perform it in a particular context and community. It is the definition of what constitutes skills that introduces the normative aspect of practices and this, in turn, suggests that practices are shared.

Rouse (2001) suggests that a social theory of learning overcomes the objection. Turner's view of learning is individualist: individual agents have specific experiences (lessons) which they put together to develop their individual understanding of how to do something and be comfortable with the reactions of others (Turner 2001:130). A social theory understands learning as not separate from contexts – both immediate social contexts and wider (for example national and international) contexts. Starting from the social means that individual lessons (and indeed individuals) cannot be separated from the contexts or from other people. Ontologically the world, including people, objects and actions are inextricably linked.

Considering how people learn socially, Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise the legitimate peripheral participation in a task that enables newcomers to achieve mastery – but it is a social mastery: *this* task, in *this* community and *this* context. While learning in this sense does involve habituation (Turner 2001), practices are more than mere habit and it is the normative force of practices that enables us to take account of the situated power dynamics which shape practices. This

is important in exploring authority – who determines what is right or wrong, or decides which actions should be authorised and which should not? In seeking to understand the practice of authority in academic management/leadership, I am seeking to explain practices: not merely to describe them.

2.4 Power and Practice

A normative understanding of practices also helps to refocus attention on the ways that power operates within a community of practice. Although Lave and Wenger (1991) accepted the relevance of power relations in communities of practice, they also acknowledged that this was not unpacked. There has been concern (Contu and Willmott 2003) that this has led to an uncritical use of communities of practice as a managerial device. Gee et al (1996:65) suggested that communities of practice have been used as a device that encourages employees to internalise the goals and values of an organisation. Uncritical use of the notion of ‘community’ can hide questions about control of resources, of the ways in which meaning is established or determination of whose participation is legitimate (Contu and Willmott 2003). A normative understanding of practices has the potential to refocus attention on these questions of power and authority.

As discussed, power is complex: encompassing the power of one to compel another (Dahl 1957); the power to determine agenda (Bachrach and Baratz 1962); and the power to manipulate the desires of others to act in particular ways (Lukes 2005). However, each of these definitions is essentially agentic, focusing on the ways in which some people are able to impose their interests on others. A practice view of power embeds power within practice bundles and

sees it as relational rather than agentic (Contu and Willmott 2003, Huzzard 2004). Watson (2017) describes power as ubiquitous in practice theory. He explains human action as shaped by practices as entity, which are, in turn shaped by individual performances of practices. Power relations are therefore 'the effects of the ordering and the churn of innumerable moments of practices' (2017:180). Watson is concerned to explore 'large scale phenomena, like corporations and governments': while my interest in this study is to explore everyday practices of authority as legitimated power. However, Watson's perspective suggests that analysis of the elements of everyday practices may reveal power, for example, how resources are allocated, how knowledge is created and shared; or how meanings are established. For instance, newcomers to a practice may already be experienced practitioners elsewhere (Fuller et al 2005) who bring new regimes of knowledge and power. As practitioners move between several communities of practice this may lead to a remaking of meaning and a change of power relations (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2007). Through adopting a normative understanding of practices and focusing on the significance of the ways in which elements of practices are controlled I hoped to highlight the potential of practice theory to unpack questions of power and authority.

2.5 Stasis and change

The focus on routinized behaviour (Reckwitz 2002); the ways in which learning and culture are passed from old timers to newcomers (Lave and Wenger 1991) and the ways in which activity reproduces social systems (Giddens 1984) has led to concerns that questions about change: emergence, evolution and

disappearance of practices, are unaddressed (Shove et al 2012) and therefore that the potential for contradiction and innovation in practices is often ignored (Contu and Willmott 2003).

These concerns focus on the *de facto* use of practice theory: the suggestion is not that practice theory cannot account for change but simply that, as often used, it does not. As already discussed, no two instantiations of practice are identical, meaning that practices are sites of change as well as routine. The relationship between practices matters too: they co-exist in time and space, not in hermetically sealed bubbles, and may compete or collaborate (Shove et al 2012). Hui et al (2017) point out the ways in which practices and objects can move through practices, carrying innovations with them. As already noted, one of the strengths of practice theory is that, unlike accounts that privilege either structure or agency, it understands the relationship between practice and practitioner as recursive (Shove et al 2012) so that each influences the other. Clearly this allows for change. Huzzard (2004) for example, proposed a practice focused theory of change in which practitioners move between routine and non-routine actions, suggesting that it is the non-routine that enables change. Boundary spanning (Wenger 1998), as practitioners move between practices, may therefore lead to change as elements of one practice are transported into others.

Changes in material resources may also drive practice change: Shove et al. (2012) discuss the emergence of car driving, showing how the new resource (the motor car) drove practice change, but also how elements of old practices (such as carriage driving) were incorporated in the new practice. Power

relations may be relevant: the authors consider the way in which driving developed as a male dominated practice as a consequence of the adapting of elements (such as mechanical know how) that were already male dominated. An understanding of power as relational further aids understanding of practice change. Huzzard (2004:358) suggests that 'sense giving' is a way in which leaders achieve change through promotion of non-routine actions in practices, while Willmott and Contu (2003) highlight the potential for some potential carriers of a practice to be excluded altogether (for example on the grounds of their class or gender). Power relations within and between practices can therefore stifle or promote change.

2.6 Use of Practice Theory in this study

Practice theory offered explanatory power as I examined authority in academic management/leadership. It provided a way of understanding the world that was an alternative to the dilemmas of the 'structure-agency' debate. In focusing on actions (physical and mental, including discourse) rather than individual managers/leaders it shifted my gaze from charismatic authority (Weber 2004) and the hero leader (Crawford 2012) and onto the processes through which social order is maintained in universities. Further, a practice approach enabled me to make use of the elements of practices (actions, routines, knowledge and material resources and meanings) as sensitising concepts with which to begin my data analysis. I considered that, potentially, authority practices might be understood as recurring blocks or bundles of these related elements within the participating universities. A focus on the elements enabled me to get my teeth into the minutiae of day to day authority.

Adopting a normative (in the sense that practices define the 'right' way to do something) understanding of practices (Rouse 2001) allowed me to focus on power relations within practice bundles through analysis of the ways that elements are controlled and inter-relate (for example who has, or does not have, access to resources). Since authority can be conceived as legitimated power (Weber 2004) this was helpful to me. A normative understanding of practices allowed for clearer understanding of the ways that social order was created. By looking at the details of practice changes as well as persistence, and by looking for connections between practices I was able to better understand how both change and stasis were enabled.

3 Methodology

This is the chapter that explains and justifies what I actually did to answer my research questions. I first offer an overview of Grounded Theory Method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and justify my choice of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2014) for this study. I then move on to consider questions of positionality and ethical considerations. Finally, I discuss my data collection and analysis methods and consider my sampling strategies. This chapter finishes by highlighting some implications of the approach I have chosen.

3.1 Grounded Theory Method

My methodological choice was Grounded Theory Method (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Corbin and Strauss 2008). Adoption of Social Practice Theory (SPT) meant that practices, rather than people or organisations, were my units of analysis. Since practices are defined as situated arrays of routinized actions comprising various elements (Schatzki 1996, Reckwitz 2002, Shove et al. 2012) I needed an analytic approach that enabled close focus on these activities, skills and processes. Grounded Theory Method seemed promising since it enabled a focus on actions rather than structures:

“[Strauss] assumed that process, not structure, was fundamental to human existence.... the construction of action was the central problem to address.” (Charmaz 2014:9)

Grounded Theory Method’s data driven development of conceptual categories based on analysis of actions and social processes therefore seemed to offer a good fit with my research. Additionally, Constructivist Grounded Theory Method

(Bryant and Charmaz 2007, Charmaz 2014) offered the possibility of data driven analysis which could nonetheless be informed by sensitising concepts such as those provided by SPT. In what follows I seek to justify this claim by briefly outlining the development of Grounded Theory Method; exploring some critiques and examining the fit in relation to my study.

Grounded Theory Method was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in response to the domination of quantitative research within a positivistic paradigm. Their aim was to offer a robust alternative which relied on neither a logico-deductive approach, nor on rigorous hypothesis testing and statistical analysis of quantitative data, but on a process of comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 1-6). Their claim was that this method, rigorously applied, could lead to the discovery of theories with explanatory power.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) set out the method which, they claimed, would enable conceptual categories to emerge from the data and support generation of theory. The focus was on an analysis of social processes. An important principle was the idea that data collection, coding and analysis should take place contemporaneously, through an iterative process, rather than sequentially. As soon as data was collected it should be coded. These early codes then shaped subsequent data collection, through a process labelled theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967:45). At all stages of data collection and analysis memos should be written to capture and reflect on emerging categories. Understanding was thus driven by data.

It is important to see the development of Grounded Theory Method in its historical context; one in which the method was challenging the domination of quantitative research methods. Grounded theory method has since attracted criticisms. These centre on a critique of the notion that theory can be discovered by following this particular process, which implies an objective reality. Despite this, writers often acknowledge the place that Grounded Theory Method has played in the development of qualitative research. For instance, Thomas and James (2006), reject 'discovery' of grounded theory, arguing that this is predicated on the outdated notion of an objective, empirically discoverable social world. However, they nonetheless acknowledge that Glaser and Strauss:

“...made a major contribution to making qualitative inquiry legitimate.”

(Thomas and James, 2006: 790)

Connected to this objection is a rejection of the notion that the researcher should not impose his or her own preconceptions on the data, nor allow a priori concepts to force the data. Glaser and Strauss argued that the job of a researcher is to examine and compare data in order to allow categories and their properties to emerge. They suggested that no literature review should be carried out prior to collecting and analysing data, nor should the researcher use their knowledge of the field to construct hypotheses. The literature, rather, should form part of the data. This suggestion is much contested: for example, Lempert (2007) points out the impossibility of researching without pre-conceptions, since the researcher is not a tabula rasa.

“In order to participate in the current theoretical conversation, I must understand it.” (Lempert 2007:254)

Charmaz (2014:12) points out that classic Grounded Theory Method depends on:

“...mid-century assumptions of an objective external reality, a passive, neutral observer [and] a detached, narrow empiricism.”

Grounded Theory Method has developed significantly since the publication of ‘Discovery’. Corbin and Strauss (2008) developed a variation of the classic method which formalised the processes of Grounded Theory Method while simultaneously downplaying the development of theory in favour of a verification approach. Their work led to the growing popularity of Grounded Theory as a method. However, Glaser (1992) criticised the loss of focus on theory development and their increasingly proscribed methods, which he felt would force the data.

Charmaz and Byrant (2007) have sought to answer postmodern challenges by developing Constructivist Grounded Theory Method in which findings are conceived as *constructed from*, rather than *emerging from* the data. The place of the researcher becomes central in the research and the idea that researchers should eschew the literature before starting to collect data is rejected. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argue that researchers should bring an understanding of the literature to analysis and that ‘sensitising concepts’ can be helpful in analysis as long as they are not used to predetermine codes. They suggest that no-one can come to their research without preconceptions and that, if not informed by the relevant literature, then these will be formed from other, less rigorous sources, including personal experience. Charmaz (2014:30) suggests, however, that researchers should be sensitive to the possibility of forcing the

data and ready to discard their sensitising concepts as soon as they are not helpful. While acknowledging the usefulness of Grounded Theory Method as a data collection and analysis method, Charmaz (2014) also moves away from the prescriptiveness of Strauss and Corbin (2008) in favour of a more flexible approach. For example, Charmaz' focus is on coding actions as they emerge, rather than on coding every word.

3.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory Method 'fit' with my research

Since practices are social constructions, grounded in the local contexts in which they take place, a positivist approach to data analysis, predicated on the idea of examining some external reality, was not appropriate. Ethnography was one possibility; Constructivist Grounded Theory was another. After being initially attached to it, I discounted ethnography, partly for pragmatic reasons, because the timeline was challenging and my position as a full time academic manager too intensive to allow for the longitudinal immersion in the data sites I deemed necessary, but also because Constructivist Grounded Theory Method offered a number of specific advantages.

Charmaz (2014:15) suggests that (inter alia) constructivist grounded theorists:

- “1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process
2. Analyse actions and processes rather than themes and structure
3. Use comparative methods...”

In the first place, the iterative approach taken by grounded theorists was attractive for the simple reason that, at the outset of the research, I didn't know what I was looking for. Shove et al (2012:17) offer the example of snowboarding practice to illustrate analysis of practices through a focus on their elements. In this example it would be relatively easy to find the data to collect; one simply needs to go and observe snowboarding in action. A focus on the practice of authority is more difficult. Schatzki (1996:91-98) suggests two categories of practices: integrative and dispersed. While the former are connected networks of doings and sayings located in specific social domains, the latter occur widely 'across different sectors of social life'. Heimans (2012:383) suggests that a key difference between dispersed and integrated practices is that the latter, but not the former, have explicit rules. So, arguably, snowboarding is an example of an integrative practice while the practice of authority is dispersed. If this is the case, then simply 'finding and observing' the practice of authority is not so easy.

Schatzki (1996:91) further suggests that:

"The dispersed practice of x-ing is a set of doings and sayings linked primarily, usually exclusively, by the understanding of x-ing."

This implies that everyone would recognise an instance of x-ing when they see one. However, the practice of authority may be carried on 'under the stage' to a degree. For example, Lipsky (1980) identified the ways in which social security staff in the USA practiced their (limited) authority to restrict access to benefits and subvert the system planned by policy makers. I reasoned that it was only after collecting some data that I would be able to identify locally embedded social practices of authority in academic management/leadership on

which to focus more closely. The Grounded Theory approach of simultaneous data collection, coding and analysis allowed me to follow up data that indicated the practice of authority.

I also needed a methodological approach that enabled me to compare actions, meanings and use of resources in different contexts in order to identify the routinized behaviours (Reckwitz 2002) that characterise practices. Comparative analysis of incidents (Glaser and Strauss 1967:103) is at the heart of Grounded Theory. As indicated above, for Charmaz this is key in coding. She suggests (2014:120) that coding with gerunds (for example explaining versus explanation) supports analysis by focusing on action and processes. Grounded theorists are eclectic about data and of more importance than the types of data (interview, observation etc.) is the requirement to use early data collection to shape later data collection through theoretical sampling. Grounded Theory Method therefore enabled me to make use of a wide range of data sources that helped in answering my questions. I could compare practices in the two settings and use these comparisons to develop an understanding of the practice of authority.

I was cautious about classic Grounded Theory Method's eschewal of an early literature review, agreeing with constructivist grounded theorists that it is neither possible, nor helpful, to ignore all that has gone before. I was also conscious that, used carefully, the literature contained examples of data on practices in other higher education settings that could be helpful in my analysis. However, practices are embodied in performances (Shove et al. 2012) and therefore situated. This meant that I needed to focus particularly on instantiations of

practices in the specific settings that I was researching. I have therefore used the literature in three ways: firstly, as an iterative literature review, developed alongside my data collection and analysis and driven by emerging concepts; secondly to identify and analyse examples of practices described in the literature; and finally, in a closer analysis of two publications on academic management and leadership by academics in the two departments I was researching. Constructivist Grounded Theory Method was flexible enough to allow this.

3.3 Positionality

Having rejected classic grounded theory's notion of the objective researcher who comes to data without pre-conceptions, I needed to:

“... take the researcher's position, privileges, perspective and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality.”

(Charmaz 2014:12)

Throughout the project I was conscious of the relevance of my relationship to the research and research participants. At the start of the research I was an academic manager in the School of Education of a UK statutory university. Before that I was first a lecturer and then a programme leader in the same department. I have also been a teacher in school, a past occupation I shared with a number of my participants. While this project focuses on Schools of Education in UK Higher Education Institutes other than my own, the data is closely allied to my own professional focus. The discipline is mine and the area focused on is at least partly my own since, as an academic middle manager, I had authority in the School.

I was aware that I was emotionally connected to my area of research. Deem and Brehony (2005:221) argue that new managerialism can be seen as an expression of managers' interests: as an academic manager this would suggest I have an interest in maintaining the status quo. On the other hand, Ball (2012b) writes of the demonization of the British teaching profession by neo-liberals driving a managerialist agenda, and of the struggles of teachers against that. As a past primary teacher I can all too easily recall my battles while in school. These and other connections mean that my positionality in relation to the research is inevitably complex.

I rejected focusing on my own School, a medium sized School of Education in an Alliance Group university, for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to be somewhere different, where my preconceptions would be challenged. Trowler (2013:3) suggests that, alongside activities, artefacts and practical sense, emotions and assumptions are part of practices, but it is difficult to notice assumptions that you hold. Mason (2002) writes about the importance of noticing in researching practice; of not being:

“...so caught up in your own world that you fail to be sufficiently sensitive to possibilities.” (Mason 2002:xi)

I hoped, therefore, that the strangeness of other institutions would aid my observations. Secondly, as well as creating ethical difficulties, my position in the School as Dean (during the period of data collection) risked jeopardising the reliability of my data. Would staff and students in my School express their own views in interviews? It seemed unlikely. Given my focus on the practice of

authority I decided that my own position in the School added an unwanted layer of complexity.

Even though I was not researching my own institution, there is still an argument that this was insider research, with all the complexity in relation to positionality that this brings. Hanson (2013:391) defines insider research as research in which the researcher is:

“... not only a full member of the organisation and hopes to remain within it after the research has concluded, but is also undertaking research on the organisation”.

On that basis, in choosing other institutions, I was clearly an outsider, but this didn't feel quite right. An alternative approach (Merton 1972, Trowler 2012) takes the position that the insider/outsiderness is not a binary divide but a continuum. Merton (1972) points out that, given the multiple identities that people carry they are likely, simultaneously, to be insider and outsider. For example, while Lumby (2012:1) complains that much research into academic leadership 'reflects the perspective of a skewed group of organisation members in a limited range of roles' – an allusion to the insider position of academic managers/leaders in such research, Deem (2003) discusses the outsider position of female academic managers. Merton (1972) highlights potential advantages of this mixed position: bringing both distance and impartiality as outsider and cultural understanding as insider.

I also considered the ways in which participants' positionality intersected with mine. The roles that they held I have also held. For most, the position I held at

the time of the interviews was equivalent to that of their line manager. It seemed likely that this might impact their responses. I was conscious of the ways in which I presented myself to my participants – should my email signature include my position or not; should I wear a suit, or jeans; what aspects of my role should I emphasise to participants? Additionally, I considered that the intersection of my discipline with that of my participants could give confidence that I would appreciate their point of view. One such exchange from an early interview illustrates that this was a real issue:

Participant: You see, if it was government policy, you know – in education in particular- you have to work with... are you an education based person?

Interviewer: Yes, I was in primary.

Participant: Right, so you know.

Arguably this confidence could support rich data collection, but it might also undermine my ability to notice (Mason 2002) shared assumptions. It could also lead to participants trying to say what they thought I wanted to hear (Brinkmann 2013). Carter (2004) considered the complexity of insider/outsider positionality in an exploration of his experiences of interviewing female, ethnic minority nurses as a health manager from outside the organisation. He argued that being outside the organisation he was researching helped surface taken for granted assumptions, but that, at the same time, being a manager created suspicions. However, Sue (2015:121) points out that the literature presents a more complex picture and argues that:

“Researcher attributes do not mechanically shape or determine interpersonal relationships.”

To overcome the challenges, I aimed to limit what I shared with participants. I limited the information I shared: left my email signature off emails, was vague about my current role, restricted the information I shared in conversation and, as far as possible, used open ended comments and prompts in interviews. My focus on noticing (Mason 2002) was facilitated, in addition to the choice of institutions other than my own, by the line by line coding of Grounded Theory Method, which drew attention to the details of actions and processes.

3.4 Sampling

I adopted a purposive sampling approach in my choice of institutions/departments and used theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967) as I pursued data collection and analysis. Below I deal with each in turn.

As explained above I had decided to focus on my own discipline: Education. From a pragmatic angle my own networks in Education gave me more ready access to departments, but my reasons for choosing this approach were primarily to enhance data collection and analysis. Universities do not have a homogenous culture and it is arguable that disciplines have very different practices (Becher and Trowler 1989). Although, more recently, the seeming importance of 'mode two' knowledge and the consequent rise in inter-disciplinary studies, along with the business facing entrepreneurialism that comes with a marketised HE system, has led to a diminution in the distinctiveness of disciplines (Trowler et al. 2012) there is still evidence of different disciplinary practices: highlighted, for example, by Loughran (2006), Trigwell (2006), Yorke and Vaughan (2013). Focusing on a single discipline enabled me to better understand the practice of authority in academic

management/leadership by limiting these disciplinary differences. I considered that the cultural sensitivity offered by researching my own discipline outweighed the risks posed by subjectivity – especially since the researcher always has a subjective relationship with qualitative research.

My next decision was to focus in some depth on two institutions, rather than to draw on academic middle managers/leaders across the HE system. A large number of studies (Knight and Trowler 2001, Deem 2003, Woods 2004, Smith 2005, Wolverton et al. 2005, Ball 2007, De Boer et al. 2010, Bagilhole and White 2011, Inman 2011, Crawford 2012, Lumby 2013, Raelin 2016) have explored academic leadership and management in higher education. Many of these focus on either academic management/leadership per se or on the perceptions of participants. In seeking to understand practices, and in seeing practice as:

“... a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” (Schatzki 1996:89)

I was committed to researching networks of situated practices. I therefore decided to identify two institutions in which I would be able to research the situated practice of authority rather than interviewing unconnected participants.

I focused on statutory, rather than chartered or ancient, universities. Smith (2002:309) points out that, while both statutory and chartered universities have become increasingly managerialist there remain ‘residual differences’ between the two. It is standard in statutory universities for academics to hold management/leadership positions on contract while in chartered universities these positions may also be held on an elected basis. Smith also reports a

difference in focus with HoDs in chartered universities being less likely to be trained for the role and more likely to be research focused. The statutory (post 1992) universities began as vocationally focused institutions and are more likely to be 'business facing' and 'student focused', and less likely to be 'research intensive' than chartered universities. There may therefore be differences in staffs' views of a marketised agenda.

To identify participating institutions, I narrowed down my choices to the 'Alliance Universities' (University Alliance n.d). This mission group of post 1992 universities position themselves as universities which are business/profession facing, with a focus on employability and therefore very much children of a marketised HE age. They identify their mission as:

"...universities with a common mission to make the difference to our cities and regions. We use our experience of providing high quality teaching and research with real world impact to shape higher education and research policy for the benefit of our students, businesses and civic partners." (University Alliance n.d).

I discounted any institutions which did not have a visible web presence for a unit (faculty, school, department or institute) of Education; any with which I had a close connection and any whose website didn't enable me to identify named academic managers/leaders in the School. This left a shortlist of seven. Finally, I searched for literature published by senior managers/leaders in the unit which focused in some way on academic leadership or management. This last decision was for a number of reasons: it enabled me to identify institutions whose managers/leaders shared this focus; the additional data would be useful

in analyzing the practice of authority and, pragmatically, those who shared my research interest might be more likely to agree to the research. This left me with a shortlist of three. I selected two and was fortunate that the gatekeepers of both agreed to the research. I negotiated access to academic managers/leaders ranging from programme leader to Head of School (HoS) as well as the opportunity to visit and observe in the two departments.

In line with constructivist grounded theory methodology I adopted a theoretical sampling approach once I had begun to collect and analyse data. Theoretical sampling is a key aspect of grounded theory methodology which involves:

“...seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories...” (Charmaz 2014:192)

Glaser and Strauss (1967:45-50) emphasised that, after initial data collection, data should be sought to fill out categories and their properties rather than being pre-planned at the outset of the research. In the case of my research, the categories emerging from initial data analysis led to a change of direction, away from a focus on strategic management/leadership of student experience towards a set of day to day actions, (for example ‘having corridor conversations’ or ‘auditing’) which seemed to be instantiations of the practice of authority. In total my data included nine, semi-structured, face to face interviews, seven open telephone interviews (Brinkman and Kvale 2015), four field visits, two observations (Bryman 2016); and text analysis including analysis of: departmental and institutions’ web pages, job descriptions, three publications by managers/leaders in the units and email threads that included setting up visits and subsequent conversations.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

In considering the ethical implications of my research I followed British Education Research Association guidelines (BERA 2011) and was guided by the maxim 'do no harm'. While participants could not be classified as vulnerable adults, in some ways their often-prominent position in their institution made them vulnerable. I was concerned therefore, about my responsibility for the participants in my research (Newby 2010:47). I was very conscious that there was an element of risk for my participants in agreeing to talk to me. Critical comments about practices at their institutions could, if attributable to individuals, do serious harm to their careers. If I had been in any doubt about the high-stakes nature of the discussions, I would have been disabused by the participants, several of who raised the issue with me; for example:

“I’m a little bit concerned me saying this, if anything got...I’m just a little bit concerned that if it said that anybody from this University had said this...”

I therefore made the decision to take significant steps to disguise the data. While the type of university chosen was a significant factor, the geographical area and precise university structure was not, and I altered these details in participants' accounts. Of more difficulty was the history and future plans of the two institutions, since in both cases there either been, or was about to be, change involving movement of staff. Although losing these also mean loss of some interesting examples of the practice of authority from my thesis, my ultimate decision was that details of these would have to be excluded from the write up in the interests of maintaining confidentiality, although I did include

these examples from field notes both in my initial coding and in later theoretical sampling. Finally, I made the decision, in using illustrative data, not to distinguish between participants. While there is something lost in developing in the reader a sense of the story, it is the practices, rather than the practitioners, on whom I am focusing and, as well as maintaining confidentiality of practitioners, treating the data in this way did enable a more dispassionate look at the practices.

On a more mundane level, I was also aware that all my participants had busy working lives and that time was at a premium. Just as I did not want to pressurise anyone into saying something they considered risky, nor did I wish to pressurise people to give more time than they wanted. On the other hand, I wanted to secure participants with whom I could carry on conversations to enable theoretical sampling. To be confident that I had my participants' full consent, in addition to gaining their written consent, I double-checked that they were happy to proceed at the start of every conversation and sent them the full transcript of interviews for comment and amendment (several participants made minor amendments). During interviews I remained alert to participants' verbal or non-verbal indications that they wanted to terminate the interview and checked where I saw these.

University procedures guided me through the process of gaining informed consent: explaining the purpose of the study, what it would involve for participants, how they could withdraw and what would happen to their data. As well as consent forms, invitations and information sheets, I supplied interview schedules to the ethics committee. Aside from my approving institution's need

to assure itself of the ethical nature of my project, there are good reasons for pre-planning. The danger in not having a thought through interview guide is in asking:

“...awkward, poorly timed, intrusive questions that you may fill with unexamined preconceptions.” Charmaz (2014:63).

However, given the iterative nature of my research it was not possible to draw up a precise schedule when I did not know how theoretical sampling would shape follow up conversations. It seems to me that there is a logical conflict between pre-planning areas of inquiry and theoretical sampling in Grounded Theory Method, where ongoing data collection is shaped by earlier data. Pre-planning may well be a practical way of maintaining ethical security and ensuring that relevant data is gathered, but even outlining areas of focus will tend to force the data.

In the end I opted for compromise: I provided a broad overview of the areas with some specific, open-ended prompts to encourage discussion. This approach proved fruitful as, during conversations, it ensured that I kept myself out of the discussion as much as possible, and focused on what my participants had to say. However, as data gathering proceeded the actual focus moved further and further away from the plan.

Use of staffs' published writing caused an ethical dilemma. In selecting my participating institutions, I had selected those in which senior managers/leaders had a research interest in academic management/leadership. As a result, there were relevant data in their published articles. Clearly, if I referenced these works

correctly as I presented my findings then I would reveal the identity of these participants and my participating institutions, which I could not do. Even drawing directly on the data to illustrate points would enable readers to identify authors with little effort. On the other hand, failing to acknowledge the source of the ideas that I drew on also felt like an ethical failing. As with institutional data, I drew on publications as a source of data but altered details within the thesis. Where publications formed part of the wider literature review these were referenced in the usual way. Finally, in order to ensure confidentiality all data were encrypted with a password.

3.6 Data collection and analysis

I needed to adopt methods for data collection and analysis that would enable me to focus on practices as the unit of analysis rather than on the beliefs and interpretations of participants. A Grounded Theory Method perspective puts data at the forefront. Although Charmaz (2014:27) emphasises the use of intensive interviewing as a method, she argues that researchers should adopt 'methodological eclecticism' and draw on a range of data as appropriate for the research problem. Because practices (whether integrative or dispersed) are situated (Reckwitz 2002) in their contexts I needed methods that would enable me to follow up promising lines of enquiry in earlier data. I made use of telephone interviews and emails to do this.

My data collection approach was towards the unstructured end of a continuum from structured to unstructured (Brinkmann 2013). I made use of sensitising concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2008, Charmaz 2014) by drawing on the idea of elements of practices (see below) to formulate questions and prompts. These

were helpful in enabling me to gain a picture of practice from early data collection and in identifying some specific ways in which authority was practiced. For example, some interview questions based on these sensitising concepts were:

- So, are there resource implications in doing this? (resources)
- So, when they're leading what are they doing? (actions)
- In your day-to-day working who do you interact with most frequently?
(contact with staff and students)

The largest proportion of my data was collected through interviews. Charmaz (2014:56) identifies key characteristics of intensive interviewing including: participants with first-hand experience; open questions that aim for detailed responses and following up on participants' accounts of actions. The interview is, she suggests, the co-construction of a conversation between participant and researcher. While my interviews were largely unstructured, I followed Karp's (2009:40) advice to pre-plan my 'domains of inquiry' in an interview guide. However, while open-ended prompts such as: 'Can you give me an example of that?'; 'Tell me more.' or 'What do you mean by that?' were useful throughout, specific questions, for example, 'What kind of interactions do you have with students?' proved less useful as the conversations unfolded. Even though I piloted my schedule with an academic manager unconnected to the two focus HEIs I was not able, at the outset, to anticipate the direction that the conversations would take.

Notwithstanding this, the interviews did follow a broadly pre-planned pattern. Every first interview with a participant began with information gathering

questions which offered an opportunity for participants to settle in to the conversation as well as enabling me to gather needed information about the institution and the department (or at least, my participants' understanding of this). Cross referencing these sections of the interviews enabled me to build up a comprehensive picture of the way that each department operated. I was able to learn about some of the major changes and approaches and develop a sense of where participants' viewpoints diverged. In the next part of the interviews I followed a framework but not set questions. I aimed to keep myself as absent as possible from the dialogue, using short questions and a number of short, open ended prompts ('Can you tell me some more?'; 'What do you mean by that?'; 'How do you do x?' for example). I found this difficult to do initially but persisted, as it was clear that more structured questions interrupted participants' flow of thought and directed them away from describing practice and towards interpreting my interest in the topic.

Each first interview with a participant was conducted face to face. This helped to develop a trusting relationship and offered contextual richness that would not have been available by phone or email (Brinkmann 2013). However, in order to enable ongoing discussion with participants, later interviews were conducted by telephone, sometimes with email discussion alongside. Having developed a relationship with participants in the first meeting the telephone follow ups could build on this.

Social practice theorists identify knowledge and meaning as two elements of practices. Schatzki (1996, 2001) emphasises the importance of speech as a type of action and talks about understandings and language; (Reckwitz

2002:249) focuses on knowledge and mental states; Shove et al (2012:416) discuss know-how and Trowler (2013:3-4) highlights meanings and 'knowing how to go on'. Interviewing offered me a way in which to probe these. I hoped that an analysis of the ways in which my participants portrayed their work would enable me to identify some of the ways in which authority was practiced. For example, one of my participants referred to 'giving' academics their workload allocation. Use of the word 'giving' implies the enactment of authority and a lack of autonomy on the part of those to whom hours were given.

One challenge was that interviews collect data which is a description of past actions. This introduces a double hermeneutic. Not only am I constructing my understanding of the action as the researcher who gathered the data, but my participants were, in their turn, constructing the experiences that they shared with me. Brinkmann (2013:4) likens using interviews in a world filled with conversations to a fish studying water. I was aware that participants' constructions would be partially shaped by factors external to the situations described: their own perspectives as academic managers/leaders who had mostly taught in other educational areas (schools and colleges); their wider lives, and their perceptions of me as researcher. In analysing the data, I was alert to indications of this, for example phrases (such as 'so you know') that invited me to engage in shared understanding, or phrases indicating an emotional response (for example, 'in my other institution my name was enough'.)

Despite challenges, interviews proved a valuable data gathering tool: they gave me access to situations that I could not observe (senior team meetings,

performance management actions, decision making across the institution, for example); they gave me access to elements of practice that would have been hard to observe; and they were also, of course, instantiations of practice themselves.

In seeking to uncover practices, observation had seemed an obvious starting point. I had reasoned that this would enable me to see practices in action. However, the dispersed nature (Schatzki 1996) of practices of authority made this complicated as there were not specific physical locations where I could observe the practice of authority taking place (as there are for snowboarding or teaching practices for example). Had I been able to be situated for long periods of time in the institutions I was studying it would have been more possible to observe the practices of authority. However, as a part time PhD student with a full-time job I could not do this. Nonetheless, observations offered opportunities to observe enactment of elements of practices and to relate them to verbal data gathered through interviews. I visited one institution on five separate half days. I visited the other institution for a two-day visit. I also observed a departmental meeting (one of the places that authority might be said to be situated) in one institution and the movements of students and staff in a teaching building in the other. I did not have a pre-determined schedule for observation but used sensitising concepts (see below) to focus on noting physical resources, location of staff and visual representations to develop an understanding of the resources and materials within which the practice of authority took place. While I recorded interviews, for the observations I did not use audio or video recordings but kept field notes.

While observations were helpful in developing an understanding of practices, it was important to guard against feeling that these data were more authentic than the interview data. As Charmaz (2014:29) says:

“People construct data – whether it be researchers generating first hand data through interviews or field notes...” (Author’s emphasis)

Mulhall (2003:308) points out that observational data and interview data both represent valid (though different) representations of perceptions. Additionally, she argues, observational data may be more prone to researcher interpretation than interview data. I was very aware that, in making use of unstructured observations, it was I who chose what to note or to photograph and the selection inevitably represented my own bias. While there was no formal structure it was helpful to make use of my sensitising concepts (resources, meanings and actions) to guide my field notes, for example:

“In the entrance to the Library there is a poster entitled ‘You said, we did’ which explains how staff have responded to students’ feedback (Coding: physical resources; responding to students; being in a customer focused environment)” (Field notes)

My final data source was documents, both extant and generated. Extant documents included web pages from each Higher Education Institute, including those for the relevant department; job advertisements and descriptions and the publications of members of staff. Generated documents were the email correspondence that I had with participants when setting up interviews as well as participants’ responses to some specific questions. Documents were both the product of actions carried out by practitioners within the institution and often

also a resource that was used by other practitioners. I made use of these texts twice, once at the outset as I developed my understanding of the two institutions and again later on in my research, as I began to develop categories.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

In line with Grounded Theory methodology my data collection and analysis followed an iterative process. Grounded theory analysis centres on analysis of textual data (Titscher et al. 2000:75). Almost all of my data, whether in the form of field notes, transcribed interviews or documents were textual. They were a mixture of primary and secondary documents. While some, such as job descriptions or university web pages, were clearly primary and others, such as interview transcripts, were clearly secondary, the distinction was not always clear. McCulloch (2011:249) suggests, for example that:

“Scholarly works might be a contribution to their field and thus secondary documents, but at the same time reflect attitudes to issues in a particular time or context and so, in this sense, they are primary documents.”

In adopting a ground theory methodology, I drew on the published works of participants as primary data, but also made use of the contributions to the field in my literature review.

I coded data as soon as it was collected and drew on initial coding and memos to develop focused codes that shaped later data collection. Where possible I used gerunds in initial coding in order to keep a focus on actions and processes. I did not adopt the axial coding processes recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008) because I was concerned about forcing the data. I used sensitising concepts from SPT to connect elements of practices. I used NVivo™ and

notebooks to organise these and to create tentative categories before returning to data collection. After coding the first two interviews I had over 300 codes, since I followed Charmaz' (2014:112) advice to:

“Code everything early in your research and see where it takes you as you proceed.”

In approaching initial coding, I made use of elements of practices identified by others (Schatzki 2001, Reckwitz 2002, Shove et al. 2012, Trowler 2013) to provide sensitising concepts. Although different writers used different words and phrases to describe these elements it was possible to identify commonalities, and these are set out in Table 2.1 on page 27. Drawing together the range of terms I labelled the elements routines, material resources, knowledge resources, actions and meanings.

These elements provided a framework both for data collection and initial coding as they helped me to remain focused on practices. Below are examples of early codes identified:

- ‘managing’ with a little ‘m’ (routines/action)
- line managing (routines/action)
- ending lectures (action)
- struggling students (connotative meaning)
- finding rooms (materials)

The coding framework enabled me to piece together different aspects of a practice (for example the use of emails). Gradually the actions, processes and know-how came together in networks. As already discussed my literature

review proceeded concurrently with coding. After an initial, very broad, review of the literature on academic management and leadership I followed each phase of data analysis with a review of the literature that was relevant to the concepts emerging, for example power and authority and then authority in education. I made use of constant comparison (Glazer and Strauss 1967) as an analytic tool. Constant comparison is used by grounded researchers to connect and develop categories. Glazer and Strauss describe the method thus:

“While coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded for the same category.”
(Glazer and Strauss 1967:106)

They argue that this will clarify the dimensions of developing categories and deepen analysis. For example, by comparing incidences of the code ‘overseeing’ in data from Hefton, I began to understand that there were both positive and negative connotations in the way this concept was used and to see the impact this had on practice in this department. I was also able to refer back to the literature to deepen the category, for example Juntrasook (2014:26) includes ‘overseeing’ in a list of the ways in which staff without formal leadership or management responsibility conceive their own leadership.

I used constant comparison at all stages of analysis as I constructed categories. I also wrote memos. Charmaz (2014) argues that memos can be used in the early stages of a research project to focus future data collection. NVivo™ offers a facility for memo writing but in the end, for flexibility, I used notebooks, which I carried at all times, to capture reflections, questions and contradictions that arose from coding as they occurred to me. My memos focused my analysis on

practices and enabled me to analyse the extent to which sensitising concepts from SPT were useful in this.

However, while I aimed to stay as close as possible to the data, coding line by line and making use of the text in generating codes, I was always aware that in analysing data I was also constructing it. In order to take a critical approach to this construction I adopted specific strategies as I developed focused codes. These included paying attention to: what was/was not considered problematic and to expressions of resistance (Jupp 2006); instances of interactions and the ways that these are described (Wodak and Meyer 2001). I also paid attention to absences. Lynch (2001:132) draws attention to the significance of non-events in understanding: why, for example, did predicted Marxist revolutions not happen? As Lynch points out, however, the idea of a non-action presents a logical difficulty, since an infinite number of actions have 'not happened'. My noticing a non-event (not sending emails, for example) was an instance of the way in which I was involved in the construction of data.

3.8 Conclusion

A constructivist grounded theory methodology enables a data-driven, as opposed to a theory driven, approach to data collection and analysis. This was helpful as I tried to construct a picture of authority as a dispersed practice. The focus on gerunds supported analysis of actions as one key element in practices. Social Practice theory determined my units of analysis (practices) and provided sensitising concepts through a focus on the elements of practice, but the project has not been driven by theory in a hypothesis testing way. Use of a range of data, including literature, supported the development of my understanding of

the nexus of routines, material and knowledge resources, actions and meanings that make up the practice of authority in academic leadership and management.

4 Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

Although there is a wide literature on education leadership and management, including a growing body of work that focuses specifically on higher education (Tight 2012), the role that authority plays in shaping practices in higher education has received less attention. There are, however, substantial literatures that research the practices and conceptions of authority and, separately, academic leadership and management. In this chapter I consider both these as well as the (much smaller) literature that focuses specifically on authority in education. Before doing that I briefly describe my search approaches.

4.2 Search approaches

I adopted a layered approach to literature searches in each of the areas described above. I first completed a general search using university search engines and key terms for each area. This gave me an initial sense of the scope and relevance of the literature: for example, the search on 'authority' produced a large literature specifically on religious authority, which was not relevant to my work. I followed this with focused searches using relevant databases: for example, the British Education Index, ERIC and Education Administration Abstracts. I further narrowed these searches by focusing on the last ten years and on peer reviewed articles. In the case of academic leadership and management literature this still left 1,634 entries. Following Tian et al. (2016) in their meta-analysis of research on distributed leadership, I then narrowed this

area further by focusing only on those journals that had published on the subject more than once in the last ten years. Finally, as I reviewed these journal articles I identified relevant books and some seminal works that pre-dated my timeframe and added these to the reviews.

4.3 Reviewing the literature and Grounded Theory

The description above perhaps gives a sense of my literature review as a singular, coherent whole and, as I pointed out in the previous chapter this did not align well with the reality of my grounded study. Grounded theorists (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Corbin and Strauss 2008) argue the importance of approaching data without preconceptions, specifying the need to avoid undertaking a review of the literature before early data collection and coding. In taking a constructivist grounded theory approach (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, Charmaz 2014) I acknowledged that the researcher's prior experiences are inevitably part of the research so that, if not this literature, then other ideas would have shaped my data collection and coding. For this reason, I chose to proceed with reading, data collection and analysis concurrently, sometimes pre-reading and sometimes following data analysis with reading. I aimed for the literature to inform my data analysis without determining outcomes by forcing it.

I began with a review of the literature on academic leadership and management before I started data collection. This included a specific analysis of management/leadership practices evident in the research. The first phase of data collection and coding followed this review. During this phase I constructed initial categories of authority practices. I next reviewed the literature on authority before further, purposive sampling of data and focused coding. I followed this

by reviewing the literature on authority in education leadership/management and lastly, revisited the data for final coding. For ease of reading I have chosen not to incorporate the literature review within findings chapters (which this iterative approach might suggest), but the reader might like to bear in mind the way that I engaged with literature.

4.4 Chapter outline

I begin with a review of the literature on authority. After briefly introducing the concept, I draw on work that explores sources of authority (for example, Arendt 1961, Weber 2004, Blencowe 2013, Furedi 2013) and follow Woods (2016) in understanding authority in the twenty-first century as social, contested and changeable. Drawing on three key ideas from this literature: that authority is socially constructed, that it has multiple sources; and that it depends on both collaboration and inequality, I review the literature on academic leadership and management, including the small literature that specifically considers authority. I consider how authority in academic leadership and management is constructed through actions present in data. I explore the ways in which authority is established and contested in academic leadership and management and identify the potential contribution of this study to the field.

4.5 Authority

The literature on authority is wide-ranging. There is literature that traces the historical development of authority (Furedi 2013); literature that focuses on the grounds for authority (Arendt 1961, Raz 1990, Weber 2004, Blencowe 2013, Woods 2016), literature that explores the relationship of authority to power

(Friedman 1990, Lukes 2005, Haugaard 2010a, 2010b, Jarvis 2012, Silverman et al.2014) and literature that seeks to understand the practice and performance of authority (Brubaker 2012, Brigstocke 2013, Piromalli 2015). In this review I concentrate on three key ideas: that sources of authority are pluralistic, changeable and contested; that inequality and collaboration are both integral to the concept of authority; and that it is in practice and performance that authority claims are established and deferred to.

To return to an idea from the introduction, one definition of authority is that it is legitimated power (Weber 2004) which, as Blencowe (2013:9) points out, implies that authority is inherently inegalitarian. Hobbes (1651) proposed authority as a solution to the problem of order, since: "...the cost of insisting on following one's own judgement is chaos" (Friedman 1990:77). People therefore agree to defer to a source of judgement other than their own in the hope of imposing order on the chaos. Legitimacy for authority is therefore based on the idea that it is recognized by all parties as commanding deference. This concept of deference implies that authority is not a matter of force. Arendt writes:

"...authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed." (Arendt 1961:93).

As Blencowe (2013:13) points out this implies consent:

"There is something fundamentally collaborative about authority...it has to be granted by those who are subject to its constraints."

The question of consent is a complex one which the writing on power addresses in depth (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, Gramsci 1971, Lukes 1974, 2005) and is

beyond the scope of this review. However, it is important to note that aside from coercive force (Dahl 1957) power may involve the ability of a dominant group to agenda set by excluding some topics from discussion (Bachrach and Baratz 1962) and further, as Lukes (2005) points out:

“...the bias of the system is not sustained simply by a series of individually chosen acts, but also, most importantly, by socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions...” (Lukes, 2005:26).

Power relations are therefore embedded within practice and although Lukes (2005) suggests that freely given consent in a relation of authority does not constitute power, it is difficult to see how, within the routinised practice outlined above, it is possible to tell consent which is freely given from that which is not, since the actors themselves would have no way to tell. A definition of authority as legitimated power gets around this objection, but the question remains as to the nature of consent.

Regardless, consent does not necessarily imply agreement: Furedi (2013) points out that a democratic government may be held to account by an opposition which challenges the wisdom of government decisions so that, while the authority of the system is deferred to, the individual knowledge claims within it are not. Authority is not, therefore, about persuading others to a point of view:

“Authority ... is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation.” (Arendt 1961:93)

Friedman (1990) argued that the difference between authority and persuasion is that, where there is an exercise of authority, someone:

“...refrains from demanding a satisfactory justification of the proposal that he is being asked to accept.” (Friedman 1990:73).

The idea of suspension of judgement is relevant in the university context, in which academic autonomy (Robbins 1963, Ball 2012a) may be considered important.

If authority is considered to be legitimated power, then it is reasonable to ask for the source of this legitimation. In the context of this study, from where does academic management or leadership authority derive? It has been argued (Arendt 1961, Brigstocke 2013, Furedi 2013) that authority was foundational in origin: it looked backwards to a source based on (originally) the founding of Rome and leading to unquestioned deference to religion or tradition. However, Arendt (1961) has argued that, in the twentieth century both religious belief and traditions became contested, so that lack of widespread acceptance of a singular view meant the end of authority. Yet authority is clearly not dead. One proposed alternative is socially constructed authority, in which unequal social contexts lead to differentiated access to various sources of authority. Woods (2016:156), highlighting the importance of context, defines social authority as:

“.... the production of authorities that occurs in modern times where there is no transcendent source of authority and stable meanings... [It is] the constellation of multiple, tributary authorities that emerges from the interplay of complementary and contested legitimations of power within an organization.”

Different typologies are proposed for these multiple sources of authority. Writing at the beginning of the last century, Weber (2004) developed a three-part typology of legitimation for authority in which existing ideas of tradition and charisma were set alongside rational-legal authority (defined as bureaucracy but also scientific or technical expertise) (Owen and Strong 2004). In a bureaucracy authority was not always evident, Weber argued, the system structured authority but people thought that they were acting autonomously, because they deferred to norms, rather than to individuals (Weber et al. 1978). This typology has been refined, added to and adapted. Furedi (2013), highlighting social nature of authority, identifies democracy, custom & practice, religion, community and popular opinion as sources. Woods (2016:158) adapts Weber's typology, eliding traditional and charismatic authority under a new category of communal authority, (based on close ties and shared values and norms); sub-dividing rational-legal authority into bureaucratic, scientific, technical and professional expertise and adding exchange (the authority of the market), democratic legitimacy (where decisions and actions gain legitimacy through some form of dialogue and participation) and, finally, internal authority. Internal authority has three elements: a democratic, critical thinking self; the authority of lived experience, and a performative, re-socialised self which has internalized external norms and values.

As we have seen in the brief discussion above, the internalizing of external norms is relevant to authority: for Blencowe (2013) this is connected with the ways in which some subjective knowledge is established as objectivity. She therefore sees unequal knowledge as the source of authority:

“Authoritative relationships derive from inequalities of knowledge... from the position of ‘knowing better’...” (2013:15)

Following Foucault (1994), Blencowe (2013:19) focuses on bio-political authority, arguing that our understanding of biological life and its relation with the economy has been constructed but is experienced by us as objective. Objectivity is therefore not ‘truth’ but knowledge constructed from our shared experiences. Seen this way, objectivity is fundamentally social:

“...the common, the shared ground from which meaningful subjectivity commences; [objectivity] is a promise of escape from finitude and singularity.” (Blencowe 2013:18)

Although the notion of deferring one’s judgement to another does appear to privilege unequal knowledge other factors are relevant too. Hobbes identified the *de facto* nature of positional power and Friedman (1990), Furedi (2013) and Weber (2004) all highlight deference to a system of governance rather than to expertise. This suggests that other elements of practice than solely knowledge resources will be needed to establish authority.

Some key ideas stand out: first, we can understand authority as social, unequal, collaborative and constructed from shared cultural experiences and understandings. The idea of internalized norms grown from patterned behaviour (Lukes, 2005) aligns with a practice theory perspective: the internalization of norms becomes ‘just the way we do things round here’. Second, the consequence of holding this view is to accept the potential for multiple sources of, potentially overlapping, contested and conflicting sources of authority. From the foregoing discussion it seems that knowledge may be privileged in

establishing authority, though other factors are relevant. The idea of contested sources of authority in higher education resonates with contestations over autonomy, collegiality, performativity and exchange. In the following sections I explore these ideas further, drawing on a large literature on academic management and leadership and the literature that considers authority in education management or leadership particularly.

4.6 Constructing authority in academic leadership and management

There is a considerable body of literature on HE academic leadership and management, including some interesting meta-analyses (Bryman 2009, Lumby 2012, Tight 2012). In some respects, the sheer weight and variety of individual studies creates confusion, and multiple definitions of academic leadership lead Lumby (2016) to suggest that the concept is insecure.

The concept of authority in higher education has received little focus thus far. A much smaller literature than that on higher education leadership and management considers authority in education specifically (Simkins 2005, James et al. 2007, Jarvis 2012, Bozeman et al. 2013, Parry and Kempster 2013, Marsh et al. 2014, Perry 2014, Braun et al. 2015, Faulkner 2015, Huising 2015, Pergert et al. 2016, Woods 2016). Some of this, for example, Thompson (2010) or Cheong et al. (2016) focuses on pedagogical authority, which was beyond the scope of my work. Furthermore, most of the relevant studies concentrate on management and leadership in schools rather than HE. However since, in both contexts, there are similar debates around managerialism, performativity, collegiality and autonomy, I have drawn on the former as well as the latter. In this section I focus on the ways in which academic leadership and management

has been defined and relate these definitions to different constructions of authority as outlined above.

Studies into academic leadership and management may be divided into those that adopt a broadly hierarchical conception of leadership and management (Kallenberg 2007, Inman 2011, Jones 2011, Miller 2014) and those that explore horizontal leadership (Zepke 2007, Crawford 2012, Jones et al. 2012) including local leadership (Irving 2015, Martensson and Roxa 2016); democratic leadership (Woods 2004); 'bottom up' leadership (Scott and Scott 2016) or distributed leadership (Crawford 2012, Jones et al. 2012, Woods 2016). Woods and Roberts (2017) draw these horizontal conceptions together under the label 'collaborative leadership.' These approaches share a focus on collaborative, participatory and dialogic decision making (Woods 2004, Crawford 2012).

4.6.1 Horizontal or collaborative leadership

Horizontal or collaborative approaches, such as bottom-up leadership (Kesar 2012, Scott and Scott 2016), democratic or distributed leadership (Woods 2004) and self-leadership (Ball 2007) all focus attention away from positional authority. With the exception of self-leadership, they are based on the practice of leadership across a community (Simkins 2005), in which deference to authority is not based primarily on structure or position. Knowledge (variously referred to as expertise, knowledge, skills and experience) becomes important in these contexts. Blencowe's (2013) theorization of authority as legitimized by knowledge and Woods' (2016) formulation of multiple social authorities both emphasize the opportunities that expertise offers to authorize grassroots leaders. Woods (2016:155) argues:

“Authority is not just the legitimization of top-down control, but is capable of emerging in diverse ways from different organizational perspectives and positions. Its meanings may be interpreted, contested and reframed.”

This suggests that claims to authority may change in collaborative leadership models as expertise grows or diminishes or as knowledge of new areas become important. However, models of distributed, shared or democratic (Woods 2004) leadership have drawn criticisms that power relations are often under considered in literature (Lumby 2013, 2016), and that they may simply be hierarchical leadership in a new guise. There is some support for this contention. Woods (2016) found that newcomers in a school began to challenge the authority of mentors as their expertise grew. Collaborative leadership commonly exists alongside hierarchical structures and studies suggest that hierarchical authority may play a part in distributing grassroots leadership opportunities. Crawford (2012) notes the potential for democratic or distributed leadership to empower actors at every level, but also suggests that it is important to look at who controls the distribution of opportunities and refers to the continued prevalence of the ‘a stand of charismatic leadership that refuses to die’ (2012:211). Lumby (2013:581) considers that opportunities to contribute, even in a collaborative structure, are not equal and that distributed leadership may perpetuate existing patterns of domination. Further, the need for management support and validation for grassroots leadership is highlighted by some (Lomas 2006, Jones et al. 2012), suggesting that lack of positional authority may hamper grassroots leaders.

In response to this criticism a number of authors have focused on power and authority in distributed leadership. Simkins (2005) normatively opposed traditional hierarchical leadership, with 'formal authority delegated from above' (2005:17) to an 'emerging' model borne out of the proliferation of new project and middle leader roles in schools and universities, in which leadership is socially constructed and therefore context dependent and not necessarily dependent on delegated authority – 'anyone can be a leader' (ibid.). This emerging view, Simkins (2005) argued, may be enacted through distributed leadership if it is not simply traditional leadership with delegated authority dressed differently.

Jarvis (2012) problematizes distributed leadership in another way. He connects collegiality, defined by him as reaching decisions through collaboration and discussion, with distributed leadership and questions the extent to which real collegiality is possible (since some voices dominate) or even desirable in an otherwise hierarchical educational environment. He challenges the efficacy of the approach, suggesting a lack of evidence for positive impact on school outcomes. Drawing on interviews with school middle leaders, Jarvis (ibid.) argues that collegiality is a pragmatic response to lack of formal authority at middle leader level – a way of enabling middle leaders to influence staff - and suggests that greater formal hierarchical authority might enable middle education leaders to be more successful. While agreeing that collegiality is a pragmatic approach to implementing change, Burnes et al (2014) disagree with Jarvis about its efficacy. They suggest that combining '...a broad, overarching, set of objectives – established by senior managers' with local participation in decision-making improves trust, job satisfaction and implementation of change

(ibid:914-915). Both Jarvis (2012) and Burnes et al. (2014), however, essentially see collegiality as a means to a managerial end.

By contrast, Woods (2016) is an advocate of democratic or distributed leadership. As we have seen, he builds on the work of Blencowe (2013) and Weber (1978) to develop a five-part typology of social authority. Woods suggests that analysis of these multiple authorities can increase understanding of power relations within distributed leadership. Woods (2016) illustrates his ideas through drawing on studies of two schools. His analysis identifies a range of authorities in which the role that unequal (and developing) knowledge plays is very evident. For example, in one school a hierarchy of knowledge emerged, with disciplinary knowledge trumping professional expertise. In this school procedural (bureaucratic) knowledge of schools' systems also conferred authority. In the other school, which had clearly identified cooperative principles, distribution of authority varied over time as new staff developed expertise and experience, giving them a stronger voice in democratic decision making. Factors other than knowledge also shaped authorities: in one school, prior positional authority in addition to experience gave one member of staff the title of 'pseudo-boss' (Woods 2016:158). Although Woods' analysis is only brief, it suggests that the different contexts entail different combinations of authority which are changeable over time.

4.6.2 Hierarchical or positional leadership

Although research into hierarchical leadership and management in higher education is plentiful, only a small amount focuses on senior HE institutional

leadership/management (Meek et al. 2010). Tight (2012) plausibly suggests that this is due to the potential danger of critiquing senior leaders, as well as the difficulty of gaining access. However, a much larger literature examines middle leadership or management: deans (Vieira da Motta and Bolan 2008, Isaac et al. 2009, Meek et al. 2010, Ngo et al. 2014); heads of department (Smith 2002, Smith 2007, Jones 2011) or programme leaders (Milburn 2010, Page 2011). These roles equated to the roles of my participants, and so it was on these studies that I focused.

In general, the literature that studies positional middle leaders and managers (deans, HoDs and programme leaders) tends to associate leadership with vision, strategy, communication and influence, while management is aligned with operational issues (Bryman 2007). Middlehurst (2010:85) separates 'organisational capability' from 'leadership behaviour', where leadership can 'shape and inspire the actions of others to drive better performance'; Marshall et al. (2011:91-92), identify three leadership themes from the responses of their participants: establishing a vision; communicating it, and inspiring and motivating staff to engage with it. Management, by contrast, was seen by their participants as being about operational actions: planning, resourcing, budgeting and staffing.

Despite the suggested differences between leadership and management, it can be difficult to distinguish differences in practice. Bryman suggests that:

“...it can be very difficult to distinguish activities that are distinctively associated with leadership from managerial or administrative activities.”

(Bryman 2007:694)

There is evidence of these blurred boundaries in the titles of articles which sometimes conflate management and leadership, for example, 'Evidence-informed Leadership in the Japanese Context: Middle Managers at a university self-access center' (Adamson and Brown 2012) or 'Towards leadingful leadership literacies for higher education management' (Davis 2014). The reader should bear these blurred definitions in mind as I explore suggested elements of leadership and management in the light of different sources of authority.

A division between systems organisation and strategic vision/drive does seem to align with different conceptions of authority. Leadership definitions that focus on inspiration and vision suggest charisma and expertise as pre-requisites, while linkage of management with operations seems to speak to a bureaucratic legitimation (Owen and Strong 2004) in which authority is delegated. Vieira da Motta and Bolan (2008:303) examine the managerial skills of Academic Deans in Brazil. They suggest that it is not traits or personality that are required, but professional expertise, concluding that:

"They [deans] tend to have a high perception of their managerial skills, even though they have no previous managerial experience or formal training. This underlines that senior academic administrators cannot simply assume that deans, by the nature of their work environment, are proficient in managerial skills."

In a similar vein, Smith (2007:6) found that departmental heads felt they lacked management training. In his research into the roles of first-tier college managers, Page (2011) also highlights absence of training. This focus on

training for specialist knowledge supports Blencowe's (2013) analysis of the centrality of unequal knowledge in authority and implies technical-rational knowledge is a foundation for managers' authority.

Thus far the approaches considered have been agentic, focusing on what hierarchical leaders or managers consider they do (or should be doing). This fits uneasily with a conception of authority as socially constructed. However, some authors (for example, Parry and Kempster 2013, Marsh et al. 2014, Woods 2016) do emphasise the relational nature of authority in education. Parry and Kempster (2013) suggest that charismatic leadership identities are not agentic but are socially constructed by followers out of available models (favourite aunt, media hero etc.) and then adopted by leaders: charisma being 'less a gift from God and more a gift from followers' (2013:21). Marsh et al. (2014) suggest that the development of supportive relationships with staff contributes to school heads' authoritative leadership. The role of external agents in constructing authorization is also considered. James et al. (2007) found that parents, communities and local authorities played a part in authorization for the leadership practices of schools and Perry (2014) identified university academic deans' part in validating the authority of programme leaders through overt support and provision of resources. Relationships and communities appear to matter to authorization.

The ways in which multiple social sources can be used to establish authority even where this has been formally delegated is the focus of Huising's (2015) study of professional technical staff in a university science laboratory. Two groups of technicians (RADs and BIOs) had been delegated responsibility by

senior institutional managers/leaders for ensuring compliance with safety requirements. Huising (ibid.) notes that the elevated hierarchical position of academics when compared with technicians caused the latter problems in establishing legitimacy for their authority. Both groups sought to assert this authority by drawing on other sources of authority but Huising (ibid.) found differences. While the BIOs' actions drew on disciplinary expertise (for example, reading relevant academic literature) and bureaucratic processes in addition to delegated positional authority, the RADs downplayed bureaucracy and used their frequent presence in labs (through their engagement in menial 'scut' work which the BIOs delegated) to develop supportive relationships with academics as well as to gain a knowledge of everyday work and practice in the labs. Ultimately the RADs were successful in establishing authority while the BIOs were not. The scientists still grumbled about compliance, but they complied with the RADs' requirements. Huising suggests that the physical presence of RADs in the labs enabled development of day to day knowledge and relationships with academics, as well as opening possibilities for support and that this constructed the authority of the RADs.

The importance of presence in constructing authority is also highlighted by Marsh et al. (2014) who develop the concept of authoritative leadership – defined as one in which a (school) head is successful in 'sustaining a balance between nurturing relationships whilst building a learning culture which demanded excellence' (Marsh et al 2014:24) and suggest that 'presence' is key in this. Presence in this context meant three things: being 'out and about' in the physical space; becoming familiar to staff by sharing anecdotes and stories, and being 'present' in conversation in the sense of listening and coming to

understand staff. As in Huising's (2015) study Marsh et al (2014) suggest that both the development of a supportive relationship with staff and the understanding of everyday contexts helped to develop heads' authority.

The role of knowledge or expertise in establishing authority is perhaps more multi-layered than the typologies suggest. Multiple strands of knowledge are evident. These include disciplinary expertise, knowledge of systems and regulations, knowledge of people, knowledge of everyday activities and managerial skills. Furthermore, it seems that it is not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the ability to disseminate this to others, and the fact of 'being known' by others, that establishes authority. An understanding of the ways in which practitioners with responsibility in academia act seems important in understanding the ways in which authority is established. In the following section I investigate the evidence of specific actions and practices in academic leadership and management.

4.7 Academic leadership and management in practice

In order to better understand leadership or management in practice I analysed papers which included examples of leadership or management activities (Milburn 2010, Giles and Yates 2011, Inman 2011, Page 2011, Kezar 2012, Nguyen 2013, Blaschke et al. 2014, Hemsall 2014, Juntrasook 2014, Thomas-Gregory 2014, Browne and Rayner 2015, Graham 2015, Irving 2015, Pepper and Giles 2015, Branson et al. 2016). From this I put together a sizeable list, with many (perhaps most) activities appearing in more than one study. Initially I attempted to separate hierarchical and collaborative leadership activities, but there was so much overlap, even in activities (such as chairing meetings or

securing resources) which might be associated with both collaborative and hierarchical leadership/management that I abandoned this approach. Table 4.1 below lists the activities.

<p>writing (reports, policies), monitoring, chairing, speech not meetings, running a breakfast club, attending meetings and committees, emailing, managing records, being bound to strategic goals, completing paperwork, allocating work, restructuring, giving news, cajoling, bargaining for resources, allocating resources, balancing the books, generating income, budgeting, appointing staff, making people realise they have to deliver, signing off, accepting faculty support, recruiting students, checking, setting goals, directing, overseeing, gaining respect, having disciplinary knowledge, auditing, knowing the right people, helping colleagues, having informal conversations, building relationships & networks, motivating, supporting, legitimizing activities through public acknowledgement, schmoozing, giving confidence, seeking consensus, winning hearts and minds, knowing who to contact, drawing on research literature, holding privileged knowledge, supervising, reading the research papers, knowing day to day practice, articulating the vision, using the electronic workload system, mentoring, encouraging grant applications, agenda building, debriefing, mediating disputes, doing paperwork, enthusing, being a role model, using structures, working shoulder to shoulder, using data, shaping content and sequence of agenda, accessing funds</p>
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Table 4-1 Leadership and Management activities

I then explored whether activities were attributed to management, leadership or both. There was again considerable overlap: generating and managing resources, having access to privileged knowledge, and undertaking routine activities such as attending and leading meetings, sending emails, overseeing and checking other activities were common to both, as were relationship building, supporting and motivating others. There were differences: examples of leadership activities included creating and promoting a vision and acting as advocate, but included little day to day people management, while management activities included plenty of the latter but little of the former. However, the large overlap supports the contention that, in practice, it may be hard to distinguish leadership from management activities (Bryman 2009). I next looked at this data

with the idea of analysing it according to legitimating authorities. This provided very difficult indeed. Table 4.2 (below) illustrates my attempt.

Authority	Activity
Bureaucracy and the market (language of exchange)	writing (reports, policies), monitoring, chairing, attending meetings and committees, emailing, managing records, being bound to strategic goals, completing paperwork, allocating work, restructuring, bargaining for resources, allocating resources, balancing the books, generating income, budgeting, appointing staff, making people realise they have to deliver, recruiting students, checking, setting goals, directing, overseeing
Communal (tradition, charisma, community) and democratic legitimacy	knowing the right people, having informal conversations, building relationships & networks, motivating, supporting, legitimizing activities through public acknowledgement, schmoozing, giving confidence, seeking consensus, winning hearts and minds, working shoulder to shoulder
Disciplinary and professional knowledge	holding privileged knowledge, supervising, reading the research papers, knowing day to day practice, articulating the vision, using the electronic workload system, mentoring, shaping the agenda, giving news, knowing who to contact, using data

Table 4-2 How might activities align with authorities?

It was mostly impossible to allocate an activity to one type of authority. As can be seen from table 4.2, I ended up eliding different categories of authority: bureaucratic and market; communal and democratic; disciplinary and professional knowledge. This was more helpful, but boundaries were still blurred. Some activities: for example, communicating, making decisions, being an institutional advocate, addressing failure or resolving conflict might have been attributed to many authorities. Others seemed to fit best with a subset: for example, activities related to finance, such as budgeting or hiring and firing staff seem connected to a marketised culture, but they also apply within a

bureaucratic system. Similarly, 'winning hearts and minds' might be attributed to either charismatic (communal) authority or to democratic legitimation.

Despite this confusion several ideas emerged from my analysis. Firstly, the considerable overlap between the language of exchange and the market support the suggestion that, within a framework of new public management (NPM), universities are operating in a quasi-market (Watson 2011). Despite Smith's (2012:651) lamentation that the language of the market overshadows other discourses, the discourse of bureaucracy, at least, is very evident here in examples of meetings, emails and reports etc. Secondly, while practical activities such as chairing meetings, agreeing the agenda or doing emails seemed connected to bureaucratic legitimation, the more relational ones, such as building a consensus, negotiating, enthusing, winning hearts and minds or working shoulder to shoulder related better to communal or democratic authority. Additionally, collaborative leaders also carried out many of the practical activities attached to hierarchical leadership: going to meetings, doing emails and so on. Finally, it was interesting that, given the foregoing discussion on the importance of knowledge in establishing authority, this strand was relatively absent from lists of practices. For those examples that referenced knowledge it was not always easy to divide them into professional or disciplinary expertise. However, while only some listed activities could be clearly categorised as knowledge or expertise, most of the activities in the list depended on some kind of professional or disciplinary knowledge (even the ability to send emails relies on a basic IT knowledge), so that lacking this knowledge could place managers/leaders at a disadvantage.

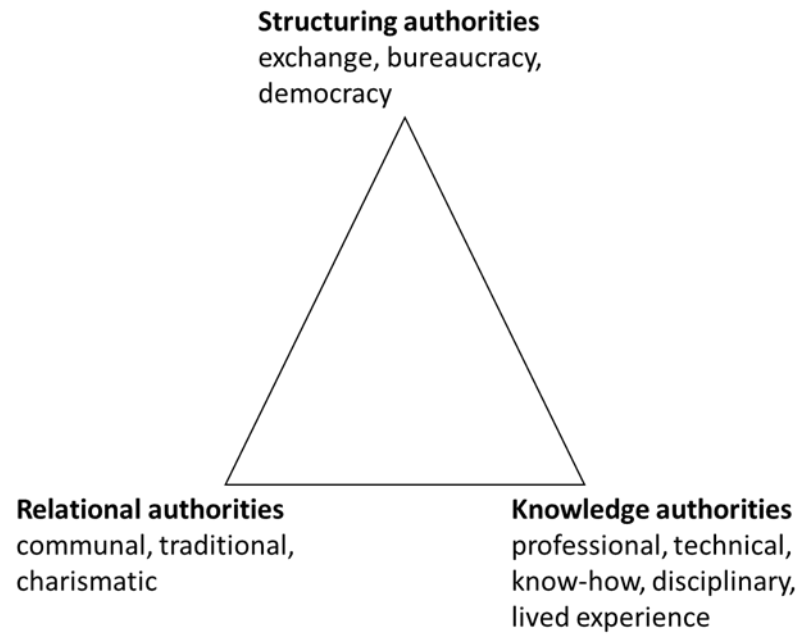


Figure 4-1 Triad of Authorities

The analysis suggested that the ways in which activities and practices relate to different strands of authority can be conceptualised in three broad categories: different kinds of knowledge act as an under-pinning authority which enable other types of authority to be established; while bureaucracy, democracy and exchange provide governance infrastructure for hierarchical or collaborative leadership. Finally, communal, charismatic or traditional authorities connect with relational activities. I visualised this as a triangle in which the three categories might work together to establish authority in practice, but might, of course, also conflict.

4.8 Establishing authority in academic leadership and management

So far, the discussion has centred on the foundations for claims of legitimacy for authority in academic leadership/management. But this begs the question of the extent to which academic managers/leaders have authority at all. Smith

(2005, 2007), in his study of university middle managers highlights perceived lack of authority among both heads of department and course leaders who are caught between the positional authority of senior managers/leaders and the disciplinary expertise in departmental colleagues. The authority of middle managers/leaders is delegated by senior managers/leaders but, since authority is consensual, consent to academic management/leadership is still needed from academics. On the basis of the evidence from the articles in this review, it would seem this is not always granted, as a culture of academic autonomy opposes one of deference. Some researchers make use of the concept of self-leadership, which is based on the premise that, as highly expert professionals, academics may lead themselves rather than needing to be led. Ball (2007) identifies self-leadership as important in the leadership of research. Lumby suggests that self-leadership:

“...may be merely another way of indicating what is described elsewhere as individual autonomy, or professionalism, but the intensity of autonomy is argued to create a context that negates leadership from others.”
(2012:6)

If the claim is that, as experts in their own right, academics may draw on that expertise rather than deferring to others, then one would expect to see resistance to hierarchical academic management/leadership. Page (2010) identifies some resistance in his study of first tier academic managers, but describes this mainly as examples of micro-resistance. Discussions that oppose new managerialism to collegiality and academic freedom (Deem and Brehony 2005, Clegg 2010, Smith 2012) may also be seen in this light. Ball (2013) argues that intellectuals need to critique the practices of power to identify alternatives.

Finally, some research highlights the significance of professional staffs' lack of academic expertise. Lomas (2006) found that central educational development units needed to demonstrate academic credibility if their initiatives were to be taken seriously by academics, while Huising (2015) found that technicians' attempts to gain academic credibility with principal lecturers by reading research papers was ineffective in establishing authority.

This tradition of academic freedom and rational argument in academia may leave middle leaders/managers in an awkward position. Milburn (2010:94) found that programme leaders felt they had responsibility without power and suggested that, lacking positional authority:

“...any potential that programme directors have to lead is rooted in the ability to influence policy implementation, both ‘up and down.’”

Kallenberg (2007:25) talks about managers ‘seeking consensus’, Lomas (2006:251) about ‘winning hearts and minds’ and Diamond and Spillane (2016) about the need for school leadership practice to include negotiation as leaders seek to mediate between administrators and teachers. As Arendt (1961) and Freidman (1990) point out, the need to persuade implies lack of authority: lacking consent, middle leaders/managers may seek to negotiate and influence.

On the other hand, it is possible that, rather than rejection of authority this might be the meeting point for two different systems of authority, democratic (in collegiality) and hierarchical (in managerialism). Seen in this light resistance is not anti-authoritarian, but a rejection of one system of authority in favour of another. Not only may authority in academia be contested, but the different

sources of authority may also conflict. McMaster (2014:433-434) describes her difficulties in learning to manage in her Australian university, confused by the co-existence of two systems of leadership: hierarchical and collegiate. Within the hierarchical system there were "...clear lines of authority, a single supervisor, defined authority and accountability.", while the collegial culture was a loosely coupled, organised anarchy with slow, deliberative, consultative decision making.

Others identify different potential areas of difference. Lumby (2012) identifies two narratives in the literature: a rational narrative which is bureaucratic, professionalized and data driven, and a charisma based narrative in which hero leaders build trust and develop visions. Several authors identify the potential for conflict between either a bureaucratic or marketised discourse to disciplinary expertise. Simkins (2005:17) normatively opposed delegated positional authority to the professional expertise of educators; suggesting that in UK education today, the latter has been replaced by the former. Jones (2011) focuses on knowledge: conflicts: the managerial skills and knowledge demanded by university structures and processes versus the disciplinary knowledge and expertise required to lead diverse disciplinary interests and to defend the existence of the department.

The idea of two different types of knowledge is also used by Meek et al. (2010:230) who suggest that:

"...an impressive academic record [is] necessary for legitimacy in an academic environment..."

while arguing that this is required alongside demonstrable managerial competence: in other words, an appeal to technical-rational justification requires two kinds of expertise.

Other work suggests the existence of dual strands of authority. Ngo et al. (2014) refer to a technical-rational foundation as well as to culture and tradition to explain four leadership styles of Indonesian deans, who are seemingly torn between traditional culture and Western models of new managerialism:

“Traditional Indonesian values, deeply embedded in Indonesian life, may prevent deans from being pro-active and entrepreneurial change agents.”
(2014:11)

The foregoing discussion suggests the overlapping, connected and contradictory nature of possible HE sub-cultures: managerialism, collegiality and academic autonomy. While collegiality is often defined by collective decision making (Tight 2014), some authors (for example, Clegg and McAuley 2005, Braun et al 2015) bracket collegiality and academic autonomy, opposing self-governance by academics to top-down, target driven management. Others perceive a contradiction. Jarvis (2012) suggests that a culture of collegiality may over-ride academic autonomy by silencing minority voices, a fear also expressed by participants in Hellowell and Hancock’s (2001) study of HE middle managers. Logically, Jarvis (2012) suggests, autonomy is incompatible with collaborative decision making: in acquiescing to a collaborative decision with which one disagrees, one is ceding authority to the group in the interest of order.

Bozeman et al. (2013:316) use degrees of 'decision-autonomy' as a measure of power in their study of academic chairs (i.e. individuals with positional authority). They define decision-autonomy as ability to make decisions without outside involvement). They found that cultural factors (gender, route into position) affected the degree of decision making autonomy. Braun et al. (2015:1831) also considered decision making in their study of interdependency management in universities. Highlighting the formal power of institutional leaders and the power of production of academics they asserted the co-existence of two authorities (managerial and academic) in universities and ask: who rules? They suggest that:

“... continuing ambiguities existing in the governance of universities point, in our opinion, to the fact that neither leaders nor the academic community can rule alone, even if there are far-reaching formal powers held by the management.”

Braun et al (2015:1838) found that, rather than confrontation, in practice decision making was a process of negotiation. Academics in their study accepted that strategic action was needed for organisational survival. However, strategic actions were constructed as a process of negotiation and collusion between positional leaders and scientists, shaped and constrained by available resources and expertise. The authors found that institutional managers/leaders in their study rarely used their formal authority to impose unpopular solutions.

4.9 Conclusion

Authority has been defined as legitimated power, which depends both on inequalities and consent. Deference to authority is not about rational persuasion

to a point of view, but about accepting judgement of others in the interest of order. The literature highlights different sub-cultures which may underpin these judgements. These include one driven by the language of market and exchange, one of bureaucracy, focused on systems and processes, one that highlights academic freedom and finally, collegiality, built on consensus. These are aligned with either a hierarchical leadership/management approach (bureaucracy and market/exchange) or a collaborative approach (autonomy and collegiality). This leads to some elision between bureaucracy and marketisation and between collegiality and academic autonomy. It is relevant for this study that autonomy may, however, be more about self-leadership and consequently sit outside a system of authority.

The extent to which these cultures/discourses are compatible is debatable.

A number of authors (Hellawell and Hancock 2001, Clegg and McAuley 2005, Tight 2014, Braun et al. 2015) consider the possibility that managerialism and collegiality may co-exist successfully. Others perceive domination by managerialism (Ball 2012a). An interesting question for me was the question of how this is played out in practice as authority is established and deferred to.

While the literature does not, for the most part, focus on authority in higher education, it is possible to make use of typologies of social authority as a lens through which to examine research on academic leadership and management. This surfaces evidence for multiple strands of authority. Grouping examples of practice of management or leadership by type of authority suggests that it might also be helpful to categorise these types. Three categories emerged from my

analysis: structuring, knowledge based and relational authorities (figure 4-1). Knowledge, presence and position all seem important.

If authorities are multiple, contextual and changeable (as Woods, (2016) claims) then it is insufficient to offer a typology: to say anything useful about the way authority works it will be important to know how these multiple authorities manifest themselves in practice, and how they combine or conflict. This study sets out to answer this question in relation to in academic leadership and management.

5 Elements in the practice of authority

In this chapter and the next I discuss my findings. Shove et al (2012:6) argue that practices exist 'as a recognisable conjunction of elements'. In Chapter Two I suggested that practice theorists (Schatzki et al.2001, Reckwitz 2002, Shove et al.2012, Trowler 2013) share similar views on the nature of those elements and that they can be broadly grouped under the headings of actions, knowledge and material resources, routines and meanings. This chapter focuses on elements. I discuss the importance of three that emerged from the data: knowledge, materials and routines. I use extracts from data to illustrate some of the ways in which knowledge and material resources and routines were used by participants as they asserted, or deferred to, authority. In doing so I build on early coding of data which placed a fourth element, actions, at the centre of analysis.

This chapter has five sections:

- The remainder of this introduction discusses the ways in which constructivist grounded theory can support insights into practice.
- The second section contextualises the findings by outlining the contexts of the two institutions.
- The following three sections explore use of knowledge resources, material resources and routines in enacting authority.

5.1 Using Constructivist Grounded Theory in data analysis

I argued in Chapter Three that Constructivist Grounded theory offers a theoretical framework which is useful for analysing practices. Grounded theory seeks to understand social processes through the construction of action from data (Charmaz 2014). And actions, in the shape of routinized activities, are at the heart of social practice theory. Reckwitz (2002:251) says:

“Practices are routinized bodily activities: as interconnected complexes of behavioural acts they are movements of the body.... These bodily activities then include also routinized mental and emotional activities which are – on a certain level- bodily as well.”

If this is the case then, to understand practice, one must focus on situated actions – mental, physical and emotional. By not working from pre-constructed, theoretical codes Grounded Theory enables the researcher to remain at the level of the data. As I coded with gerunds, my early codes focused almost entirely on the physical and mental activities of academic managers/leaders and staff, for example: deciding hours, battling systems, understanding student surveys or resisting standardisation.

As I re-coded data through focused coding, I looked explicitly for apparent instances of assertion of, or deference to, authority. I reviewed the literature on authority as I coded. Constructivist grounded theorists acknowledge that data are constructed, not discovered and my understanding of the literature on authority will have shaped what I noticed (Mason 2002). In order to avoid forcing the data I needed a working definition of authority which was to some extent indistinct, so that I limited imposition of my own pre-conceptions on the data. In

Philosophical Investigations Wittgenstein (1953: §70) discusses the concept of a game. He asks "... do you want to say I don't know what I am talking about until I can give you a definition?" It is a rhetorical question, of course, and he suggests the answer himself:

"One might say the concept of a 'game' is a concept with blurred edges. – 'But is a blurred concept a concept at all?' – Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what we need?" (Wittgenstein 1953: §71)

An indistinct definition of authority was exactly what I needed: focused enough to allow me to recognise potential instances of authority, yet flexible enough to cast my net widely. I therefore drew on the whole range of typologies of foundations of authority considered in Chapter Three, without privileging any. I also focused on instances of resistance, persuasion and coercion. As Arendt (1961) has pointed out, if authority is legitimated power, persuasion suggests an absence of power, in that the person being persuaded has not subordinated his or her own judgement, and coercion suggests a lack of legitimacy since the power is enacted de facto.

Having grounded my analysis in actions I wanted to analyse the ways in which other elements of practice were relevant. Charmaz (2014:30) writes:

"Grounded theorists use sensitising concepts as tentative tools for developing their ideas about processes that they define in their data."

Making use of constructivist grounded theory enabled me to adopt the other elements of practice (meanings, materials, routines and knowledge) as sensitising concepts. As I re-coded I looked for examples of other elements. Three in particular: knowledge, materials and routines were evident in data.

5.2 Contexts

Practices as performances are situated in their contexts. The context for this research was two post 1992 statutory universities. Understanding the broader contexts helps to understand the data. In the following outline, while I have altered specific details to protect the anonymity of participants, the overall picture sets the contexts. Rockborough is in a rural and Hefton in an urban setting. Hefton is smaller than Rockborough, with an annual intake of around 2,800 undergraduates, compared with almost 4,400 at Rockborough. Both universities draw students from areas of relative deprivation, but Hefton has a lower graduate employment rate than Rockborough. At the time I was gathering data, both had achieved a non-continuation rate better than their benchmark (HESA data) but 'Education' at both universities was in the bottom third of the Good University Guide subject league table, with Rockborough, however, several places higher. Both units entered the REF in 2014. Rockborough's education submission achieved a mid-table position overall, while Hefton was nearer the bottom of the table. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) outcomes post-dated this research, however, in National Student Survey 'teaching' scores, there was a significant difference between the two universities in the year data were gathered, as the table of 'percentage agree' below indicates (data have been slightly altered to preserve anonymity).

Question	Rockborough	Hefton
1. Staff are good at explaining things	90%	87%
2. Staff have made the subject interesting	97%	69%
3. Staff are enthusiastic about what they teach	95%	84%
4. The course is intellectually stimulating	88%	83%

Table 5-1 NSS Outcomes

The two units each run a range of undergraduate courses and postgraduate courses. At the time of this study Hefton's teacher education sat within a different department, while it was included in the School at Rockborough. Hefton's management/leadership team in the unit was smaller than at Rockborough and comprised of a Head of Department (HoD) and deputies (DHoD), compared with a Head of School (HoS) and Associate Heads (AHoS).

Examination of institutional documents suggested that marketised discourse operated in both institutions, at least at institutional level. For example, job descriptions at Hefton included key performance indicators, a list of managers/leaders to whom the role reports, and a requirement to 'deliver the values of the university'. A list of required skills was included. As well as a focus on skills, a job description at Rockborough referred to cost-effective and customer focused service. Both websites promoted the career prospects of graduates. At Rockborough, these job prospects were also prominently on

display on posters around the campus. At Hefton, posters labelled, 'You said, we did' detailed responses to student satisfaction surveys.

In Chapter One I argued that quasi-marketisation in a data-driven environment has led to changes in the leadership/management of higher education. Hefton's lower position in league tables and REF may have driven decision making. Institutional initiatives at Hefton aimed to improve ratings: from investment in early career researchers to a strong focus on student perceptions, through conversations, focus groups and surveys. At Rockborough drivers were less apparent, although money had been invested in research leads and automated systems.

5.3 Knowledge Resources

The literature points to the importance of knowledge in establishing authority (studies identified disciplinary expertise, knowledge of systems and regulations, knowledge of people, knowledge of everyday activities and managerial skills). Practice theorists also highlight the importance of situated knowing in practice. Schatzki (2001) talks about practical intelligibility and understandings; Reckwitz (2002) refers to know-how, knowledge and understanding; Shove et al (2012) refer to competencies, skills, know-how and technique and Trowler (2013) talks about practical skills, knowing how to go on, intelligibility and a feel for the game. Given all this it is perhaps unsurprising that 'knowledge' focused codes formed a large proportion of coding. The following categories of knowledge resources emerged:

Claiming professional practice and disciplinary expertise:

- 'Keeping your hand in the pot' (having current practice in common with team)
- Using professional and disciplinary expertise ('that's what I did everyday')

Having knowledge and skills to deal with systems and processes:

- This category included 'Knowing the systems' (understanding the structure and processes of the University or School of Education) and having technical skills (e.g. 'being IT literate')

Knowing what is going on:

- Knowing the data ('we need to start evaluating'). This included knowing what staff and students think ('you're talking to me about what students are saying?')
- Understanding internal politics ('I've found the less she knows the better, to be honest.')

Sometimes it was hard to decide on a category. For example, the following extract could be an example of knowing what the students think or knowing data – or both:

However we know that – based on what the individual students themselves have told us we know that we've stopped at least three students leaving. Three that we absolutely clear about. Based on what the students themselves have told us. Um so it is self-reporting of course, um, but I think that's an important bit of evidence.

(Extract 1: Pilot)

However, while these categories' edges were blurred and over-lapping they recurred persistently enough in the data to warrant individual consideration.

5.3.1 Professional Practice and Disciplinary Expertise

'Having a hand in the pot'

This category referred to academic managers/leaders' use of up to date knowledge of teaching practice through their current (or recent) engagement.

And they seemed very engaged ('cause I also teach as well). I think it's important actually – as part of management and my role as teaching and learning – is that there is engagement. Because how can you possibly talk about teaching and learning if you're not actually teaching. [If you're not ...] exactly. So I try to make sure that I've always got my hand in the pot, as such and I make a point if anyone's got queries they can come and see me

(Extract 2: Hefton)

In extract 2 a deputy head of department (DHoD) explains how practice knowledge enables her to support staff. She uses the phrase '... 'cause I teach as well' to explain her involvement as a practitioner, as well as a manager, in the process. The inequality in the relationship is indicated by 'as well as'. The phrase 'how can you possibly...' then indicates the authority she believes is conferred by that involvement. The phrase 'got my hand in the pot' is interesting: it evokes the image of someone standing outside the main activity (as a manager) but nevertheless keeping her teaching practice current. This current practice then positions her as a source of good advice ('...if anyone's got any queries they can come and see me.'). It is interesting that she privileges her own practice knowledge as a source of advice.

In extract 3 another DHoD highlights the problems that a lack of understanding of current practice may cause. Again, management perspective is separated from teaching perspective, which leads to misunderstanding between managers and staff. Managers' lack of understanding of current teaching

practice is described as causing problems for staff, who react by challenging the policy ('why are you arguing?'). In Arendt's (1961) terms staff have not subjugated their wills to their managers/leaders'. This resistance could be interpreted as a loss of managerial authority as a consequence of their lack of practical expertise, but it could also signal a clash of authorities. The speaker concedes some positional authority ('and they're right in terms of their management perspective') but asserts the importance of teaching knowledge ('that wastes 10 minutes...').

Senior management are like, "well we have our vision! We just want you to do it. Why are you arguing?" It's really interesting and I find it fascinating from that management perspective of... And they're right, in terms of their management perspective but in terms of getting staff on board I think they miss some of those nuances of people and they see it as resistance when actually it's just that it makes the job more difficult. Some of the rooming like, you might have to walk 10 minutes in between a seminar and a lecture and that wastes 10 minutes of your teaching time.

(Extract 3: Hefton)

In extract 4 an associate head (AHoS) discusses how current practice ("I am still a module leader, I'm still teaching, still having that interaction with students...") rather than "just being management" gives authority through a 'shared experience'. It is the parallel experience (talking module leader to module leader rather than associate head to module leader) that the speaker suggests gives the authority. This suggests a co-operative authority based on lived experience (Woods, 2016: 158) rather than one based on expertise or hierarchy. However, in this case, as in the first example, the speaker feels in a position to offer advice.

I think it helps that I am still a module leader, I'm still teaching, I'm still having that interaction with students. I'm not just management I do have that range...

And that helps because?

Because I'm actually doing it and I can see when, if a module leader comes in about something, I can say "well I actually agree with you" or "this is a way round it" and that helps. It's that shared experience.

Shared experience gives you what?

I think the bit of authority. To be able to talk to somebody as a module leader. "I'm a module leader, your module leader, this is the difficulty you're having, this is the way I've solved it." Or sharing really good practice and saying "yes, of take that on and pass it on."

(Extract 4: Rockborough)

I am interested in the phrase, "just management" because it is possible to read 'just' in two ways, as in:

I am not only management, I have more than one role.

I am not simply management, I have more important roles.

In the second of these the meaning of 'management' acquires a negative connotation that seems counter to the hierarchical authority that might attach to the label 'management'. This second interpretation fits with the idea of being solely management leading to misunderstanding and of the shared module lead role that brings 'that bit of authority'. Caution is needed, however, before dismissing the authority of management too hastily. There is the implication (within extracts 2 and 4) of the speaker being entitled to offer advice in an authoritative way:

"If anyone's got any queries they can come and see me."

"This this the way I solved it... take that and pass it on."

Knowledge is not neutral. These academic managers/leaders use their up to date practice knowledge as a source of advice to staff: advice that would

arguably not carry the same force if offered from a non-managerial position. This implies inequality. Blencowe (2013:10) suggests that:

“Authority is the force of ‘wise’ or ‘in the know’ counsel – the force of ‘advice that cannot safely be ignored’ – deriving from inequalities of access to objectivity.”

Blencowe (2013:15) describes objectivity (not truth) as naming a position outside particular perspectives and argues that inequalities of ability to define what is objective underpins authority.

Using professional and disciplinary expertise

Professional identity as a source of authority was evident in the use of professional and disciplinary expertise as a knowledge resource. Managers/leaders drew on professional knowledge to achieve compliance from others and to explain their own deference to the authority of professional standards.

Sometimes it seemed as if difficult past professional practice was worn like a badge of honour. Part of the meaning of management responsibility at Hefton seemed to include toughness. In extract 5 the HoD at Hefton highlights credentials for leading learning and teaching in his unit, referencing FE experience, a teaching qualification, Ofsted (‘outstanding’) and coping with toughness.

Did my PGCE and worked in [college] for 7 years, and that was a tough college. Outstanding at the time – you know, it was one of the best colleges in the country at the time.

(Extract 5: Hefton)

Another manager draws on past target driven professional practice ('It was just the world I was in ... that's what I did every day') to explain the decision to ask staff to teach longer hours. The language in extract 6: ("I have to smile... be glad you're not a teacher...") somehow rules out of order a request for shorter teaching hours.

... having to measure outcomes, much more like KPI's. They are like, "what are they?" Everything is so new. Whereas I was target driven and everything was measured. It was just the world I was in. It was also really... I was working from nine until three with young people every day. And even now, I have a smile because, like a member of staff was saying I had to teach six hours yesterday. And I thought, "Well that's what I did every day". And I still find that quite hard.....Yes, so they moan but I still think, "Be glad you're not a teacher because they have it a lot harder."

(Extract 6: Hefton)

Blencowe (2013) argues that to speak with authority is to point beyond oneself to some objectivity (not necessarily truth). Being able to define which knowledge counts (agenda setting) is an important element in this (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). At Hefton the knowledge that counted was teaching knowledge. In extract 7 those with non-university teaching expertise are identified as 'the best teachers'. By contrast, disciplinary experience ("straight from PhDs") is linked to ignorance about teaching and poor practice.

They're the minority though. The people who've come straight through from PhDs, they are the minority. Most people have got professional experience before coming in here. They're the best teachers. It's the ones who have come straight from a PhD who tend to be the worst. Often because that's the way they've been taught themselves and they've never seen anything else. You talk about group work to some of these people and you could be talking a different language. 'Do that with the students? What do you mean I don't start with a half an hour lecture? Group work straight away? No!'

(Extract 7: Hefton)

This is part of a wider picture in which academic/disciplinary knowledge was positioned as unhelpful in the drive to improve learning and teaching in the unit.

People who aren't so confident in terms of teaching and learning almost retreat into their subject specialism. They think that being a subject specialist is enough, you know? That having a PhD in psychology of education is enough. And they've been allowed to think that for a long time, so it's not their fault. The previous HoD thought that was fine, but it wasn't to me.

(Extract 8: Hefton)

At Hefton, disciplinary knowledge does not confer authority. In contrast, disciplinary knowledge was identified by several participants at Rockborough as a source of authority. The examples below illustrate:

I think that's based on values, isn't it? I mean, framing descriptors and criteria within a policy or strategy comes from what you believe a strategy should be based on (mm) – good principals and – yeah- I think that comes from an academic authority which also stems from confidence in oneself as an academic. And an academic leader at that, not just an academic who is good at their own focus area. I think that is the difference between possibly, the professor who is in a leadership role as opposed to a professor who just does their own thing.

(Extract 9: Rockborough)

In extract 9 an academic leader/manager's authority is connected with 'values' and 'good principles' but 'also stems from' personal confidence both in leadership and 'their own thing'. Disciplinary knowledge is recognised as a part of academic authority. Another member of staff at Rockborough referred to their recently completed doctorate as giving 'that bit of authority'.

5.3.2 'Knowing the systems'

Understanding processes and systems subdivided into procedural understanding of processes and having needed skills (mostly IT skills). A key theme in participants' commentary was the role of routinized systems in their work, and is dealt with later in this chapter. This section deals specifically with knowledge and skills relating to systems and processes.

Concern around systems often coalesced around the difficulty of using them. Lacking knowledge of the systems left staff unable to access the systems to

comply with policy, which brought them to the attention of managers/leaders and put them in the position of having to ask professional staff who might choose not to respond positively.

In contrast, having knowledge of the systems put managers/leaders in a position of authority. In the extract below, having learned about the system over the last two years of her appointment enabled this Associate Head at Rockborough to tell the programme leads what to do.

I've learned an awful lot over the last two years – a lot.

About?

About the whole system and where the catches are and now ... I know now, what I've told the programme leads they have to do is, between now and February, is already identify who is teaching what next September and next January.

(Extract 10: Rockborough)

The role of central university or faculty staff ('admin' and registrars) as systems/processes experts was a source of frustration to academics. Both units had experienced a reduction in local administrative support and an increase in online processes as a consequence of institutional changes. This meant new knowledge of processes and IT skills were required at a time of loss of local administrative expertise.

Additionally, at Rockborough, managers/leaders expressed the view that some professional staff withheld information about processes. Central and faculty staff held knowledge of processes that academic staff did not have which put the former in a position of authority over academic managers/leaders even when they were 'academically, miles junior' (Rockborough AHoS). Authority to access systems and assign process work to staff seemed hierarchical.

In the Faculty of XXX we had a really good Associate Dean and as a program lead, when I needed to do changes to the program because of national changes that were required, I went into her office she told me what to do, I wrote it down and did it. That was it. Not that it was easy what we had to do but she just gave me the information that I needed and we did it. And I'm not feeling that we're getting that same clear-cut instruction about what we need to do from the current faculty.

(Extract 11: Rockborough)

In extract 11 authority is accepted without question: "... she told me what to do ... and I did it."; the only concern is whether the instructions are clear "I'm not feeling we're getting the same clear-cut information..." In extract 12 the manager accepts her authority in ensuring junior staff acquire expertise; in extract 13 the senior member of staff without the needed knowledge expects other people (by implication less senior: 'I'm paid quite a bit of money to be here battling with this') to do the work for her, ('whereas if I had just handed it to someone who is familiar with the system...'). The phrase 'just handed' implies authority to ask someone else to complete the task.

You have to know it is there. It's all on this portal and if your IT skills aren't very good... you wouldn't get onto it or you wouldn't find it. I've done a lot of work with staff on this. "You need to do this training, this training in order to understand the system. And then your life will be made a lot easier!"

(Extract 12: Hefton)

Um, I think the key barrier is, over a number of years, is the way that the admin support has been taken away and replaced with automated systems, online systems, that assume that we have a much better knowledge of IT systems and processes than most of us have. It is a key frustration in doing the job I'm doing, that I will spend quite a bit of time on the computer battling with different systems. Oh, and the help is there but it takes two and a half hours to read what actually [online help?]. Online help. But actually, I am being paid quite a bit of money to be here battling with this, whereas if I had just handed that to someone who is familiar with the system they would have done it instantly.

(Extract 13: Rockborough)

The authority that a speaker was subject to was often depersonalised, with the passive voice much used. The authority was distant and bureaucratic, with a 'belief in the validity of rationally created rules' (Weber 2004:2) accepted with

resignation. It was unnamed staff that 'assume that we have a much better knowledge of IT systems and processes than most of us have', administrative support 'has been taken away' staff 'were let go.'

5.3.3 Knowing what is going on

The final category of knowledge resources was 'knowing what is going on'. Unlike the previous categories, which all related to acquiring skills or having expertise in one way or another, this category related to an understanding of internal politics and access to internal data. When the HoD at Hefton remarked, of his line manager, "I've found the less she knows the better to be honest" and of his staff, 'I learned where the power bases were', he revealed the power of 'knowing what was going on'. Managers/leaders made use of information to which others did not have access, and a range of data sources was drawn on by managers/leaders in their accounts: KIS data, student surveys, timetable data, student outcomes and research publication data. In the staff meeting at Hefton that I observed the HoD used data comparing the department's proportion of good degrees unfavourably with other departments to justify a change of practice.

Managers/leaders made multiple references to knowledge acquired from universities' senior managers/leaders. The phrase 'it came from the VC/DVC/very senior people' was common, particularly at Rockborough, and seemed to be used to end arguments about required actions, for example, a reference to a DVC's initiative closed down objections to online student surveys in the staff meeting at Hefton. Managers/leaders attended faculty and university

level committees and referred to representing their school/department as well as 'reporting back'.

And I mean, each of us has different responsibilities to go to faculty meetings and our responsibilities then to represent the School at the faculty and then bring anything back to the School. It's complicated.

(Extract 14: Rockborough)

In this process they learnt about what was going on outside their own unit and were put in a position of being able to choose what information to share.

There were differences between the two institutions. At Hefton knowledge of student perceptions/satisfaction/wants was accorded a central position ('...they pay our wages you know, we want happy students.'). At Rockborough, while understanding students appeared as a code, knowledge of student perceptions/satisfaction/wants did not, perhaps because of higher student satisfaction scores in surveys. At Hefton data giving knowledge of students' wants was positioned as driving management/leadership decision making. In extract 15 a decision is made solely on the basis of student perception data ('...there was no question from my HoD" ...) so that access to this knowledge appears to trump any other argument:

And he said right, what are we getting from the students? And we said right, from the surveys they are asking for this, and this and this, and there was no question from my head of department because he is very student orientated. He was like, 'well, we've got to do it then'. It was like that, there was no umming and ahing. It was, 'well that's what we need.'

(Extract 15: Hefton)

The power that could attach to this knowledge was considerable. At Hefton, student outcome and perception data were used to drive performance management (extract 16). Inequality of access to objective knowledge: ('come directly to me') enables the HoD to use his privileged access to start

conversations with staff. The hierarchical authority of the HoD is evident in extract 17 ('yeah, and I'm going to carry on doing that as well!') but it is clearly not wholly accepted by staff (what do you mean?').

Monitoring... we've got data. You know [Uni] is really good at data. I can find data on pretty much anyone's performance. Um, people have to do course reviews, we've got the course evaluations which come directly to me from all of the programmes. [From the students?] mmm, yes. So there's no shortage of data. If there's an issue we pick it up quite quickly.

(Extract 16: Hefton)

There's a couple of members of staff who said, 'what do you mean? You're talking to me about what students are saying?' And I said, 'yeah, and I'm going to carry on doing that as well!'

(Extract 17: Hefton)

5.3.4 Knowledge resources as elements in the practice of authority

To sum up: data support the idea that knowledge resources confer authority since a wide range of types of knowledge are elements in the practice of authority at both institutions. Current teaching practice, disciplinary and professional expertise; understanding of systems and processes and 'knowing what is going on' all gave authority to managers/leaders. Authoritative knowledge was of three kinds: professional or disciplinary expertise, knowledge of systems and processes and finally, privileged access to people and data that enabled managers/leaders to justify decisions.

5.4 Material resources

It will be clear from the foregoing section that in drawing on knowledge resources practitioners made use of other, material, resources: policy documents, student surveys, minutes, electronic forms and platforms, and so on. What I have called 'material resources' others (Schatzki 2001, Reckwitz

2002, Shove et al 2012 and Trowler 2013,) have variously referred to as artefacts, things, materials, entities, technologies and materiality. In this section I explore specific ways in which three material resources: spaces, technologies and emails, were used in asserting or deferring to authority, and the ways in which practitioners had, or did not have, access to them.

5.4.1 Spaces

Codes relating to physical spaces: campuses, teaching rooms, offices and other workplaces were common. They included: 'not having a room to meet in'; 'seeing home working as autonomy'; 'asking for a bigger room'; 'struggling to make the timetable fit' and 'moving campuses'. Access to space was determined bureaucratically through institutional policies as well as operationally day by day. Institutional decisions were usually unchallenged, even when impact was considerable. At Rockborough (extract 18) despite a campus move, which caused 'considerable upheaval' that left participants 'seeking comfort' and needing to 'settle down', the university is positioned as 'generous'.

The University managed it very generously but, but for those of us who did relocate, I mean I joined the University knowing it was going to happen so, so that was fine. But I think we experienced a big upheaval and change of staff. And it took people a year or so to settle down and pick up and thus the research element after all, is the most difficult part of that job. I think people sought comfort in what they did best, which was teaching (laughs) so it took time.

(Extract 18: Rockborough)

At Hefton a campus move was imminent during data gathering. This had led to mothballing of rooms and my observations detailed deterioration of physical buildings, with peeling paint and accumulated junk. Staff suggested 'rooms are a nightmare'. Despite this staff anger there were 'smiles and enthusiasm' at the

HoD's announcement of action to mitigate the situation (extract 19). Note that the senior university management/leadership team are depersonalised ('the university' and 'they') consequently depersonalising the decision.

The first item is presented by the HoD as 'money for X (the site we are on). He explains that the university have identified that the site is becoming run down and 'they' will invest. There are smiles and enthusiasm at this announcement. HoD explains that 'they' have recognised that something is needed for students in the interim (before the move).

(Extract 19: Hefton)

The rationale given for investment was: "...they have recognised that something is needed for the students". That the HoD positioned student, not staff, experience as the driver, and that the staff did not remark on this, highlights the dominance of students' wants and perceptions in the practice of authority at Hefton.

Access to physical space was a site for the everyday practice of authority. Often, this was determined centrally through institutional decisions implemented by professional staff who had delegated authority (Raz 1990). Day to day access to meeting and teaching rooms was controlled by central booking systems: "...you can't just get a room... you've got to be completing the forms...". In extract 20, bureaucratic authority at Hefton is evident in the references to numbers and policies as well as the language of compliance ('you can't'; 'you have to'). Academic staff who feel that their pedagogical authority should take precedence are required to justify their request ('...what's your reason?').

There are very clear rooming policies and it's all done on numbers, but if you want to do group work and been put in a room that only holds 25 then you can't move them about. And then if you asked to move it is well, "what's your reason? You've only got 25 in your group." And that takes five emails to shift a room and staff are like, "well this is for a pedagogical reason, I should just be able to move it." And senior managers are saying, "Well you have to fit in with what the policy is."

(Extract 20: Hefton)

Both the HoD at Hefton and the HoS at Rockborough used their own authority to control staff access to spaces too. At Rockborough one of the Head's first actions on appointment was to re-organise rooming arrangements for her staff (although note the reference to persuasion, suggesting a lack of authority).

When I started and I also did something that could have gone really badly but actually went quite well, which was I persuaded everybody to move rooms.

(Extract 21: Rockborough)

At Hefton, I observed the HoD on entering the location for a staff meeting space, a public space, say to two members of staff who were having a break, "You can stay here for the time being." His language suggests authority to give permission – the two staff left soon after, well before the start of the meeting.

Even on a micro scale access to space was controlled by managers/leaders. In extract 22 a Rockborough manager explains how academic staff have autonomy to decide where to work.

Oh yes, absolutely. I've said to all of them, 'Look, if on any reasonable given day you want to work at home, just let me know and do so. And some of them do that and some of them don't, but they still all produce properly in the work that they do.'

(Extract 22: Rockborough)

Analysis suggests this is less about staff autonomy than authority. Again, limited permission is given ('...if on any reasonable given day....'just let me know') with the expectation that staff complete expected work ('still all produce properly').

However, even the senior managers/leaders were subject to the delegated authority of the central professional team: the HoD at Hefton was unable to book a room for his staff meetings, and so had to use public space.

5.4.2 Emails

Documents were part of the nexus of practices at both units. They included emails, surveys, data sheets, forms, module documents, minutes and policies. Codes relating to documents included; 'making a case'; seeking assistance; asking/giving permission and 'giving a rationale'. Documents drawn on differed in the two settings: student surveys and data sheets were a particular feature at Hefton, where knowledge of student perceptions and references to data carried considerable authority, while at Rockborough documents written by staff to 'make a case' featured. However, references to emails were common at both institutions and therefore I have focused on these to illustrate some ways that documents were used in the practice of authority.

Emails were used to assert authority through consultation, information giving, justifying decisions, questioning staff and requiring or monitoring action/compliance with policy and regulations. New policy requirements were disseminated by email at both institutions: 'it comes out as a university directive and we all get it' (Rockborough). At Hefton, one deputy head explained use of email to give instructions and set expectations.

So -Director- 'Ok, this is what we're going to push for. This is what we need, we need to make sure it's happening. Someone needs to be auditing this.' So as part of my role, I have to make sure (some say it's policing) going round and, you know, 'oh, this hasn't been done!'. I was doing that yesterday and it's a simple case of emailing and going, 'we need to make sure that's up there for me.' And it gets done, it gets done.

(Extract 23: Hefton)

In this account authority from the Director is channelled through the DHoD, 'this is what we're going to push for', and 'someone needs to be auditing this'. The hierarchical authority of this delegation is accepted without challenge by the DHoD, 'so as part of my role I have to make sure...' who emails the request to staff for compliance. The use of the phrase 'up there for me' implies DHoD's recourse to personal authority. Does the DHoD not think that the institutional directive will carry the same weight I wonder?

Emails reified discourse for managers/leaders to criticise and this caused anxiety of staff, including middle managers/leaders. Anxiety was caused by responding times, ('.... sometimes people, if you respond too quickly, think you're just sat there waiting for their emails... "She can't be very busy"! (Rockborough)), or about missing an important request: ('My anxiety is always, you know, letting it go and then forgetting it' –Rockborough); about 'getting the tone right/wrong' (Hefton & Rockborough); or not gaining access to the person needed to complete a task, ('I try not to send 'abyss' emails because I like to think of the person I am emailing to'; Rockborough). People in hierarchical positions of authority (line managers, the registrar, finance staff) received prompt attention ('If it comes from the boss, it gets seen, and looked at pretty sharp.' Rockborough), but others might wait longer, although that carried a risk

that the email might be forgotten altogether: ('My feeling is, if I don't respond, it'll just go down and I'll lose it.' Rockborough).

Emails were resources to be drawn on. Staffs' concern about the way emails could 'land' suggest that emails also functioned as a form of surveillance. The DHoD in extract 23 uses email as part of her auditing process and one AHoS at Rockborough commented: "One of my programme leads is often late in responding to emails". In addition to informing staff of regulations and requesting compliance they were also used by those in authority (including delegated authority) to threaten punishment for non-compliance. An Associate Head at Rockborough said: "and I shall, in a minute, get a nasty email from another part of the university saying, 'we'll take your credit card away if you don't sign it off.' And that's stressful. Unnecessarily so."

A further anxiety related to the difficulty of getting replies to emails from elsewhere in the university. The non-responder was, de facto, able to exert power by blocking the sender's access to needed information.

I think one barrier can be lack of email responses and that would be from the faculty and so you send a request for something and it's just ignored and so you send another one and another one and so then you got to track somebody down and it's always (inaudible). And I think that is something that I find really annoying because a quick response would save all that and invariably, if I ask a question of someone in faculty, that's because somebody's asked me a question.

(Extract 24: Rockborough)

Practices of authority are threaded through these concerns: gaining access to the right people; managing recipients' reactions to the email; managing one's own reputation in the university. For these middle managers/leaders concerns related both to managing up and managing down.

5.4.3 Technologies

Codes relating to a range of technologies were evident in the data. They drew attention to electronic reading list platforms, room booking systems, timetable databases and VLE platforms. Engagement with forms was primarily online, although they were sometimes printed off. However, codes for technologies were closely related to other categories, particularly 'having knowledge and skills to deal with systems and processes' and 'routines'.

At both institutions there had been senior management/leadership level decisions to adopt online systems for administration and teaching/learning, leading to significant change for staff, who did not all have the digital capability required (extract 25).

Some of it has. Some of it is to do with how higher education has changed and all the new computer systems. A lot of staff aren't that IT literate, so for them it's a massive shift – a change.

When did that happen- when the faculty started?

Yes it kind of all coincided at the same time. The marking goes online, we use Moodle a lot. We've moved over to Moodle as a VLE so there's been a lot of change, massive change.

(Extract 25: Hefton)

Work requiring engagement with technologies included: marking and uploading of marks, creating reading lists, development of timetables and module documentation, PG supervision, processing extenuating circumstances and personal expenses. In some cases, this moved work that academics would previously have done without automation online, in others it involved a shift of work from administrative staff to academics.

One factor in the practice of authority was access to systems. Quite apart from the barrier that lack of expertise brought, staffs' access to information and opportunities was managed through granting or denying use of platforms. Extract 26 illustrates how programme leaders were effectively locked out of overseeing their programme's timetable ('Well, they are not allowed on the system') because access was only granted to module leaders.

Because, last year, for one module, we hadn't got the module delivery sheets. They were allocated to a particular person who then turned round and said 'I'm not teaching that.' So then the whole system was fouled up while we found the right module leader who has got that piece of paper, because that's the only person who can do it.

Others don't know?

Well, they are not allowed to on the system.

(Extract 26: Rockborough)

This restricted access reflected a professional staff view of programme leadership which was not shared by the most senior leaders in either unit, where discourse was about opening access and taking responsibility: "...so now we have a meeting in which programme leads... can raise things they want to drive forward' (Rockborough); "I am trying to instil in them at the moment that it is a leadership position" (Hefton).

Use of technologies regulated staff actions in a host of areas to achieve standardisation (described by the Education senior team at Hefton as 'a decent minimum'). The bureaucratic authority of managers was therefore implemented through engagement with technologies. Not using technologies required permission to be sought 'at the highest level' (Rockborough). In extract 27 the decision is once again depersonalised ('the university') and the language of permission ('be allowed') highlights that hierarchical authority must be negotiated with.

“The university decided to adopt an online tracking system for postgraduates... and this was a very clunky thing.... well, it didn’t work for us in Education....so I, as the research lead, negotiated with the programme leader and the Graduate School for us to be allowed not to use it.” *(Extract 27: Rockborough)*

This formal challenge of decisions at Rockborough is considered in the following chapter.

5.5 Routines

Routines appeared important in the practice of authority in two ways: firstly, because the routinization of activities into a formal process (often described as ‘systems’ by participants, and often linked to use of technologies), supported institutional drives for standardisation and limited staff autonomy. Secondly because managers/leaders were able to draw on generic routines as they asserted authority. In one memo I reflected on this:

“Routinised decision making in both settings draws on other routines, embedded within the routinized actions. So, systems were set up or existing systems drawn on to structure decision making. Meetings also formed part of decision making processes, the validation process clearly structured the design of the degree at Hefton, including gaining agreement for small group teaching; and ‘the university’ developed an internal GPA calculation for REF at Rockborough. Micro practices – meetings, working groups, automated systems, email exchanges- form

a kind of toolkit that practitioners can draw on to construct authority practices.” (Memo 36)

In this section I explore the ways that routinisation influenced the practice of authority through focus on two categories of routines: ‘systems’ and ‘meetings’.

5.5.1 Following systems

Use of systems as materialised formalisation of routines was commonplace and closely connected to use of material resources such as electronic platforms and documentation. Systems also made use of other routines (formal meetings for example). Examples of routines shaped by systems included: programme/module development, assessment, timetabling/room booking (both institutions), extenuating circumstances, making a business case (Rockborough) and attendance at conferences (Hefton). Increasing systematization led one academic at Hefton to comment: ‘You can’t move without a form in this place!’

Systems were often, but not always, online. They worked by fixing the steps in a routine and so standardising behaviour. In the words of one DHoD, they established ‘a decent minimum’. As behaviour was systematised, autonomy reduced:

There’s more form filling, here’s more requirements, you know, and this idea of consistency can come across as – which I can understand – very bureaucratic now. In academia it’s very much a world where you’ve got... well, you had a lot of autonomy, you could do what you wanted, and now there seems to be a lot of standardisation now. Er, which can be quite difficult for some colleagues, which I do understand.

(Extract 28: Hefton)

Systematization meant that some decisions about teaching and learning were effectively taken by professional staff who were responsible for compliance with policy and processes. This shifted the balance of authority from academic to central professional staff since exceptions to compliance had to be sought. Academic managers/leaders were then delegated authority to 'sign off' compliance. This took time: one AHoS at Rockborough had to sign each module leader's timetable. She commented: "That's taken about a month to come through, for me to authorise every single one."

Data suggested that academics resented the volume of systematised routines because of the inefficiency of systems and because the 'fixing' of a routine led to loss of autonomy. One AHoS at Rockborough lamented that, in a previous institution, "my word was enough". However, there was no overt challenge: data suggested senior managers/leaders largely accepted systematization, although they sympathised with staff:

That causes a little friction. And things like, from a management perspective, to go to any conference or anything like that you do, as an academic activity, you have to fill out a form and it goes to resources committee to approve. Well, people just see that as admin that they could do without. As bureaucracy. Now, from a management point of view it's useful to know where your staff are and it's useful to be able to see where their time is being utilised. But when you're the one filling out the form and there's three levels for it to go through and then it comes back and you don't know if you can book flights or you can't book this conference until you've got the form back: there's lots of to-ing and fro-ing and people get frustrated.

(Extract 29: Hefton)

Actions were undertaken by managers/leaders to ensure staff followed the systems correctly. Sometimes this was very direct: an Associate Head at Rockborough talked about 'sitting with' programme leaders to upload timetable information. More often it involved 'checking' and 'auditing' (two earlier codes):

a deputy head referred to checking compliance with online learning platform systems: “So, as part of my role I have to make sure (some says it’s policing) going round and ...’oh! This hasn’t been done!”

At times staff seemed to rely on bureaucracy. In extract 30 staff reject the offered autonomy to design their own class evaluations, preferring to access the ‘generic ones’.

One questioner asks: ‘We agreed to do evaluations mid-year, can we still do that in hard copy?’ DHoD says yes. Q: where can we get hard copies? DHoD: you can create them for yourself. Another staff member says, ‘better to have generic ones’. Some discussion follows. A number of staff want to be able to use generic evaluations (maybe the same Qs as on the online version). There is reluctance to design their own. Finally agreed that DHoD will email and people can adapt it.

(Extract 30: Hefton)

Academics who wanted to gain exceptions from following formalised routines needed to negotiate this with authority figures (either professional staff with delegated authority or senior managers/leaders themselves). At Hefton deviation from room booking policies was negotiated with timetable staff. At Rockborough participants talked about organising meetings and ‘going up to the highest level’ to gain exceptions for programmes from ‘semesterisation’. This practice will be considered in more detail in the following chapter under ‘challenging’.

5.5.2 Meetings

Another common routine was use of meetings. Middle managers/leaders at both settings talked about extensive participation in meetings:

“A lot of what I do is meetings. I chair quite a lot of things. I go to quite a lot of things.” (AHoS, Rockborough)

“Committees. At least one committee [a day]. Faculty committees, central committees. Plenty of those.” (HoD Hefton).

Meetings were routinized both in the sense that different types of meetings followed predictable patterns, and because they provided a familiar tool that was used by managers/leaders to achieve their agenda. I only observed one meeting (a general staff meeting at Hefton) but references to meetings figured strongly in interview data. The main constructed categories are below, with illustrative codes.

‘Doing meetings’:

- Going to meetings: going to learning, teaching and quality meetings; meeting regularly as a department; going to committees
- Meeting in teams: having regular meetings of each team; holding team meetings of their particular group; meeting weekly with the senior team
- Managing meetings: setting expectations; chairing; calling/not calling speakers; creating the agenda; inviting Programme Leaders to meetings

Purposes of meetings:

- Representing: representing the school; representing to the university
- Formalising: having/circulating an agenda; having minimal minutes
- Informing: introducing change at departmental meetings; using meetings to pass on requirements;
- Regulating: making sure policy is presented and minuted; sitting in meetings with the book of regulations
- Deciding: deciding in the meeting; having a special meeting to decide

- Issue raising: raising issues; calling programme meetings to deal with issues
- Supporting: meeting staff to discuss how things are going; supporting staff through causal meetings; sharing good practice

Hearing/not hearing staff voices:

- Consulting: asking for ideas in departmental meetings; getting staff feedback through meetings
- Making your voice heard: hearing the same few voices; speaking multiple times
- Meeting individually: meeting staff individually to learn what's happening; meeting dissenters one to one

'Doing meetings' (originally an in vivo code) was developed from references to going to meetings and the ways in which they were organised. Data referenced governance committees, management/leadership team and staff meetings, work group meetings and ad hoc meetings called to deal with a particular issue. Meetings were generally organised and run by someone with leadership/management responsibilities (codes referenced roles from PVC to Programme Leader). Senior managers/leaders had administrative support for this. At Hefton the HoD called and ran the meeting, moving the agenda on and, for parts of the meeting called speakers, who indicated if they wanted to speak.

Codes for 'purposes of meetings' suggest that they were seen as a mechanism for achieving management aims. The position of a meeting in the hierarchy and its place in the governance structure of the university shaped the purposes for

which it was used by staff in the two units. Institution websites showed that committee meetings were a key component of governance. Since my participants all had some level of management/leadership responsibility, this focus on management is unsurprising. It would be interesting to gather the perceptions of staff without any such responsibility to understand how they saw meetings.

Data suggested that different types of meeting followed different routines, but the pattern in both institutions was similar. From managers/leaders' perspectives, meetings had a role in achieving compliance with policies and processes. For that reason, all except team meetings had at least a degree of formality with agenda and minutes. Governance meetings were very formal with limited space for discussion. They reified policies, curricula or decisions. University level, or faculty level meetings, at which participants were not the most senior members of staff, were used by participants to represent the unit to the wider university, to receive and understand policy and other directives; and to gain permission for particular courses of action, including exceptions to policy or systems. Departmental/School whole staff meetings focused on consultation, 'issue raising', and information dissemination. University or faculty level operational meetings served similar functions to School level meetings, but data did not include instances of issue raising. Team meetings were mainly peer to peer (School management/leadership teams in both Schools, teaching teams at Hefton and the REF working group at Rockborough) and had data that suggested the focus was on 'getting work done'.

The staff meeting at Hefton worked to reinforce the authority of the management/leadership team, in particular the HoD. The seating, with the HoD, deputy and minute-taker together and members of staff leaving a gap on either side, served to differentiate managers/leaders from other staff. Items were introduced and brought to an end only by the HoD and deputy and, in the first part of the meeting, staff members indicated to the HoD when they wanted to speak. But this authority was limited in two respects: firstly, by institutional managers/leaders whose decisions set the agenda: agreeing investment in the campus, setting employability and good degree targets, and secondly by the staff who, in the open discussion, mostly ignored HoD's early attempts to manage this discussion. Participants drew on bureaucratic authority and professional and disciplinary expertise in this meeting.

At Rockborough, in addition to regular meetings and working groups, 'one-off' meetings were organised to address specific issues; this was sometimes described as part of 'making a case'. This involved more junior staff in meeting with senior (often university level) staff to seek an exception to regulations or policy.

So we've got a big meeting next in the week over whether we can carry on running something that we've been running for years. The partners require us to work in a certain way with them and we've always been OK with that and it brings in a decent bit of money for us. Because of the semesterisation of the systems the professional services staff are currently saying to us, well you have to do all the teaching and the assignments in one semester.

(Extract 31: Rockborough)

Asked who would be at the meeting, she indicated her impatience with the need to call in senior managers/leaders to over-rule 'professional services staff', stopping just short of overt criticism ('which I just think is...').

Some of the senior team at the university and people like myself, plus the programme lead is going to have to come along. Really senior people, which I just think is...

(Extract 32: Rockborough)

Routine use of meetings was part of the process of seeking exceptions. The passage in which she explains this is redolent with the language of requirement and permissions: 'you have to do the teaching in one semester'; the 'programme leader is going to have to come along'; 'our director asked if we could have that reconsidered'; 'I asked her if we could have a special meeting'. Both bureaucratic authority (structured by policy, systems and committee meetings) and hierarchical authority (in which people in positional authority can make decisions) are evident here.

'Hearing/not hearing staff voices' was the final category. Staff meetings were used to consult on proposals, ask for reactions to proposed decisions and for staff to 'raise issues'. It was unclear from the data how effective this was. While the HoS at Rockborough attributed a trouble free room move to consultation in staff meetings, at Hefton a consultative section of the meeting ended with no clear decision on how staffs' views would be used. At Hefton managers/leaders' reported meeting staff one to one to address dissent, understand staff views and 'what is going on' and provide support with issues. 'Corridor conversations' was a phrase used at Hefton to refer to ad hoc one to one meetings. The HoD at Hefton expressed concern that whole staff meetings privileged some staffs' views:

There were little cabals who were all, you know, decided policy, and most of the staff felt thoroughly excluded. So it was a matter of breaking that down. So that's why I met everyone individually, because then you learn what's actually happening on the ground, rather than if you meet in a meeting you're going to hear the same few voices.

(Extract 33: Hefton)

The HoD's authority is threaded through extract 33. He uses it to 'break down' staff groupings. He identifies these groups, as well as those staff who are 'excluded' and he uses the one to one meetings to gain knowledge of 'what is going on'.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on grounded theory coding to analyse and identify some elements in the practice of authority. As social practice theorists (Reckwitz 2002) have suggested, knowledge resources, material resources and routines are important. Analysis suggests that issues of access and inequality lend authority to some practitioners over others.

Access to knowledge was secured in a variety of ways. Past and current *professional and disciplinary expertise* was developed through having specific experiences (leading or teaching on modules, taking a PhD, teaching in school or FE) as was developing *knowledge and skills around systems and processes*. *Knowing what was going on* was gained through access to data and to key people. Positional authority also enabled practitioners to determine which knowledge counted – for example in identifying good practice.

Access to material resources was key in developing needed knowledge and achieving aims. Staff needed access to spaces, people and documents and

were frustrated when this was restricted. With the exception of emails, which were available to everyone, (although managers/leaders' access to emails supported staff surveillance) access to material resources often depended on position. Only certain people (managers/leaders and professional staff) could access the timetable systems or survey data, for example. The levels of skills (for example IT skills) also limited access for some staff.

Positional authority led to inequalities. It conferred the ability to agenda set by privileging some knowledge and expertise over other kinds. This, coupled with the surveillance that access made possible meant that managers/leaders could decide what to recognise and reward (noticing and sharing 'good' practice for example). It often determined who could gain access to material resources (for example REF internal and external review reports at Rockborough) and spaces. Positional authority could be held by junior staff, so that professional staff controlled access to timetables and rooms, implementing senior managers/leaders' policies and restricting the actions of middle managers/leaders. However, positional authority was not always deferred to, and there are examples of challenge based on professional and disciplinary expertise in the data.

Positional authority (or lack of it) also shaped the ways in which staff participated in routines. For example, middle managers/leaders in university level meetings became the passive recipients of decisions which, as senior managers/leaders in the School/department, they passed on to others. Institution level decisions set in place systems, which then became routinized actions that regulated staff behaviour to ensure compliance with policy.

Routines also became generic micro-practices that managers/leaders drew on to achieve their aims.

In the next chapter I consider the ways in which these elements combine in three specific practices of authority: deciding, overseeing and challenging.

6 Authority Practices in Academic

Management/Leadership

Reckwitz (2002:249) writes that:

“A practice is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another...”

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the elements that Reckwitz refers to (the knowledge and material resources and routines considered in the previous chapter) come together to form three specific authority practices in academic management/leadership: ‘deciding’, ‘overseeing’ and ‘challenging’. Each of these practices emerged from the data as routinized, with similar actions in a repeated sequence drawing on predictable knowledge and material resources as well as making use of other, familiar routines such as ‘meetings’ or ‘making a case’. Each practice involved inequality among practitioners which was mostly unremarked by them.

These practices were chosen for different reasons: ‘overseeing’ and ‘deciding’ were chosen for their presence in the data with numerous codes relating to each. ‘Challenging’ was a less common practice. I chose it because, at points in the data, the boundaries of the practice of authority gave way to resistance, persuasion and attempts at compulsion, and ‘challenging’ seemed to me to happen right at these boundaries. However, challenges were not resistance – they took place within overall deference to a decision. Other interesting practices were evident which are beyond the scope of this thesis: ‘giving’ was

one such. The times in which managers/leaders referred to 'giving' something to staff: hours, resources, support, time for research and so on, seemed to me to suggest authority. The giver had access to something that the recipient did not, and the recipient was not always allowed to refuse the gift (for example staff were 'given' hours in the workload model). This might be a fruitful area for future work.

In the following three sections of the chapter I address each practice in turn. I draw on data to model ways in which each practice comes to exist as 'a recognisable conjunction of elements' (Shove 2012:6). I then illustrate this further with discussions of one performance of the practice in each setting. Finally, I briefly consider actions at the boundary of authority: resisting, persuading and coercing.

6.1 Deciding

A range of informal and formal decision-making processes were evident. I constructed three different types of decision-making from the data:

- Operational decisions affecting the business of the unit: for example, deciding which modules to run.
- Everyday decisions affecting the day to day work of the unit: for example; staff working patterns.
- Institutional decisions affecting a large part of the university: for example, location changes and faculty restructures.

In this section I focus on operational decision making as an authority practice, as it was here that a routinized pattern most clearly emerged. Aspects of day to

day decision making were associated with the code 'line managing' and are considered under 'overseeing' below. Institutional decisions had been made at a higher point in the organisational hierarchy than my participants and so I did not have access to the routines for decision making at that level. I did, however, have access to reactions to institutional decisions and these are considered under 'challenging'.

6.1.1 Operational Decisions

Operational decisions often followed a similar, predictable pattern in both institutions. Typically, they were driven by 'knowledge of what is going on' externally to the university: 'We have to constantly monitor what we do and will potentially have to revamp the content of our courses each year in line with government decisions' (HoS, Rockborough Education website). Drivers were often marketised: analysis of documents (webpages, job descriptions and articles) contained references to marketised drivers including accountability and regulatory drivers (such as REF and Ofsted) and commercial drivers (to enhance reputation, recruit learners and meet clients' needs). In making an operational decision management/leadership teams typically formulated a course of action which was then communicated to staff. The method of communication varied. At Hefton meetings were an important part of everyday routines and so decisions were communicated in staff meetings; at Rockborough, where emails appeared more often in data, emails were more often used.

Decisions were not simply taken centrally and announced; ongoing efforts were made to involve staff in the decision in some way. The initial communication

normally invited responses. Managers/leaders at both institutions stressed the importance of being 'open and honest' (HoD, Hefton and AH, Rockborough). Their accounts suggested that knowledge seeking was a part of this initial communication: either to gather information from staff or to request staff input of ideas. Meetings and emails were used for this. The knowledge gained was then reviewed by managers/leaders, or by groups established by them, alongside other relevant resources such as reports, student data or outcomes. Advisory groups were constructed by senior management/leadership in both institutions for this purpose. Following this a decision was made. Sometimes this decision was tentative and was passed on to other parts of the university for approval and/or returned to staff for further comment, often involving further meetings, either formal or informal.

Only after university and staff support was secured was the decision announced, often by an email from a person with positional authority. Finally, further steps were taken to engage with and support staff, particularly those who might be unhappy with the decision. The emphasis on staff engagement suggests the importance of community assent and a limit to bureaucratic authority. Figure 6-1, Operational Decision Making, illustrates the sequence.

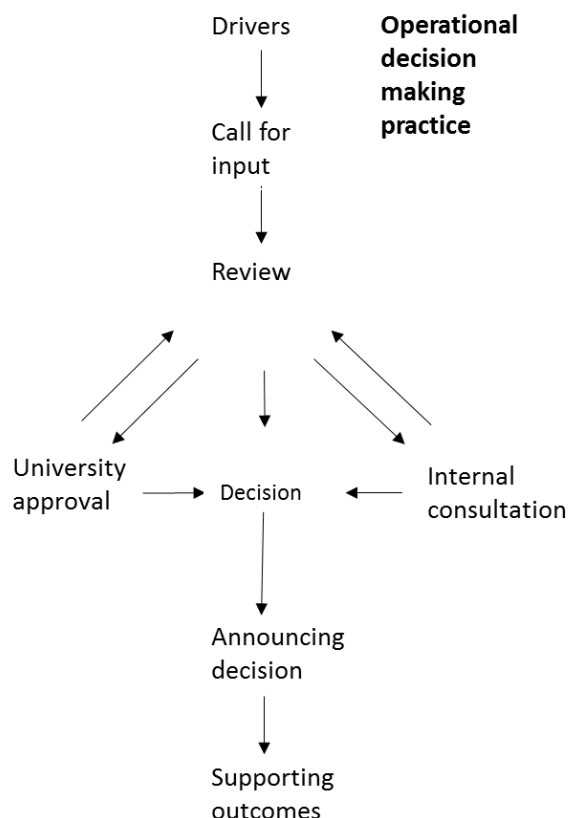


Figure 6-1 Operational Decision Making

Examples of decisions that followed this pattern included decisions about: teaching patterns (Hefton); new programmes or modules (both settings); who should be submitted to REF (Rockborough) and implementation of university policy (anonymous marking at Rockborough and improving the proportion of good degrees at Hefton). Below, I work through two examples, one at each institution.

6.1.2 Decision making in practice: teaching patterns at Hefton

A key part of the re-validation of the Education Studies degree at Hefton was a change in the pattern of face-to-face teaching. Students had previously been taught in whole group lectures led by a specialist alongside discursive seminars, led by academic facilitators. The new degree utilised small group teaching for

all sessions, deleting lectures along with some 'niche courses' (HoD, Hefton) to achieve this. Staff might now teach on modules where they had little specialist knowledge. Each seminar group leader was responsible for developing students' subject knowledge (previously the preserve of the module leader, who gave the lectures) as well as leading discussions. This was not universally popular with staff some of whom felt de-skilled and/or undermined. Managers/leaders at Hefton offered different accounts of the decision indicating different levels of staff engagement:

“I made the decision.... It was just me that time”, and “It wasn't just my idea... I met every member of staff” (HoD), as well as “We met as a management team” (DHoD)

Figure 6-2 (on the following page) maps data on this decision to the outline process in figure 6-1.

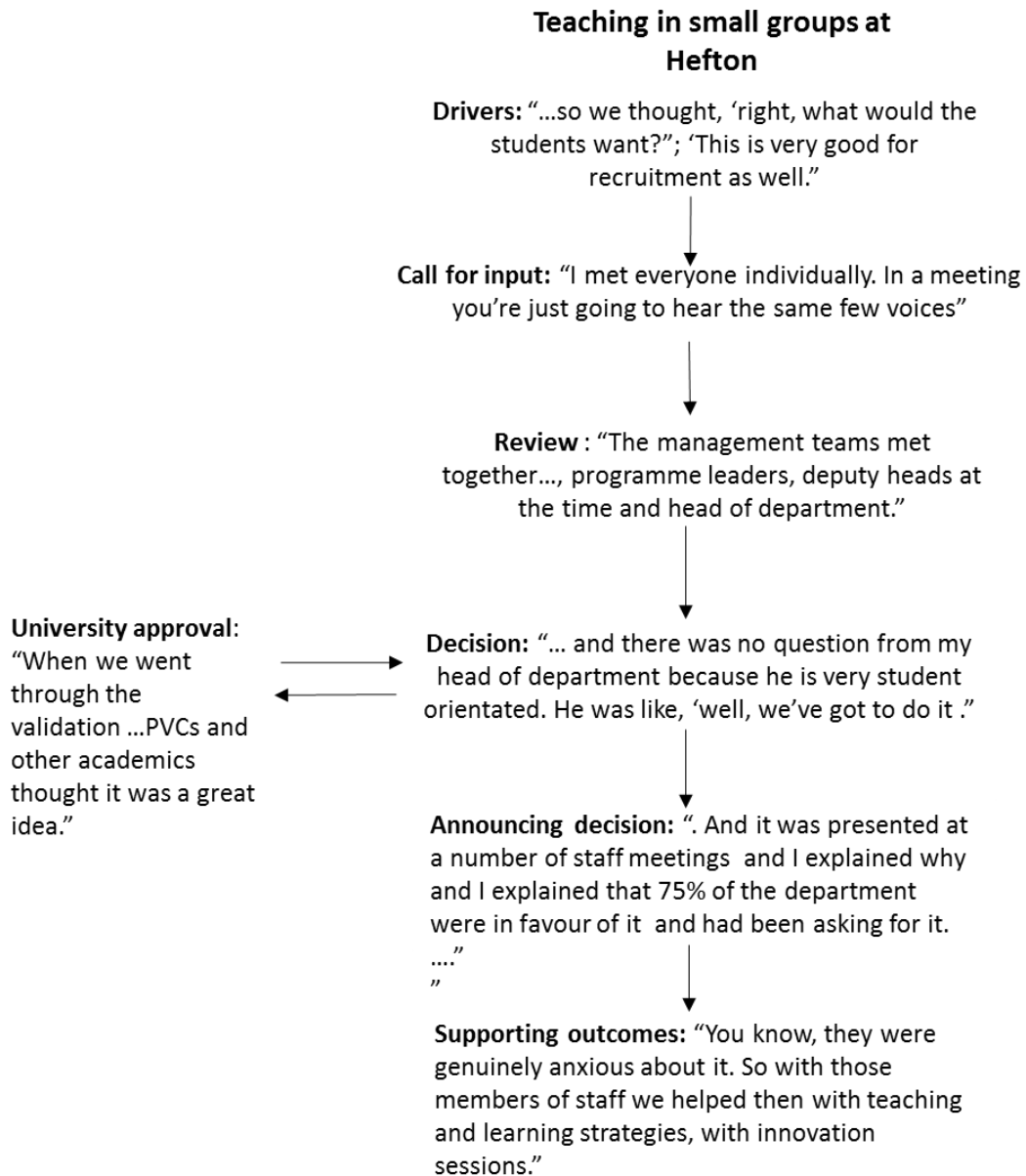


Figure 6-2 Operational Decision Making at Hefton

6.1.3 Elements in decision making at Hefton

Analysing the elements of this process helps to construct how managers/leaders sought to ensure staff deferred to the decision. Firstly, they drew on familiar routines. The change took place as part of the university's periodic review process and was therefore unlikely to be resisted by staff, once

agreed. Staff meetings helped consolidate the decision. Management/leadership staff at Hefton were ambivalent about the use of email ('there's death by email', and 'you can get the tone wrong') and therefore did much face to face in one to one, team based or departmental meetings. They aimed to use 'casual conversations along the corridor' as well as 'more formal meetings' (DHoD, Hefton). Including these routines embedded the decision in familiar practices and helped, therefore, to normalise it.

Second, material resources: these did not play a large part in the decision, but those that were used were significant in consolidating it. Student survey data were used by managers/leaders in making the decision:

“...head of department said, 'what are we getting from the students?' and we said, 'Right, from the surveys we are getting this, and this and this.’”
(DHoD)

Additionally, the validation document, once approved, set out the mode of delivery and therefore reified the decision.

Finally, managers/leaders drew on knowledge resources, which were much more evident in the data than material resources. Different aspects of knowledge were used to make the decision:

- Knowledge of the external context for Higher Education (financial drivers)
- Knowledge of validation processes (to follow the process)
- Knowledge of power bases (in the staff body)
- What the students said they wanted (from surveys)

- The background of the students (younger than previously)
- What the staff do best (teaching/facilitating in small groups)

Most of these fall into the category 'knowing what is going on'. In keeping with Hefton's focus on students, knowledge focused on student experience and staff delivery of this. Familiarity with internal and external systems (external drivers and the validation process) however, also conferred authority. The ways in which knowledge resources were used were key in assuring that the decision was deferred to by staff. Firstly, knowledge was underpinned by an understanding of HE as marketised and target driven (that 'what students want' was important and the government drivers mattered). Secondly, those in positional authority had best access to knowledge, partly because they had access to information (such as university finances or student data, that were restricted, but also because were best able to define what knowledge should count (agenda set)).

The management/leadership team used these 'inequalities of access to objectivity' (Blencowe 2013:10) to define which knowledge counted and ensure that their decision was deferred to. Knowledge of the desire for small group teaching was gathered from student survey data and also through the HoD's one to one meetings with staff:

"Um, I learnt where the power bases were, where the problems were, and I learnt where students had been saying for years that they wanted small groups, you know, that they didn't learn effectively. And most of our staff had taught in schools or had taught in colleges, so they're good

at that. It's what they do best. They know how to facilitate group work well." (HoD, Hefton)

The management/leadership team were also able to draw on external expertise of the Periodic Review team:

"When we went through validation um, you know, pro vice chancellors and other academics from other institutions thought it was a great idea."
(DHoD)

Data suggested that staff accepted senior managers/leaders' perspective on the financial importance of student continuation ('They pay our wages you know, we want happy students') and shared the understanding that the nature of the student body had changed recently, with students becoming less capable of dealing with academic work ('Our students are ... fresh out of school and they need a lot of confidence'; (DHoD); [we used to have] 'mature students with no qualification but a lot of confidence' (Lecturer)). Staff and managers/leaders alike complained about poor student engagement but also accepted (in the staff meeting) the university's aim to raise the proportion of 'good degrees' and the importance of the department's DLHE (Destination of Leavers in Higher Education) ratings for employability. There was therefore a shared understanding of external drivers and the consequent 'need' to improve student engagement.

These knowledge resources enabled the decision to be presented authoritatively (by the HoD) at meetings: "I explained why and that 75% of staff were in favour of it." However, this is also another example of the desire to

establish collective consent to decisions as far as possible. The final phase of the process was dealing with staff who disagreed:

“Then there was probably a year of disagreements with the other 25%. With some of them, it was just that any change would have been considered negatively ... For others, they were actually afraid. Some others had never taught in schools or FE colleges You know, they were genuinely anxious about it. So, with those members of staff we helped them with teaching and learning strategies, with innovation sessions.” (HoD)

The HoD created here two categories of staff: those who would have resisted ‘any change’, and those who were ‘genuinely anxious’. An assumption of the value of teaching knowledge is implicit in ‘some had never taught in schools or FE Colleges’. References to disciplinary expertise are absent from the data. In discussing teaching allocations, the HoD made clear the low value that he placed on disciplinary expertise by ‘doing away with niche [specialist] courses’ and ensuring that teaching expertise, rather than subject knowledge, became the focus of staff development in small group teaching. Although staff complained:

“So, again, some of the staff complained bitterly that we made the courses more generic.” (HoD)

ultimately all but two members of staff accepted the decision. It is interesting to note that an intellectual objection to the change is bracketed out by the categorisation: one is either being awkward or afraid. Throughout, managers/leaders remained keen to demonstrate staff support for the decision

to teach in small groups and the erasing of an intellectual objection to the change facilitated this.

6.1.4 Decision making in practice: REF at Rockborough

The decision about which members of staff to enter into REF 2014 at Rockborough followed a similar sequence of activities to that at Hefton (Figure 6-3, operational decision making at Rockborough). The principal driver appeared to be to retain and enhance reputation. 'Maintaining or enhancing reputation' was a recurring code in the Rockborough data but, interestingly, didn't occur in Hefton data, which was in a lower league table position than Rockborough. REF entry was an operational rather than institutional decision, ('It was managed within the unit, not a lot of edicts from on high') but involved making decisions that impacted researchers in other Schools. In the context of REF this meant co-ordinating the Education submission across a large number of departments:

“Our reputation here is built on teaching excellence and a lot of that involves so called pedagogic research which takes place in every faculty.”

This role was delegated to an Associate Head in the School of Education. She created an advisory group (the REF working group, comprising professors and readers in the School) to support her. In most operational decisions managers/leaders drew on a restricted group of relatively senior staff to support them. The REF submission decisions had the potential to be contested, as individual researchers were keen to be entered into REF and the working group sought to exclude submissions which were 'a whole load of one and two-star

stuff' and which could therefore be 'reputation damaging'. As with Hefton, the sequence of actions worked to build support for the decision among staff perhaps indicating desire to seek consent to authority. As with Hefton, unequal access to knowledge resources in conjunction with a shared understanding of the importance of a successful REF submission ('pretty much agreed across the university') ensured deference to decisions about who to include.

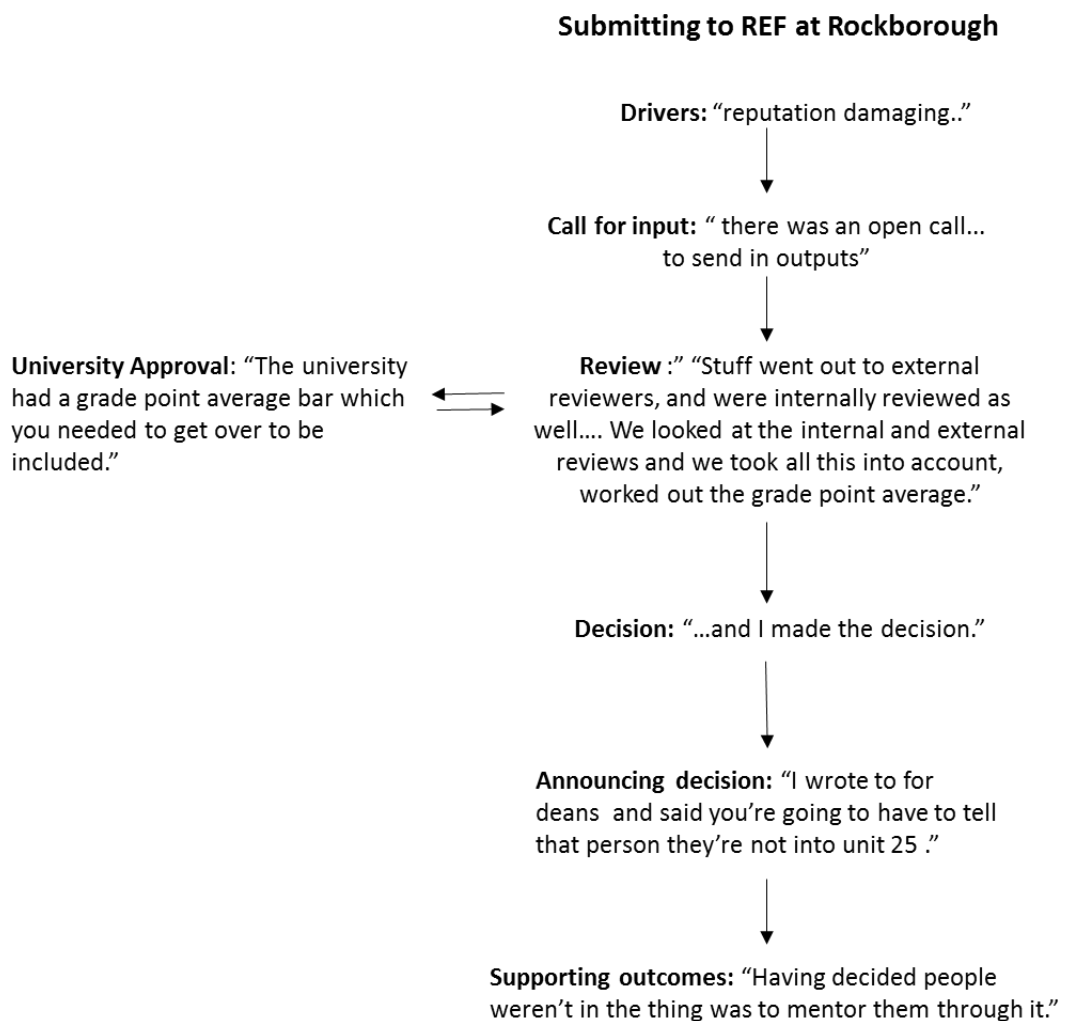


Figure 6-3 Operational Decision Making at Rockborough

6.1.5 Elements in decision making at Rockborough

As at Hefton knowledge and material resources connected with established routines to build the desired consensus. This decision made more use of material resources than the example from Hefton. In constructing the decision, the team invited outputs from academics, and made use of assessments from internal and external reviewers. Established routines, from use of email to communicate with the staff community to the use of a systematised REF submission system (internal and external reviews and a calculated GPA), provided familiar structure. Knowledge of systems appeared in the data as the working group drew on their understanding of the REF process and the University's internal process for developing a submission. Knowledge of the government funding formula was used in decision making as was a classification of research as 'a load of one and two-star stuff'. The advisory group also drew on their disciplinary expertise in relation to educational research and prior professional experience of engaging with REF (RAE).

The process started with an 'open call... right in the early days' for anyone who wanted to be included to send outputs and draft impact studies to the working group. This was followed by a period of review during which the working group drew on material resources (internal and external review documents and 'the funding formula') to work out 'the grade point average'. Their access to this information was privileged: the working group had access to knowledge that other staff did not. This privileged information, coupled with professional experience and understanding of the REF system and positional authority as Education REF lead should have conferred authority to make the decision.

Notwithstanding that, data from the Associate Head's account indicates her ambivalence over who was responsible for the decision and its communication.

Three interpretations of the actual decision are possible:

- The decision was made by the Associate Head ('I made the decision')
- The decision was made by the working group ('We worked together')
- The university 'bar' meant the decision was calculated ('We worked out the GPA')

The Associate Head distanced herself from the decision and responsibility for communicating it to academics outside her own School. She seemed to suggest that while in the School she did have positional authority, this did not extend beyond it:

"It was easy in [the School] because it was a unit that I had authority and, a sort of job description, in. What was difficult was coordinating that [REF strategy] beyond the [School]- the educational work that was coming in."

She distanced herself through reference to the role of material resources (the GPA and external reviews) and by assigning authority other staff: 'the university', internal and external reviewers and perhaps also to the member of staff's own dean ('you're going to have to...'). It seems that the other deans too, were not keen to accept the responsibility, ('and there was a bit of...'). Note also the use of the passive voice ('when decisions were made') to distance herself from the decision.

“I had, um, again this kind of schizophrenia, saying to the others ‘you will *have to* deal with it’. I think when decisions were made about who was in and who was out, for the non-Institute people, I think I wrote to deans and said, ‘you’re *going to have to* tell that person they’re not into unit 25.’ And there was a bit of... But I said ‘sorry, *I don’t have any authority*. I’m just really going on our external review and our own internal judgement.’ Because we had a grade point average bar over which you needed to get in order to be included with instituted that, and that was agreed, pretty much across the University.”

It is an interesting contradiction that she issues a command to the deans (above her in the hierarchy), ‘you will have to deal with it’; ‘you’re going to have to tell...’ on the basis that she doesn’t, ‘have any authority’. Outside her own School, although she has delegated authority to make the decision she is reluctant to give the news.

The rationale for the decision was positioned as resting on knowledge external to the official decision makers: in this case on the expert opinions of internal and external reviewers as well as ‘the university’ for setting a GPA bar. A sense of disciplinary authority has also, presumably, influenced the choices of members of the working group (professors researching education and the Associate Head, herself a professor in educational research). It is interesting, therefore, that the working group seek to draw on external (to the group) disciplinary expertise, rather than relying on their own. What is it that limits their feeling of authority?

Although the decision was clearly not collective, ongoing staff engagement was mainly successful in securing (grudging) agreement: “Most people took it on the nose when they were told, “you know actually this is below the bar””. Commitment to ‘openness’ with staff was again positioned as important: from an ‘open call’ asking for people to submit work to being ‘absolutely open and honest with people’ about the decision.

Finally, in the last stage of the decision making there is a similar phase of support for those who are disappointed: “Having decided people weren’t in the thing was to mentor them through it.” And “you and I need to work together to get your papers from one star to 3 star”.

6.1.6 Summary

Operational decision making at both institutions was routinized. There was a recurring set of actions (‘open calls’ to staff, review of evidence, use of advisory groups, announcement of decisions and support for staff.) and use of formalised processes and systems (such as REF and validation).

Knowledge was significant: access to knowledge and the ability to determine which knowledge counted conferred authority. In both institutions, while ‘knowledge of systems’ and ‘knowing what was going on’ supported the development of a decision, professional expertise in relation to teaching (at Hefton) and research (at Rockborough) were important in securing staff support. The ways that managers/leaders sought consent suggests some uncertainty in the foundations of authority for decision making.

6.2 Overseeing

Unlike 'deciding', 'overseeing' was not a linear process. This category was constructed out of three groups of codes focusing on the different ways in which managers/leaders worked with staff: development and support, compliance monitoring, and reporting to senior managers/leaders: these might be considered sub-practices that nested within the larger practice of overseeing. Codes included: 'making sure', 'auditing' and 'checking' (compliance); 'meeting', 'sitting with' and 'supporting' (development & support) and 'informing', 'telling' and 'reporting' (reporting).

'Auditing', 'reporting', and 'development and support' were interconnected actions that encompassed staff development, checking for compliance and reporting back on outcomes. In so far as it is possible to separate them, the list below illustrates with some examples of each sub-category from the data. 'Overseeing' was, for these participants, a day-to-day practice that did not include more formal performance management. In a memo I comment:

'Overseeing' is quite a personal practice. It is often around 1:1 actions and exchanges – auditing someone's site, sorting some-one's problem, finding some-one cover, saying some-one can work at home. It isn't about formal performance management (though clearly that is an authority practice too) but about informal management – a relationship between one person and another where there is a junior/senior relationship. (Memo 29)

Overseeing was shaped by institutional strategy, policy and processes. University managers/leaders set the policy, strategy and standards (for

example, institutions introduced online systems for marking, teaching and course evaluations) that were then driven forward. Even when staff had reservations they did not often challenge the overall direction overtly. In the staff meeting at Hefton, a deputy head responded to criticism of online course evaluation with 'It came from [DVC] he pushed it forward. It was never quite agreed.' Despite the hint that academic agreement is needed for a decision of this type, no-one challenged further.

Once the agenda was set by senior managers/leaders it was then middle managers/leaders' task to implement it. Implementation involved a combination of staff development, audit and support. Progress was then reported back to senior managers/leaders.

Supporting, encouraging and developing:

- "I was picking up on: 'I'm concerned about ...how's Moodle going to work' ... and so I ... made sure that we put resources in place." (Hefton, deputy head)
- "...sharing really good practice and saying "yes, take that on and pass it on." Rockborough, Associate Head)
- "And they're all very approachable and we've had a big chat about 'presentism', they're all around quite a lot so that people can grab hold of them" (Rockborough HoS on middle managers/leaders)

'Making sure': checking for compliance:

- 'I'll do a quick audit of the Moodle shells and what's going on there.'
(Hefton)

- 'Making sure the policies of the university are adhered to' (Rockborough)
- 'Checking out' that the School Evaluation Document is right (Rockborough)

Keeping management informed

- 'So, I'll report back [to the faculty] and there'll be a discussion' (Hefton DHoD)
- '[Producing] end of year [module] evaluation reports' (Hefton staff meeting)
- 'So, I expect them to have the underground knowledge of things that are happening' (Rockborough senior manager/leader on Associate Heads)

6.2.1 Overseeing in practice at Hefton

At Hefton data suggested that institutional leaders set the agenda and then expected regular updates, while middle managers/leaders checked for compliance and supported staff to develop competence and expertise. The following extracts are from a deputy head's explanation of implementing standardisation of online learning platforms for all modules.

Reporting: "So there's someone who's in charge of teaching and learning in every department in the faculty and it's our job to make sure that, basically what [faculty dean] says happens!....I'll report back and then there'll be a discussion."

Compliance checking: "So ... director- 'Ok, this is what we're going to push for. This is what we need, we need to make sure it's happening."

Someone needs to be auditing this.’ So as part of my role, I have to make sure (some say it’s policing) going round and, you know, ‘oh, this hasn’t been done!’.”

Supporting: “I was picking up on: ‘I’m concerned about ...I’m teaching in a different environment – how’s Moodle going to work, how’s this, how’s that’ And so I took all that into consideration, with management, and made sure that we put resources in place, so for instance we got [technician] in to oversee, ‘don’t worry, look, this is how we’re going to do it.’”

6.2.2 Elements in overseeing at Hefton

Knowledge resources were important. ‘Overseeing’ involved a hierarchical relationship between overseer and overseen. The overseer’s authority was positional (but did not normally involve line management responsibilities). However, they also expected (and were expected) to have an authority based on unequal knowledge and expertise, through good understanding of policy, processes and systems as well as disciplinary practice. A key supporting role involved ‘sharing good practice’ a process which implied a superior practice knowledge, but also conferred the ability to define it: ideas were ‘spotted’ by middle managers/leaders and ‘given’ to staff.

As in the case of decision making, ‘Knowing what was going on’ was a key part of practice at Hefton. Managers/leaders at Hefton gathered information through talking to people, one to one or in regular meetings, and through auditing material resources such as the VLE and survey data. Despite the regularity with

which it happened, data suggested that staff, including managers/leaders, were uncomfortable about this because of its connection with loss of academic autonomy: “some say it’s policing” and “...you had a lot of autonomy, you could do what you wanted, and now there seems to be a lot of standardisation now. Er, which can be quite difficult for some colleagues, which I do understand” and finally “it’s not about micro-managing... overseeing means I like to facilitate in terms of giving ideas and thought processes”. The HoD said of his line manager (the dean), “I’ve found the less she knows the better, to be honest...people will say she micro-manages... but if everything’s going along I’ll tell her about the successes. Everything else I’ll keep to the department. It works better that way.”

Routines were central to the practice of overseeing. The ‘need’ for standardisation seemed accepted by staff, to the extent that they were uncomfortable in the staff meeting when asked to devise their own mid-module forms. Managers/leaders talked about ensuring standards were met and the need to achieve a ‘basic minimum’. Material resources were used to ensure compliance: templates for VLE content, forms for conference or room booking. Online, automated systems caused problems for staff because they were ‘not always that IT literate’. This generated further need for support from managers/leaders and limited staff autonomy.

6.2.3 Overseeing in practice at Rockborough

At Rockborough policy was set by the institution and implemented by middle managers/leaders who saw their job to further delegate leadership of this to others and then support and check. Codes relating to ‘monitoring’ and ‘supporting’ were plentiful, while those for ‘reporting back’ were minimally

present. Rather than a middle manager reporting directly to his/her senior or in formal meetings, at School level this appeared to happen mostly in the more collegiate forum of the School Executive Group.

Monitoring and Supporting

“It’s a bit of a two-way isn’t it? There’s a bit of enforcing, making sure that people are doing what they’re supposed to be doing but at the same time also encouraging people to do things that are innovative and if somebody is doing something that is really good, making sure that that is shared.”

Monitoring: “Programme leaders come to that [the learning and teaching committee], so that’s where they would have been informed that this is a policy. And it’s then their responsibility to be leading that. So, it’s devolving that responsibility to them and I’m there to monitor, to make sure they do it.” (Associate Head)

“...making sure that good, effective learning and teaching is shared amongst the team; that there are shared approaches.” (Associate Head)

Reporting back: “I expect them to have real knowledge of what’s going on in the teams.” (HoS)

6.2.4 Elements in overseeing at Rockborough

The ways in which knowledge resources were shared shaped overseeing at Rockborough. As at Hefton data suggested that middle managers/leaders gained everyday knowledge of things that were happening through monitoring. However, ‘working very closely’ with staff also meant for example, ‘sitting with’

programme leaders while they uploaded the timetable. Although the HoS encouraged 'presentism' she worried that it was 'counter-productive because it leaves people unwilling to do things for themselves'. There was a fine line between monitoring and micro-managing apparently. Despite this, data referenced sharing of knowledge more frequently than at Hefton. Knowledge of policy was cascaded to programme leads so that they could assume 'responsibility to be leading that' and codes also more frequently referenced Associate Heads' roles in 'sharing good practice'.

The sharing of good practice at Rockborough was not only about middle managers/leaders identifying this and passing it on. More so than at Hefton there was evidence of the use of material resources to define good practice – students' 'star awards', external examiners' reports and journal articles. Monitoring also made use of material resources as AHoSs checked the online module resources and reviewed staff reports such as the Initial Teacher Education SED (self-evaluation document).

Routine use of standing committees was an important part of the process of overseeing at Rockborough and these were used to disseminate knowledge. Programme Leaders came to the teaching and learning committee to 'be informed that this is policy'. However, 'there was a concern that they were perhaps not as well informed' as they needed to be because 'not everything goes through the learning and teaching committee'. Consequently, they were also invited to management /leadership team meetings 'about once a month' so that they could understand what they needed to 'be driving forward' on. One to one meetings were also referenced, but not as frequently as at Hefton.

6.2.5 Summary:

Overseeing as a practice occurred at both institutions, made up of similar categories (monitoring, supporting and reporting back) but there were differences in the details of this practice. At Hefton, although staff were uncomfortable with it, there was an emphasis on the importance of 'managers knowing what was going on' resulting in a checking and reporting back culture that 'some say [is] policing' (DHoD). It is noteworthy that the HoD's own published writing on academic management considered resistance (see 'challenging' below for more on this). This background may have influenced the monitoring culture at Hefton. Also evident at Hefton was a hierarchical culture of support for staff in which middle managers/leaders provided resources (training, time, support staff) and identified examples of good practice for sharing.

At Rockborough codes relating to staff responsibility were more evident, with an emphasis on delegation from managers/leaders and on avoidance of micro-management. Developing delegation through attendance at meetings was evidenced but codes for 'standardisation' were absent, although concern to ensure that institutional policy was implemented was evident. Material resources were more likely to support identification of good practice, although this perhaps still masked managers' role in selection of evidence. Once again, comparison with the HoS's published writing is interesting, since her focus is on collaborative leadership. However, when I asked about leadership style, she did not refer to these approaches. Nonetheless the culture at Rockborough is more about communicating in meetings and less about reporting back.

6.3 Challenging

“Challenging” might seem an odd choice for an authority practice. Surely challenging is part of a practice of resistance? The HoD at Hefton seemed to accept resistance as inevitable. His writing too, implied this; suggesting that resistance was driven by the neo-liberal discourse discussed earlier: competition, performativity, surveillance, individualisation and managerialism, and that this would lead to low level resistance that provided a defence against indoctrination into managerial values. I discuss resistance at the end of this chapter under ‘boundaries of authority practice’.

In contrast with an act of resistance, in which authority is rejected, in an act of challenge the authority is accepted, and the challenge made within the confines of that authority. This can be illustrated by reference to a democratic government (Raz 1990). In a democracy, there is a formalised role for challenge: both the challenge to change governments through the electoral system and the challenge that an official opposition party provides within government. In neither case is the challenge a rejection of the democracy: it is a part of the relational practice of authority.

In this section I explore challenge as part of the practice of authority rather than resistance as a rejection of it. Data from both institutions suggested that challenge was part of the practice of authority in academic management/leadership, and that challenge acts were considered differently from acts of resistance by managers/leaders and often endorsed by them. Nonetheless, there is a fuzzy edge between challenge and resistance, as there is between persuasion and authority, both of which I consider in the final section

of this chapter. I first consider the two institutions separately, as the nature of challenge was quite different in each.

6.3.1 Challenge at Rockborough

Challenge at Rockborough occurred at two levels: challenge from programme teams and challenge from the School's senior management/leadership team, with the latter more evident in the data. At both levels challenge was directed against policy or decisions made that were formulated externally to the School: for example, anonymous marking, semesterisation and online supervision record keeping. In each case the challenges were focused. In each case challenges had the support (perhaps tacit) of a middle manager. They sought not to change the policy or decision overall but to seek exceptions to the decision, accepting the overall authority of the decision makers to change policy.

Challenging at Rockborough may have developed from a more formal authority practice there: that of making a business case. Business cases drew on material resources- they had to be written to justify financial commitment – for example in creating a new academic post. This involved expertise: 'the skill of doing so is certainly quite singular, the more you do the better you get' (AHoS). They involved writing: 'two and a half sides of A4' (HoS) of 'solid, solid business case; based on income that is tangible, not aspirational'. Business cases were made 'to the next level up' and then passed up the hierarchy. They 'could fall at any stage, and usually do.'(AHoS). Middle managers/leaders considered business cases rather a waste of time: 'a bit of an obstacle really, imposed by the non-

academic parts of the university' (AHoS), and wanted autonomy: 'it might have been better to let me take a local decision' (HoS). Nonetheless, they complied with the process in order to try to get the outcome they wanted.

The practice of challenging seemed to draw on the routine of making a business case. The challenge was often underpinned by a tangible driver based on professional or pedagogical knowledge: meeting the needs of teachers who were taking research degrees or meeting the needs of schools commissioning CPD, for example. Managers/leaders' or staffs' professional understanding that a decision was wrong for students or partners then led to a request for a meeting that brought together middle and senior managers/leaders (Associate Heads; Programme Leads; registrars, 'the graduate school', faculty dean, PVC). There was the potential 'to go right to the top' to try to get the right decision. Although staff were irritated by the need to 'beg and plead' or 'negotiate' they relied on this practice and objected when lack of structure or resources (for example the absence of a central registrar) limited formal challenge of some decisions. The HoS actively encouraged challenge, telling middle managers/leaders to 'stand up for themselves' saying at one point, 'I've told my colleague to stand his ground'. Knowledge resources: of systems, of disciplinary requirements, of the right people, of university governance structures, therefore underpinned challenge. Material resources drawn on included emails, meetings and reports.

The example in figure 6-4, below, illustrates where 'challenge' sits in relation to other responses to a decision. The university had recently moved from terms to semesters. This was one of a number of simultaneous university initiatives and

required considerable reorganisation by staff in the School. Additionally, the School's engagement with Teacher Education and CPD for teachers did not fit well into the new structure. For the most part, despite concerns and additional workload, staff accepted the requirements (left hand column). The comment, "and it's managing that" typifies the resigned compliance. Adjustment was allowed for within the policy (middle column), and for the PGCE exemptions were granted by 'the university'. Although staff resented the need to apply every year, they complied. The third route (right hand column) outlines the challenge process when staff were told: "no, you can't keep on doing this."

The example in figure 6-4 relates to middle managers/leaders challenging outside the School, but the practice operated internally too. A 'compromise' was negotiated after staff on the Early Years programme met School managers/leaders over anonymous marking, allowing markers to 'unblind' an assignment after it was marked in order to give feedback. The Associate Head commented:

"That idea came from the Early Years studies team who, again, were very much concerned about losing the personal approach, the personal touch. And so that's what we're going to trial this year to see how well that works."

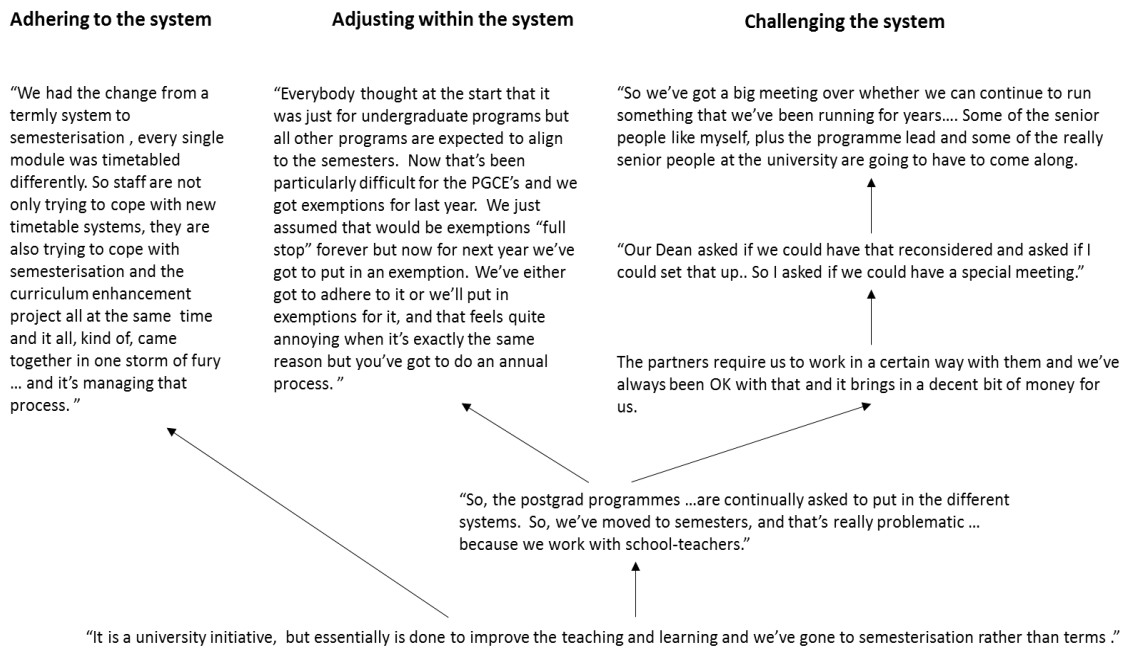


Figure 6-4 Challenging at Rockborough

Note that the language in the challenge is one of deference and not resistance: 'our Dean asked', 'I asked', 'going to have to', and 'whether we can continue'. This is one side (deferring) of authority involving an acceptance of the structures of authority, not a rejection of them.

6.3.2 Elements in challenging at Rockborough

A range of knowledge and material resources and routines were combined in the practice of challenging at Rockborough. For each example evidenced in this data the driver for a challenge was professional or disciplinary expertise: an understanding of teacher education, of the needs of mature students, and of the importance of focused personal feedback. Knowledge of the systems of the institution and knowing the right people enabled an effectively directed challenge. Managers/leaders understood the need to work up the hierarchy and were concerned by a gap (absence of an institutional registrar) that prevented this. The process of challenging drew on other, familiar routines (such as

holding meetings or making a business case). Material resources were scarce in the data – mainly written reports and emails.

6.3.3 Challenge at Hefton

Challenge at Hefton was directed at departmental decisions as well as institutional decisions and policy. Data suggested that managers/leaders actively sought staff feedback on ideas and encouraged the raising of issues but that this was not closely connected with a change process. Challenge at Hefton felt closer to resistance sometimes and more adversarial: the HoD reported saying to staff:

“If I make a decision, you’ll know why. You can challenge me on it openly, I don’t mind” (HoD)

‘Fight’ was a frequent code in Hefton data, as in:

“We decided as a department that we were going to fight through the structures and things. We knew it wasn’t going to be easy, um... so we knew we were up for that challenge but, first and foremost we were basically going to take this to validation.”

“The Head of Department, he will fight the corner, because he’s there in the department he will say it from the staff point of view.”

Open debate was encouraged at staff meetings, but this did not always lead directly to action. One DHoD described how this worked in practice, an account which was supported by my own observations of a staff meeting:

“We [management/leadership team] would go, ‘Right, so based on what you brought up during the year the fundamental issues are this, this and this, therefore next year we are going to do this, this and this.’ So, they don’t necessarily get something back next committee meeting but we kind of collate all the different ideas throughout the year and then at the away-day normally would have a discussion about the kind of things that were brought up in what we are going to do as a result that.”

[HoD] says he is therefore raising the issue and sharing data: ‘What should we do?’ He says he is ‘perfectly open’ to ideas and strategies. The discussion that follows is very unlike the earlier part of the meeting. Initially people raise hands and [HoD] calls them, but people soon just start to talk (interrupting each other). Nine people speak during this debate, four (and the note-taker) are silent. Most speak five or six times, one makes eight contributions. One only speaks twice, but with force. There are lots of interruptions. Eventually [HoD] says, ‘Ok, let’s draw a line. We’ve got some suggestions which [DHoD] has noted.’”
(Observation notes on the staff meeting).

Despite seeking to deflect challenge, managers/leaders showed sympathy with staff concerns about managerialism and top down decision making:

“This idea of consistency can come across as – which I can understand – very bureaucratic now ... Er, which can be quite difficult for some colleagues, which I do understand.”

But, ultimately, managers/leaders aimed to ensure compliance with policy:

“You have to do it. All I can do is help you in getting to that other side and if you can’t work with me to get there then we got a problem.” (DHoD)

Below (figure 6-5) a challenge to ‘timetabling’ to achieve the rooming arrangement required for the new ‘small group’ teaching is analysed. This challenge was supported by managers/leaders and directed at university professional services. A comparison with challenge (figure 6-4) at Rockborough shows an apparently greater willingness to comply with university policy at Hefton than Rockborough (column one), an adjustment that involves providing resources to enable staff to adapt to the systems rather than the other way around, and a more ad hoc approach to challenging policy (use of emails on a room by room basis). It also shows a thinner level of challenge – this was the only example of challenge (as opposed to compliance or adjustment) in the data.

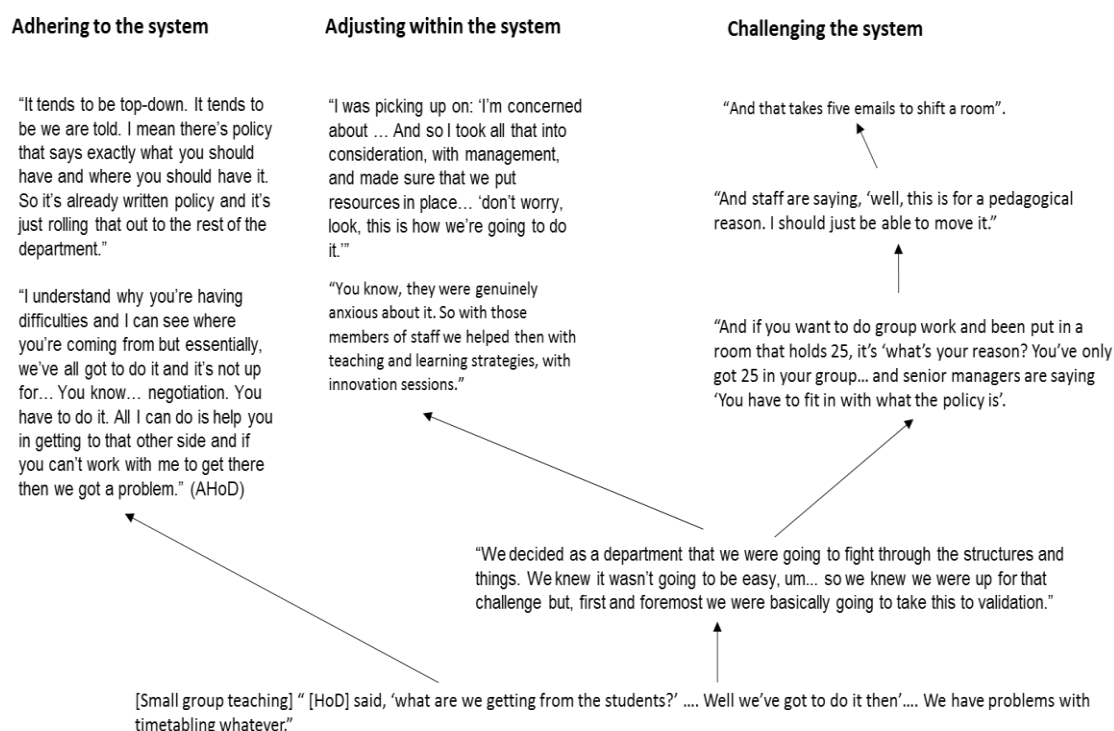


Figure 6-5 Challenging at Hefton

6.3.4 Elements in challenging at Hefton

As at Rockborough challenge was supported by managers/leaders in the unit and driven by professional expertise (pedagogical reasons). This aligns with the HoD's privileging of teaching expertise over disciplinary expertise (PhDs) as well as with his published writing, which suggested that lecturers often resisted to defend students and pedagogy.

Clearly, knowledge of systems (in this case room booking) is also drawn on. Routines and materials seem pitted against each other as staff 'fight through structures and things'. On the one side agreed institutional policy operationalised through the timetable system and on the other a decision to teach in small groups, reified in the validation document. The battleground is the familiar routine of emails.

6.3.5 Summary

Challenging was an action of last resort: the first approach was to adhere to a system, then to seek exceptions within the system, and finally to challenge only when practice in the school/dept. could not be accommodated within the system. The practice of challenging within these two units of education draws on familiar elements of knowledge, materials, and routines within an attitude of overall acceptance of decisions and systems. Drivers that are based on disciplinary or professional expertise gained support for challenge from middle managers/leaders and one reading is of challenge to bureaucratic authority from authority based on professional, pedagogical or disciplinary expertise. At Hefton challenge was less common than at Rockborough and staff at Hefton were more likely to be encouraged by managers/leaders to adhere to, or adjust within, the system.

6.4 The boundaries of authority at Rockborough and Hefton

Before concluding, I want to touch briefly on the limits of authority. In addition to developing focused codes suggesting assertion of, or deference to, authority – particularly deciding, overseeing and challenging, I also looked at codes which suggested the absence of authority: resistance, persuasion and compulsion.

Coercion appeared in the data at Hefton but not at Rockborough. Related codes were 'line managing' and 'performance managing' and referred, in the former instance to the ability to tell staff what they must do and in the latter to discipline staff who behaved in ways they 'shouldn't have done'. Examples included:

“The difficulties program leaders have is that they are involved in managing the programme, but they don’t have any line management responsibility of staff. So, staff won’t do things.” (DHoD)

“I’ve had to use performance management a few times and again, that was something that was new to this department. [I said] ‘If a student comes to me and says you’ve done something you shouldn’t have done I will call you on it, and you will be challenged on it.’ Depending on what it is whether we start performance management or not.” (HoD)

Resistance, in the sense of non-deference to authority, clearly marks a boundary where authority in an organisation breaks down. In this study, rather than loss of authority, data suggest this may sometimes be conflict between different sources of authority – for example disciplinary and bureaucratic expertise. Additionally, many of the acts of dissent in the data, for example grumbling and jokes about policies, decisions and decision-makers seemed merely to distance the speaker from the policy or decision without seeking to change anything. Like challenges within the system this ultimately reinforced, rather than dismantled, authority structures in the units by reinforcing the authority of managers/leaders to implement decisions which were disliked. Contu (2008) suggests that such micro-political acts of resistance are in fact one way in which organisational power is self-sustaining. She writes:

“These transgressive acts that we call “resistance” are akin to a decaf resistance, which changes very little.”

There were however, two acts of resistance (one in each institution) where staff clearly expressed their intention not to do as they were expected and appeared intent on carrying this through. These acts, and managers/leaders' responses to them, seemed to me to mark out some boundaries of academic authority and are interesting for that reason.

We do have some, again there are some, who say, "nope. Not doing it at all!" (Rockborough, anonymous marking)

"Some staff refused to teach on the modules at all." (Hefton, small group teaching)

Managers/leaders' responses were interesting. In both cases the initial appeal was to hierarchical authority:

"This is the policy, we have to follow it. We have no choice" (Rockborough);

"Essentially, we've all got to do it and it's not up for, you know, negotiation." (Hefton)

When this failed managers/leaders at both institutions resorted to persuasion, but in rather different ways. At Rockborough there were second and third appeals to authority: firstly, the student voice, ("Actually, this comes from the students themselves.", "... clearly developed by students for students.") and secondly to managers/leaders' personal professional authority, "Talking it through from personal experience, saying it did work, it is so much easier."

When one programme leader still expressed dissent managers/leaders tried to understand staffs' professional concerns:

“So, I need to go back and talk to that programme leader and find out what was the difficulty and why they are concerned about it... And so there's more discussion to be had. And I don't know the answer to that yet.”

Is this persuasion or negotiation? When appeal to straightforward positional authority fails the debate is between the primacy of students' opinion versus professional expertise.

At Hefton the debate, and the outcome, was rather different. Managers/leaders' first approach was to listen:

“My strategy is, is to listen, hear what they got to say, try and understand where they're coming from, see if you can put anything in place to help them.”

Resistance was first understood as a need for support and resources, training sessions and idea-sharing sessions were arranged. However, when two members of staff still resisted small group teaching they were given alternative courses.

“Yes, so we had to make a decision as to whether we should just say 'fine' and move them to other courses in the interests of the students. So, only one, only two members of staff outright refused and actually, they're probably the members of staff we wanted off year one in the first place.... So, in a way it was in our interests they were allowed to do that.

But it's been quite interesting in the way that that's been seen by other members of staff. That some people have been allowed to say, "I don't want to do that." And get away with it while others haven't. That's been tricky to manage."

It is interesting that this challenge to managers/leaders' authority was successful since managers/leaders' language was more directive at Hefton than at Rockborough. Although managers/leaders rationalised the outcome ('we wanted [them] off the course... it was in our interests') they did not seem to attempt to understand staff motivation, perhaps because the HoD was so unsympathetic towards disciplinary expertise. Managers/leaders recognised that this successful resistance had attracted the attention of other staff and the way it was described by one DHoD ('the way that's been seen.... allowed to...get away with it') suggested that it was seen as a breakdown in authority by managers/leaders and staff. It would be interesting to investigate the impact of this failure on authority going forward.

Resistance and persuasion mark the boundaries of authority at Hefton and Rockborough. While 'decaf' resistance (Contu 2008) such as grumbling and jokes was not uncommon, such acts did not reject the authority of managers/leaders but took place within an acceptance of the overall system. Genuine acts of resistance, where staff refused to comply with directions were rare. When direct appeals to positional and bureaucratic authority failed managers/leaders resorted to persuasion: at Hefton by offering support and resources and Rockborough by seeking to understand objections. Coercion was not apparent at either institution, although managers/leaders at Hefton

used the language of coercion they capitulated when faced with outright refusal. One way of understanding resistance is of the rejection of one foundation of authority and adherence to another, and data here could suggest that staff rejected bureaucratic authority in favour of authority based of professional expertise.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored three practices of authority in higher education academic management/leadership; two dominant in the data and one at the margins of authority. These practices can be considered to be formed from a conjunction of elements; particular kinds of knowledge and material resources and routinized actions. These practices are both routinized themselves, drawing on similar elements in ways familiar to practitioners, and also embed other more generic routines within them: ways of meeting, emailing, making a case or engaging with systems.

The authority in these practices however, is not straightforward. Bureaucratic and professional expertise authorities conflict, and academic managers/leaders express reluctance to assume authority at times, drawing on processes, resources or on staff or student opinions to justify action. In all three practices the efforts of managers/leaders to gain staff support for their actions seem to exemplify this reluctance.

7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

At this point it is time to draw some threads in the research together. My research questions asked about the nature of practices of authority in higher education management/leadership and the ways in which these could be constructed through specific elements. They asked how authority could be conceptualised in academic leadership/management and what the implications for academic management/leadership in Higher Education might be. Finally, they asked about the value of using social practice theory as a lens for data analysis. In this chapter I begin to answer these questions.

Using a social practice theory framework to analyse my data showed the multiple ways in which materials, routines and, especially, knowledge shaped authority in the two HE Education settings. This supports Woods' (2016) contention that authority is social, multi-layered and changeable. It also supports Blencowe's (2013) contention that knowledge is central to the practice of authority. However, the data suggest a wider range of sources of knowledge than those often considered in studies of authority. Disciplinary and practice expertise and 'everyday' knowledge of workplace practice and politics were key elements of authority practices in academic leadership/management in these two settings.

Inequalities of access shaped the ways in which these elements were used. Blencowe (2013:15) states:

"Authoritative relationships derive from inequalities of knowledge."

While inequalities of knowledge were evident, my findings suggest that it is inequalities of access to resources more generally: to physical spaces, documents, computerised systems, and people as well as knowledge, from which authorities derive. Some of these material resources are gatekeepers to knowledge, but others block authority in more practical ways.

A Social Practice Theory framework enabled me to construct specific practices from the data: three, deciding, challenging and overseeing are considered in this thesis. These practices drew on material and knowledge resources in routinized ways. Hui et al. (2017) consider the inter-connectedness of practices. My findings support this inter-connectedness, in particular the 'nested' nature of practices. In these two settings a range of practices formed a kind of 'tool-kit' from which authority practices could be constructed. Practitioners incorporated a number of other practices within the authority practices of deciding, challenging and overseeing. These practices were sometimes authority practices (such as auditing) but were often generic practices (such as emailing). The already regularised nature of these practices provided solidity to the practice of which they were now a part.

Of course, these practices do not take place in a vacuum. Authority in academic management/leadership is practiced in a higher education system containing competing strands of collegiality, academic autonomy and managerialism. Academic middle managers/leaders are connected to both a managerial structure and to the different cultures of their departments (Smith 2002, Milburn 2010, Trowler et al. 2012). Practices constructed from the data utilise material and knowledge resources and routines from both collegiate and managerial

cultures. Coding pointed to three ideas: that, in these settings, the discourse of managerialism dominates; that, notwithstanding this, practitioners draw, in practice, on aspects of collegiality to establish authority, and that academic autonomy is largely absent from practice and discourse, except in the past tense.

One consequence of the idea of authority as contested, constructed, social and changeable is that academic authority has to be established: simply having delegated positional authority is not enough: for authority to be granted by colleagues, work must be done. In establishing authority, practitioners in these two settings drew on knowledge and material resources from cultures of managerialism and collegiality as well as on familiar routines in a 'toolkit' of routinized practices. Unequal access to knowledge and material resources was important in establishing authority relations in practice. In the remainder of this chapter I consider each of the ideas in this introduction in more depth.

7.2 Knowledge as an element in the practice of authority

'Knowledge' is considered in two ways in this study, as a source of authority and as an element of practice. This dual presence suggests the importance of knowledge to the practice of authority. Use of knowledge resources in accounts of practice is often complex, including skills (practical understanding, know-how) and tacit knowledge (a feel for the game) as well as declarative knowledge. Reckwitz (2002) lists multiple strands of knowledge, including background knowledge, know how, states of emotion, motivational knowledge and practical understanding. Furedi (2013) highlights the role of tacit knowledge (Polyani 2009) in supporting political decision making. Welch and Warde (2017)

focus on Schatzki's (2001) general understandings as well as practical understanding (components of specific practices), arguing that the former concept could be helpful in addressing wider cultural understandings in practice theory.

However, despite this complexity, categories of 'knowledge' are sometimes simplified in the literature. For example, Shove et al, (2015) because they are seeking to understand the links between and movements of practices:

“...lump multiple forms of understanding and practical knowledgeability together and simply refer to them as 'competence' our second element.”

(Shove et al. 2015:23)

Gherardi (2016) in addressing the question of how it is possible for practices, which have knowledge as a central platform, to also be creators of knowledge, does not unpack elements of knowledge at all. Typologies of authority may also simplify: identifying only professional (technical-rational) scientific/technical expertise and 'lived experience' (Weber 2004, Woods 2004).

The findings in this study suggest practitioners use knowledge/expertise in complex ways to establish authority. Multiple knowledge resources in the findings include:

- Claiming professional practice and disciplinary expertise: current practice in common with team as well as using professional and disciplinary expertise.

- Having knowledge and skills to deal with systems and processes: understanding systems, structures and processes as well as having technical skills.
- Knowing what is going on: knowing the data, knowing what staff and students think and understanding internal politics.

Knowledge was used by practitioners both as a tool that enabled successful completion of actions (for instance knowledge of student perception data coupled with understanding of the significance of this supported practical decision making) and as a means through which to establish authority based on inequalities of access to this knowledge (for instance managers/leaders, but not staff, had early access to all student perception data).

Understanding of these elements of knowledge supports understanding of how tributary authorities may combine or contradict in practice. It is possible to see some alignment between typologies of authority and these categories: having knowledge and skills to deal with systems and processes, for example, matches use of technical-rational authority, and 'using professional and disciplinary expertise' is captured by Woods' (2016:58) 'professional expertise' if the focus is technical-rational knowledge. After that it gets harder.

When participants talked about professional, practice or disciplinary knowledge it was usually in relation to past or present practice. This might be categorised as either lived experience or professional expertise – probably it was both, but this professional expertise was not technical-rational, bureaucratic knowledge. Recent or current experiences in higher education practice, or of a particular

profession (school, FE or early years) authorised managers/leaders to engage professionally with staff on an equal footing ('module leader to module leader'). When a DHoD at Hefton said, "How can you possibly talk about learning and teaching if you're not actually teaching?" she was expressing a sentiment reflected many times in the data: the need for managers/leaders to be able to match staffs' professional expertise, whether that related to their discipline or to their day to day work. The desire to establish aspects of an equal relationship as a way of simultaneously establishing authority has been found by others. Huising (2013) found that technicians' attempts to gain authority by understanding academics' disciplinary expertise was ineffective. The frequency with which this strategy was used by middle managers/leaders at Hefton and Rockborough may highlight the value of a shared professional background.

A further complexity was that there were multiple bodies of professional and practice knowledge: for example, teaching (in school, FE or Early Years), educational research or bureaucratic knowledge. These different bodies of professional knowledge could, and did conflict, indicating problematic nature of treating professional knowledge as a single entity. The ways in which managers/leaders did or did not validate bodies of knowledge authorised some staffs' expertise over others: an instantiation of the creation of unequal knowledge. . It was not uncommon for 'pedagogical reasons' and 'management perspectives' to conflict: when they did middle managers/leaders normally supported pedagogical knowledge and sometimes authorised challenges in support of pedagogy.

While most knowledge conflicts were across a central unit/departmental divide, conflicts also occurred within the department/school. The clearest example of this was the way in which the HoD at Hefton privileged prior teaching experience over an academic route into HE. In doing so, his opinion (not a matter of truth of course) gave authority to his own experience (in teaching) and also validated the experience of one group of staff at the expense of others.

The question of the direction of the relationship between authority and knowledge is an interesting one. Blencowe writes:

“Authoritative relationships derive from inequalities of knowledge. Authoritative statements provide guidance, judgement or witness from the position of ‘knowing better’.... The force of authority has, then, something to do with the structures and the force of knowledge. But it is clear that the force of authority is not the same as the force of truth itself. To be impelled by authority is not the same as being compelled by reason.... A statement might remain authoritative despite being untruthful, depending upon who declared it and in what circumstance, so authority cannot be the same as truth. Moreover, authoritative statements can refer to matters of opinion, not only of veracity. (Blencowe 2013:15) (My emphasis)

On the face of it the first underlined fragment stands in contradiction to the latter: on the one hand authority is derived from unequal knowledge, on the other the inequality of knowledge is created by the authority of the person who uttered it. In practice these can be true simultaneously as practices both shape, and are shaped by, the actions carried out by practitioners (Hui 2017). In the example

above the inequality of disciplinary and teaching expertise was created by the positional authority of the HoD (his place in the bureaucracy) and the values he placed on the two bodies of knowledge, but the authority of those staff with teaching expertise derives from the created inequality between pedagogical and disciplinary expertise.

Another complexity related to the category 'Knowing what is going on' which reflected participants' sense of the need to 'keep on top of things'. This was shared by senior managers/leaders who expected middle managers/leaders to be able to report back. This was partly about performativity and monitoring compliance but also about understanding in order to enhance interaction and support. Strands included internal or external drivers (knowledge of internal and external politics, government or sector news, internal and external reports, surveys and other data); staff and student views (based on formal and informal feedback) and everyday practice (including compliance with processes and 'good practice'). It aligned well with Giddens' (1984) category of practical intelligibility.

My findings suggest that 'knowing what was going on' conferred authority in three ways: in a culture of performativity it enabled managers/leaders to intervene if they foresaw problems and also conveyed a sense that managers/leaders knew if staff were 'non-compliant'; it enabled managers/leaders to build supportive relationships with staff; and it enabled early understanding of highly valued knowledge (such as student survey data) which allowed managers/leaders to 'know better' than staff. Huising's work (2015) supports the contention that this kind of everyday knowledge is valuable

in establishing authority: in her study a second set of technicians' frequent presence in labs enabled them to build positive relationships with academics as well as to identify and correct health and safety contraventions. Technicians' presence in labs enabled this knowledge to develop which established authority. Effective acquisition of everyday knowledge at Hefton and Rockborough mostly required staff to be present on campus. This was recognised and promoted by senior managers/leaders: the HoS at Rockborough commented 'We've had a big chat about presentism'.

The use of a social practice theory lens, with its focus on knowledge as one element in the practice of authority enabled a finer grained analysis than is usually the case. It revealed layers of complexity and contestation in knowledge that are not normally apparent.

7.3 Inequalities of access to resources

The foregoing section suggests that Blencowe (2013) was right, at least in part, to assert that authority derives from inequalities of knowledge. The actions of managers/leaders in privileging some knowledge over others, for instance in 'identifying good practice', structured inequalities into what knowledge counted and this granted more authority to some.

However, my findings suggest that it was not only access to knowledge resources that shaped authority relations, but access to material resources too. Routinized actions in the two settings were given shape and meaning through use of resources – whether knowledge or material.

It might be argued that this is to mistake the role of material resources; that they are simply a tool which gives access to knowledge resources. Certainly, this angle was evident in data. One of my codes for the following extract was 'experiencing loss of knowledge':

"I don't automatically sit on university level committees and have a say and a knowledge of what's going on at a higher level. It's much more, erm, how can I say it, it's much more... I feel less... central to the work of the University as an associate head than I did as an associate dean."

This loss of knowledge had arisen from a restructuring which included altering committee membership, excluding the Associate Head. So, in this case, access to the committee, a structured combination of resources (physical space, documents) and people, supported 'knowing what is going on'. Conversely to the example above, school level committees at Rockborough were expanded (on occasions) to include programme leaders because "... there was concern that the programme leaders were perhaps not as informed about what was happening." Lumby (2015:18) found that senior managers saw formal organisational structures as a source of power, and recognised the potential for restructures to change power differentials. Other access conferred control too: student survey data went first to the HoD at Hefton which meant that he was able to control both what was seen, and how it was seen. All these activities are instantiations of the ways that access to material resources shaped authority relations through control of knowledge.

However, access to material resources shaped authority in ways that were not knowledge based too. Required use of online systems, ways of accessing

physical space or permissions around travelling/working off campus were all exercises of organisational authority which did not create knowledge inequalities.

One significant instance of this was the practice of 'signing off' or 'authorising' which was often connected to compliance monitoring as part of the practice of overseeing. Lukes' (2005) definition of power includes the structured behaviour of groups so that bias is in-built to the organisational structure and 'authorising' was an instance of this. Signing off/authorising was part of (often online) university processes and systems and was delegated to middle managers/leaders or central administrative staff. There were many examples: room bookings, timetables, credit card transactions, working from home, conference bookings and Moodle shells all had to be checked and approved.

Raz (1990:2) outlines 'at least' three uses of authority: to have permission to do something which is generally prohibited; to have the right to grant such permissions, and to be an expert who can vouch for the reliability of information. While the last of these is clearly dependent on access to expertise or knowledge of some kind, the former two are not (at least not necessarily so). Authorising seemed to me to be of the second type. All the activities needing approval were restricted in some way (for example only module leaders could create timetables). Access to material resources controlled staffs' scope for action: the email that was not responded to, or the access to an online platform that was denied all restricted ability to get the job done and caused frustration ('it takes five emails to shift a room') but did not control access to knowledge.

Ability to control access to material resources signalled authority – the HoD at Hefton moved people out of the staff common room by saying “You can stay for the time being”, and exercise of authorising power by central administrative staff was a source of considerable frustration to middle managers/leaders since it put administrators (who were ‘miles junior’ to academics) in a position of authority over them and restricted action. Even the HoD at Hefton was unable to book a room for a staff meeting. Difficulties over signing off were often cast by middle managers/leaders as pitting the system against the needs of the school or department.

One objection to shifting the basis of authority relations away from unequal knowledge and towards unequal access might be to argue, as Blencowe (2013:15) does, that the idea of legitimated power rests on the notion of being authoritative - of ‘knowing better’. But while the idea of being an authority (Friedman 1990) does, I would agree, entail unequal knowledge and is, furthermore, clearly significant in defining authority, so too is the concept of being ‘in authority’. Middle managers/leaders in universities are in positional authority by virtue of infrastructure resources (Shove 2017) in the form of the governance structures of the university. Being ‘in authority’ moreover, does not entail unequal knowledge: as Furedi (2013:70) points out, democratic authority and popular sovereignty entail that citizens defer to the system, rather than to expert knowledge which, in a democracy, is contested. I contend therefore that, while knowledge is a very significant force, it is inequality of access to resources generally (including knowledge resources) rather than specifically inequality of access to knowledge, from which authority relationships derive.

7.4 A 'toolkit' of practices

Practices are interconnected. Connected practices have been described as:

“...bundles, complexes, constellations and systems...” (Blue and Spurling 2017:25)

They overlap and merge, one into another, linked by elements (Shove et al. 2012). My findings suggest that practices are embedded within each other as well as linked by elements. Hui et al (2017:4) adopt the concept of ‘threading through’ to:

“...capture the idea that things, for instance, an object or a practice, can move or advance through the nexus of practices, thereby linking the practices through which they pass, or to which they are connected.” (Hui et al. 2017:4)

It follows from the idea of one practice passing through another that one practice can be embedded within another. In this section I explore this idea in relation to my findings.

Schatzki (1996:91) distinguishes integrated practices, situated in a context which draws on specific material resources (like football) from dispersed practices (like ordering) which are not tied to specific contexts. I have argued that authority is a dispersed practice. Clearly a dispersed practice may form part of an integrated practice, for instance, one can issue an order in a football game. Can an integrated practice also form part of a dispersed practice? Again, yes: ‘giving’ is, after all, an integral part of attending a birthday party.

In my study the three practices focused on interconnected with other practices in a number of ways. First, it is important to note that the labels 'deciding', 'overseeing' and 'challenging' refer to specific practices within the overall practice of authority in the two settings. While it seems not unlikely that these practices may exist as entities as well as performances (Shove et al.2013) so that other universities may practice similar authority in similar ways, context will shape the ways in which these are practiced – and these practices moreover, are to a degree arbitrary, drawn by analytic boundaries decided by me in this study. Further, one must be wary of extrapolating. For example, 'deciding' happens in nnumerable ways, many of them completely unconnected to authority. This practice is just one way of practising 'deciding'. *These* labels apply only to *these* specific practices in *these* contexts.

However, if we do focus on these authority practices, what the findings suggest is that other practices, some generic and some authority focused, form part of each.

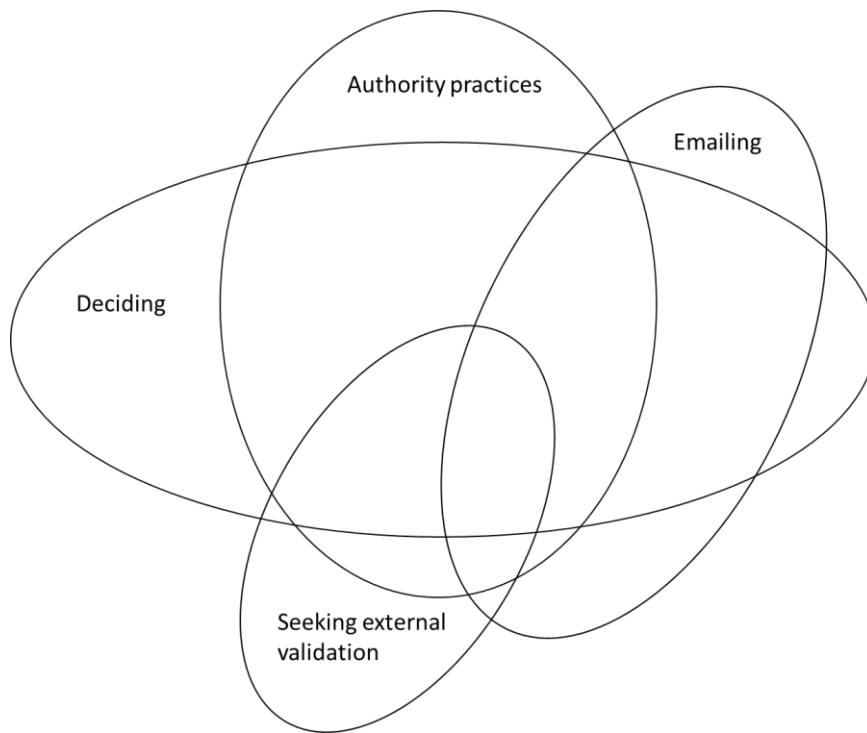


Figure 7-1 Deciding at Rockborough

Figure 7-1 illustrates these inter-connections through an example. While ‘deciding’ as an authority practice in higher education academic management/leadership is only one small practice alongside many other practices of deciding (such as deciding what to wear, deciding whether to take an umbrella and so on), some of which may be connected to authority and some not, it is also constructed, in part, from other practices, which again may, or may not, be authority practices. At Rockborough, as at Hefton, deciding was one of a number of authority practices. Seeking external validation (from external reviewers, senior university managers/leaders external to the unit, OFSTED etc.) as well as emailing were routinized actions that formed part of the nexus of practices at the institutions and in the two settings. They were used for many reasons aside from decision making. However, in the School of Education at Rockborough, both of these practices formed part of the practice of deciding,

while in the Department of Education at Hefton, where the culture was to prefer face to face conversations to emails, emailing did not appear in the data as a routinized part of deciding. This illustrates the contextualised nature of practices. Using a familiar practice seemed to support the process of establishing authority. This model is illustrative of a complex, overlapping and connected nexus of practices. As these practices overlap and interconnect, not only the resources, but also objects (Hui 2017) such as emails, are threaded through from practice to practice.

Now it might be objected that, inevitably, some practices are utilised to construct another, but there is nothing particularly noteworthy about this. I would argue that this is to ignore the meanings that attach to practices. Shove et al. (2012:25-29) illustrate this with reference to car driving. They point out that car driving was initially constructed from carriage-driving, which involved dirty mechanical repair work, traditionally a male preserve. As cars were initially unreliable these mechanical repair practices transferred to car driving, along with the gendered nature of the practice, traces of which survive to this day. In 'challenging' at Rockborough we can see how meaning transferred with an imported practice. 'Making a business case' was a managerial activity commonly undertaken by middle managers/leaders in order to gain authorisation for a needed resource from central senior managers/leaders and administrators ("everything has to be a business case with a financial stream attached to it that you can justify"). When middle managers/leaders wanted to challenge a university decision that went against the interests (in their view) of the School - a challenge which drew on pedagogical/disciplinary knowledge and understanding and rejected managerialism – they used the managerial practice of making a business case.

It had the advantage of being a familiar practice that was part of the governance structure of the university, and therefore not part of a discourse of resistance.

Establishing authority, it seems, in addition to requiring unequal access to material and knowledge resources, also utilises other practices, to lend familiarity and signal compliance with the rules of the game.

7.5 Collegiality, autonomy and managerialism

“Social authority emerges from and shapes the kind and degree of coordination actors within the organization achieve in their practice and decision-making.” (Woods 2016:156)

An understanding of authority as the product of co-ordination and interactions of practice reinforces the contextualised nature of the practice of authority. In this section I turn again to consideration of the university context.

Silver (2003:167) suggests that it makes no sense to talk about a single university culture because lack of ‘shared norms, values and assumptions’ leads to ‘a system of subcultures in perpetual, erratic and damaging tensions’. This is reminiscent of Arendt’s (1961) assertion that authority is no longer relevant because of a lack of shared traditional values. Lack of agreed authorities to which we defer may bring chaos (Furedi 2013). Woods (2016) is more sanguine. In his view multiple authorities, while contested and changing, can shape and co-ordinate practices.

UK higher education is in a time of flux at the start of the 21st century. I have considered three parallel cultures; new managerialism (Deem et al. 2007);

collegiality (Molesworth et al. 2009, Ball 2012a, 2012b, Tight 2014) and academic freedom or autonomy (Clegg 2010) that may operate in higher education in the UK today. Clegg and McAuley (2005) with Milburn (2010) highlight the ways in which academic middle leaders/managers in particular may find themselves operating at the junction where managerialism meets collegiality, and this is the focus of this section.

At Rockborough and Hefton, managers/leaders' collegiate approaches might be considered anti-authoritarian, opposed to managerialism and drawing on persuasion, through consultation and the sharing of disciplinary and practice expertise, in a way that convinces autonomous academics, through reason, to agree a course of action. This is in line with the view that authority is incompatible with persuasion (Arendt 1961, Raz 1990). However, there is a lack of evidence for such autonomy in practice in my findings; autonomy was only present in coding through references which indicated its loss, for example:

“In academia it's very much a world where you've got... well, you had a lot of autonomy, you could do what you wanted, and now there seems to be a lot of standardisation.”

“There is kind of fight between autonomy and pedagogy and having ideas about your own course and how you put things forward.”

Collegiality may therefore be better linked with forms of democratic leadership (Woods 2016). Managers/leaders' decision-making practices that incorporated consultation, widened committee membership and references to the percentage of staff that support a decision seem more aligned with collegiality than autonomy.

‘... we had a collaborative effort at refining it [School policy] so that everybody bought into it...’, ‘One person wrote the module document in consultation with the others.... And emailed it round so that people could say, ‘oh no, I don’t agree!’...’

In an autonomous system, practitioners retain control over their own decisions (Jarvis 2012), while in a collegiate or managerial system the power to decide is, in principle, relinquished to others. This suggests that managerialism and collegiality sit within an authoritative system while autonomy sits outside it.

Alongside examples of collegiate practice was the language of new managerialism, captured in references to market drivers, performativity and surveillance, for example:

Market drivers: ‘We want happy students, you know, they pay our wages.’; ‘The OFSTED steering group came off the back of a failed inspection’; ‘If you submit [to REF] a whole load of one and two staff stuff we’re not going to get money’.

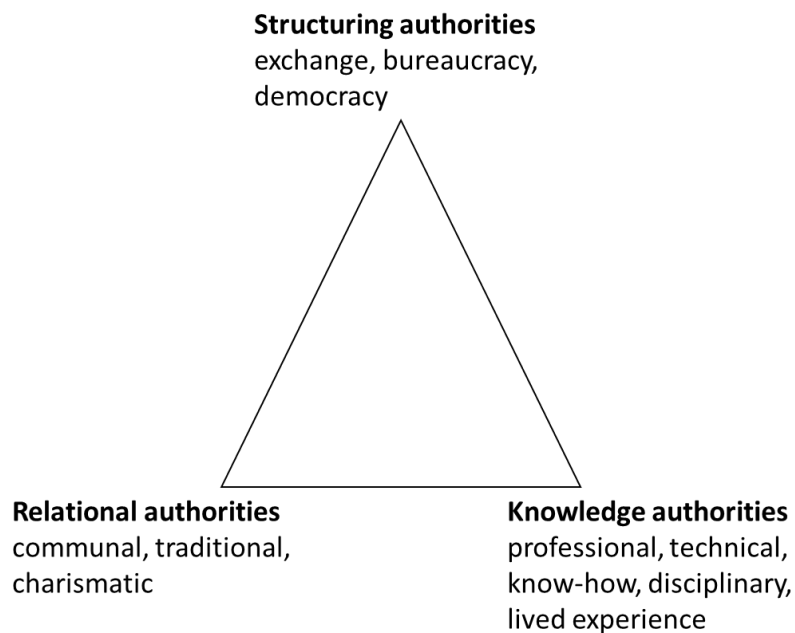
Performativity and surveillance: ‘...obviously there is a university rule book and... the book gets opened and checked.’; ‘Part of my job is I get to audit’, ‘Suddenly that’s not OK and you’re non-compliant!’

The presence of these two strands supports Tight’s (2014:302) suggestion that, in practice, collegialism and managerialism may blend. Authority in higher education academic management/leadership in the two settings in this study seems to be established through both collegiality and managerialism.

My findings support those of others (Milburn 2010, Burnes et al. 2014) in suggesting that, while the discourse of managerialism is evident, in practice middle managers/leaders also draw extensively on collegiality. Even though my participants held a position of authority in the management/leadership structure of their university they needed to find additional ways for their authority to be accepted by colleagues. These additional ways were as often collegial and managerial. However, in attempting to negotiate their way between collegiality and managerialism, practitioners drew on multiple authorities in ways that were, arguably contradictory. The next section explores this idea.

7.6 Establishing authority in academic management/leadership

Viewing middle managers/leaders' authority through the model constructed from examples of leadership and management practice (figure 4-1) offers a way of viewing the combination of strands of authority drawn on by practitioners, as well as highlighting potential contradictions between practices.



(Figure 4-1 triad of authorities)

Findings suggest that, at Rockborough and Hefton, authority was established based on three different sources: the position of a practitioner within the organisation, a range of knowledge resources, and staff relationships. These can be seen as located on the three points of the triangle. Positional authority was structural (the apex of the triangle). It was rooted in the organisational infrastructure and in delegated responsibilities within structures and, in both these settings, was managerial, speaking the language of exchange and bureaucracy.

Shove (2017) distinguishes three types of material resources: (things): things relating to infrastructure; things which are mobilized in a practice (devices): and things which are used up (resources). She says:

“Some things are necessary for the conduct of a practice but are not engaged with directly. I suggest these have an infrastructural relation to practice.” (2017:155).

University governance structures and regulations performed this role in authority practices. In ‘overseeing’ for instance, it was positional authority that enabled middle managers/leaders to audit for compliance or define good practice. When there was a failure of this structure (for example the absence of a senior registrar at Rockborough) managers/leaders subject to the authority were more likely to challenge decisions. Unless there was a structural failure however, infrastructure resources were largely unremarked by practitioners. University structures were both heavily systematized (bureaucracy) and underpinned by the language of exchange (student recruitment, income generation etc.). Elements of democratic decision making were not formalized in university structures, but based on local management/leadership decisions: for instance, to widen the management/leadership team meetings to include programme leaders at Rockborough, or to use staff meetings to gauge opinions at Hefton.

Knowledge based authority (another angle of the triangle) has already been extensively discussed in this thesis and I shall not repeat that discussion here. What is noticeable, however, is that managers/leaders drew on general understandings (Schatzki 2001) of managerialism and collegiality. Professional knowledge in the technical-rational sense (Woods 2016), knowledge of systems, processes and regulations, enabled middle managers/leaders to ‘know better’ (Blencowe 2013) than other staff. The ‘general understanding’ of

managerialism shared by staff meant that this knowledge then conferred authority. Disciplinary expertise and recent or current practice knowledge resources were used by managers/leaders to enable them to meet staff as equals ('module leader to module leader') and to establish them as 'an authority' as well as 'in authority' (Raz 1990). These, therefore, drew on a general understanding that was based in collegiality.

The third angle of the triangle I have termed 'relational' authorities. These capture the ways in which relationships between practitioners establish authority: through community, tradition or charismatic leadership. Actions that might develop these were threaded through the practices: in overseeing when a Deputy Head at Hefton asked staff to 'put it up there for me' during an audit process, or 'presentism' at Rockborough as an Associate Head sat with Programme Leaders to upload the timetable; or the ways that more senior managers/leaders' support for staff challenges enabled them to be seen as staff champions. A sense of community was developed through discourse which separated the department/school from 'the university', consolidated through language in references to 'a god up there' or to senior managers/leaders without recent teaching practice. Relational authority was often collegial: the "assumptions of hierarchy – clear lines of authority, a single supervisor, defined authority and accountability" that MacMaster (2014:433) describes as providing authority among professional staff was less evident among these academic managers/leaders – only the HoD at Hefton made significant reference to this.

Tight (2014: 302) asks "why the collegiality/managerialism debate has been, and continues to be, so heated, at least in certain quarters." My findings suggest

that one reason at these two institutions might be a conflict in the sources of authority: while knowledge-based and relational authorities are, at least in part, collegial, structuring authorities in these settings were managerial. Despite their apparent involvement in decision making, academics were ultimately subject to managerial control, while collegiality, as Jarvis (2012) and Burnes et al. (2014) suggest, may have been a tool used to secure compliance.

7.7 Practices, authority and power

I adopted a definition of authority as legitimated power which is based on both inequality and collaboration. Since practices are normative it follows that all practices have a power dimension. In a community of practice newcomers to the practice learn (through legitimate peripheral participation) the right way to carry the practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). But inequalities, of knowledge and material resources, determine which practitioners can define what 'right' is. Watson (2017:180) suggests that some practices (and practitioners) are more specifically able to direct the actions of others than most. He writes that some practices in particular:

“... enable the aggregation and alignment of the resources necessary to assemble, maintain and exert some degree of control via technologies of governing.”

Two of the practices identified in this study, deciding and overseeing, seem to be of this type. Within the practice of deciding, while staff generally engaged in various consultative approaches, the final decision was made by a manager with delegated positional authority. Key resources, in the form of privileged

access to student satisfaction data and external and internal REF reviews, enabled managers/leaders to make decisions in the two examples worked through in the findings. These decisions had the potential to have significant impact on the lives of others: at Rockborough whether or not someone was submitted to REF was potentially career changing; at Hefton decisions about small group teaching downgraded the expertise of some staff and excluded them from module leadership. Overseeing gave some practitioners (positional managers/leaders) the power to determine normativity in relation to other practices, by setting out the right and wrong way to carry them out. Overseeing set, and sought compliance with, standards, policies and regulations in relation to practices as diverse as research, online learning, marking or teaching. Deciding and overseeing are practices which determine the nature of other practices and therefore determine normativity.

‘Challenging’ was different. This practice was not about determining the actions or practices of others, but about appealing against those determinations. ‘Challenging’ reminds us that authority is relational (Parry and Kempster 2013) and not just simply imposed from above. Challenges to institutional management/leadership about decisions or compliance demands were sanctioned, sometimes led, by middle managers/leaders and they drew on institutional structures as a resource (Shove 2017), as well as on familiar managerial practices, in a way that indicated challenge within an overall position of deference to institutional authority.

Practitioners’ engagement with authority practices therefore varied dependent on their roles in relation to others. Facing senior managers/leaders, middle

managers/leaders might defer to decisions and seek to implement them, seek individual exceptions or challenge the whole decision. Facing their own staff, they might introduce changes, monitor for compliance or sanction a challenge. Smith (2007:6) explains 'having to represent the university to the department and the department to the university and the different expectations of the two communities' as a major difficulty for heads of department. In attempting to resolve this difficulty managers/leaders appear to draw on authority practices from both managerial and collegial cultures. The uneasy juncture of these can be seen particularly in decision-making: while consultation is common, unpopular decisions are made and implemented and managers/leaders attempt to ameliorate the effects of these on the collegial culture of department through support for staff. This seemed more successful in Rockborough, which had a more collegiate culture than at Hefton, where there were examples of resistance that staff were then 'allowed to get away with'.

7.8 Conclusion

Authority in academic management/leadership at the two settings in this study had to be established. My findings support an understanding of authority as drawing on multiple social sources and as contested and changeable. Authority relations derived from position, from governance structures/systems and from knowledge. Authority practices, often incorporating other practices, were constructed from resources – material and knowledge- alongside routinised actions. Access (or lack of access) to these resources established or limited authority. Knowledge resources in particular were multi-stranded and often conflicting. The ways in which these elements connected with general

understandings of collegiality or managerialism shaped the ways in which the elements of practices overlapped or conflicted.

In the final chapter of this thesis I re-visit my research questions and consider the contribution of this study as well as limitations and possibilities for further research.

8 Conclusion

This research study has sought to advance understanding of authority in higher education academic middle management/leadership by taking a social practice theory perspective which shifts focus from managers/leaders to the practices themselves. I addressed a number of specific questions.

- Are practices of authority evident in the data? If so, what are these?
- If practices of authority are evident, what are the elements of these practices?
- How can authority in academic leadership/management be conceptualised?
- What are the implications for higher education leadership/management?

Additionally, I aimed to understand the benefits and limitations of using a practice theory approach as a sensitising framework in educational research. In exploring these research questions, I have developed a number of models through which to understand the routinized patterns of authority practices; to model the ways in which practices may interact; and to relate typologies of authority to these practices.

8.1 Use of Social Practice theory as a lens

To begin with the final point, one criticism (Lumby 2012) of research into higher education management/leadership is that it is dependent on the perceptions of a narrow group of manager-academics who, as Deem and Brehony (2005) point out, have an interest in defending their own positions. Use of a practice focused constructivist grounded theory enabled a move beyond the perceptions and

values of practitioners to a construction of the elements of practices themselves. This, in turn, supported a less agentic and more relational understanding of the data in which the actions and interactions, rather than people, were the focus of analysis. It enabled construction of some of the ways in which authority practices shaped other practices by defining appropriate ways of working. Because practice theory focuses on routines it can illuminate how actions become routinized and why some practices (such as emailing) that staff complain about might persist as they become embedded as integral parts of other practices. Analysis of resources, both knowledge and material illuminated how inequalities shape authority in higher education academic management/leadership.

Use of SPT as a theoretical perspective – particularly as a sensitising framework for analysis within a constructivist grounded theory methodology – had limitations too. While it proved a very useful tool for knowledge and material resources and routinized actions, this approach did not yield significant data in relation to meanings. While meanings did emerge - both denotative and connotative - the approach taken did not enable a rigorous analysis of these. I attribute this as much to use of constructive grounded theory as a methodology as to SPT. Watson (2017) suggests discourse analysis as a way of surfacing power relations in meso level research – this could be a fruitful area for future research.

Overall, my use of Social Practice Theory has advanced understanding of authority in higher education academic management/leadership through the

construction of specific practices and analysis of some of the elements that they comprise.

8.2 Authority Practices

This study offers a partial answer to those who argue that practice theory does not uncover power relations in practices and therefore masks patterns of control. To study authority is to study legitimated power. Watson (2017) suggests that some practices in particular may enable access to resources that give some degree of control over governance. He suggests that research into this would be most applicable at macro level, but this study suggests that such research can prove fruitful at the level of the work group too. Use of the elements of practices as a sensitising framework for coding, enabled me to surface practices which supported control of actions and decision making in the two settings. These practices enabled managers/leaders to gain consent to even quite unpopular decisions. It was as rare for staff to openly resist as it was for managers/leaders to resort to formal performance management actions, although both were evident at times.

Chapter Five shows some of the ways in which specific practices of authority were constructed. In the cases of the practices of challenging and deciding, a repeatable sequence of actions was discernible as routinized actions, and these are captured in flow diagrams, figures 6-1 to 6-5, which set out the sequences, as well as the ways in which resources, knowledge and material, were used. In addition to drawing on resources, practitioners also embedded other familiar practices, not necessarily authority practices themselves, within authority practices, enhancing the routinized nature of the practice itself. Figure 7-1

illustrates the overlapping nature of practices. Overseeing was constructed from other micro-practices, auditing, supporting, meeting etc. in these, patterns of action drew on familiar resources: for example, at Hefton managers/leaders met staff one to one in informal settings but minimised the use of emails.

8.3 Unequal access to the elements of practices

As the foregoing suggests, practices were constructed as practitioners acted on/with resources: what I have termed 'material resources' (to include infrastructures, virtual resources as well as physical objects and spaces) and 'knowledge resources' (Know-how; a feel for the game, practical intelligibility, knowledge, general understandings, skills and technique (Schatzki 2001, Reckwitz 2002, Trowler 2013, Hui et al. 2017)).

My research builds on the work on Blencowe (2013) by suggesting that inequalities of access to the elements of practice establishes authority. While Blencowe's (2013) work focuses on inequalities of access to objectivity (knowledge defined as valuable) I argue that it is inequality of access to resources generally, rather than only knowledge resources that establishes authority.

In academic management/leadership in these two settings managers/leaders held positions within an infrastructure that was both bureaucratic (highly systematised and regulation bound) and managerial (driven by the market and focused on performance). Their positional authority was delegated by virtue of their position in the university and the university infrastructure created inequalities of access to knowledge and to resources through in/exclusion from

committees, systems and distribution lists. This privileged access enabled staff to shape what others could say and do. Middle managers/leaders were in the middle of a chain of authority practices – while they could restrict access to material and knowledge resources for their staff, so others could restrict their access. Which systems and people they could access, what they could sign off, and which committees they sat on controlled their opportunities for action. Further, position did not always equate to seniority, administrative staff with delegated authority to manage systems could, and did, dictate to ‘more senior’ academic managers/leaders.

In this study, not only access to knowledge, but the power to determine which knowledge is valuable established authority. The findings suggest that this operates in two ways. It was clear that middle managers/leaders did have the power to privilege some knowledge over others and that this could dis/empower their staff. Power to determine what counted as good practice; that teaching experience was more important than disciplinary expertise or that staff should prioritise gaining knowledge of electronic systems were examples of this. However, managers/leaders also expressed the importance of having relevant practice and disciplinary knowledge that matched staffs’ expertise (“...because how can you possibly talk about teaching and learning if you are not teaching?”). This captures the relational nature of authority: it was not only imposed from above in these two settings, but had to be established, and this also gave staff the opportunity to shape which knowledge counted, at least to some extent.

8.4 Conceptualising authority

My research adds to an understanding of authority as multiple, changeable and contested (Woods 2016) in two ways. Firstly, by extending the complexity of knowledge based authorities and secondly by categorising the multiple strands of authority found in typologies in a way which casts light on some conflicts.

To turn to the complexity of knowledge based authorities first: my findings suggest there is benefit to be gained from exploring the multiple ways in which knowledge can establish authority. The different bodies of knowledge elucidated by practice theorists: know-how; a feel for the game, practical intelligibility, knowledge, general understandings, skills and technique (Schatzki 2001, Reckwitz 2002, Trowler 2013, Hui et al. 2017) were all relevant in these two settings. Codes for knowledge resources led to the development of the following strands – perhaps a typology of knowledge based authorities: professional, practice and disciplinary expertise; knowledge and skills to deal with systems and processes; and ‘knowing what is going on’.

While modern typologies of authority (Woods 2016) highlight a greater degree of complexity than the technical-rational and scientific knowledge identified by Weber (2004), including, for example, lived experience, this research suggests that the interplay of the different bodies of knowledge outlined above might prove illuminating in seeking to understand academic management/leadership.

The different strands supported and contradicted each other as practitioners attempted to establish authority. One reason for the contestation of authority in this research was that, while professional knowledge was frequently drawn on

by practitioners, practitioners held different bodies of knowledge and attempted to establish its privileged status. In this research, disciplinary expertise; teaching expertise; as well as knowledge of university regulations, aims and drivers, were all evident as claims for professional knowledge. Practice knowledge was also multi-stranded: it referred sometimes to current practice, sometimes to immediate past practice and sometimes to practice at another institution. Practice knowledge referred to possessing the skills and understanding of carrying out a particular practice (teaching, researching etc.) and was therefore different to 'knowing what was going on' which referred to understanding of how things were carried on in the setting. 'Presence' was crucial in supporting this understanding. Different practitioners drew on these different bodies of knowledge as they attempted to assert authority. This research suggests therefore, that more nuanced categorisation of knowledge would support an understanding of authority in practice.

The second way in which this research extends understanding of authority is through the categorisation of the multiple stands of authority into three: structuring authorities, knowledge based authorities, and relational authorities (figure 4-1). Structuring authorities: bureaucracy, exchange/market and democracy, provide a framework in which actions and decisions are taken: in a democracy a majority in favour of a properly put proposal will lead to a decision, in a bureaucracy actions will be determined, at least in part, by regulations. Structuring authorities enable a practitioner to be 'in authority'. Knowledge based authorities, discussed above, enable practitioners to be recognised as 'an authority'. Finally, relational authorities: communal authority, tradition and charisma, refer to the ways in which practitioners relate to each other and the

expectations that they hold of leaders. This last category is not addressed in this study to any great degree and might be a fruitful area for future research. However, structuring and knowledge based authorities connect in interesting ways, and it is to this that I turn next.

The debate over managerialism and collegiality (Deem and Brehony 2005, Tight 2014) suggests both a clash of ideologies and that, in practice, middle managers/leaders are engaged with both. Depending on whose approach one adopts, managers/leaders are either caught in a difficult position (Smith 2002) trying to play two games at once or able to adopt a pragmatic approach that blends the two and enables them to get things done (Hellawell and Hancock 2001). Viewing this dilemma from the perspective of structuring and knowledge based authorities casts light on the complexity. Collegiality is based on democratic authority – academics making decisions via consensus; while managerialism is based on bureaucracy and, to some extent, a hierarchical, market driven approach. The middle managers/leaders at Rockborough and Hefton habitually involved staff in decision making in some way, but the final decisions were made by management/leadership teams. Including staff in committees was positioned as open and inclusive, but simultaneously as being about information giving, rather than decision making. Further, as I have outlined above, different bodies of knowledge - technical-rational, pedagogical and disciplinary - were used to justify actions and decisions or to challenge them. In attempting to blend collegiality and managerialism it could be argued that, in these two settings, the former is being used as a pragmatic tool to achieve the latter. Does collegiality within a managerial system simply, as

Lumby (2013) says about distributed leadership, perpetuate existing patterns of domination?

8.5 Implications for academic management/leadership

There are implications for Higher Education academic middle management/leadership in these findings. If the prospect of blending aspects of managerialism and collegiality in a way that supports the efficiencies of managerialism and retains the distinctiveness of a self-governing academic body (Hellowell and Hancock 2001) is to become a reality, senior managers/leaders need to look for ways in which structuring authority – the infrastructure, policies and regulations of the university – can be made more democratic so that the knowledge bases of academics may be drawn on more equally. This might involve an overhaul of systems to equalise access: for example, by opening up committees, limiting what actions need to be authorised and providing structured ways in which the expertise of academics is not only heard, but given power. The model of a top down organisation with heads of departments/schools expected to implement policy and decisions taken elsewhere may be incompatible with a structure which is collegial in any meaningful way.

There are also implications for the training of middle managers/leaders in universities. If the findings in this study have any traction, new academic managers/leaders need to understand that their new positional authority alone will not enable them to govern their unit effectively, but that they will need to

draw on multiple knowledge resources, including disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge as well as managerial expertise, and to establish routines that support their aims. They will need to recognise their power to determine which knowledge counts and the ways in which this may silence useful voices alongside enabling them to set directions.

8.6 Limitations of the study

While I hope that this research has furthered understanding of authority in higher education academic leadership/management through the construction of specific authority practices, there are, of course, a number of caveats.

The first is addressed at the start of this chapter: social practice theory elements include meanings and affects as well as knowledge and material resources and routinized actions. Whilst coding with gerunds was very effective in enabling understanding of resources and routines, a limitation of this approach was that these meanings did not, in the main, emerge. Revisiting the data with an alternative methodology – for example discourse analysis - might have deepened understanding further by focusing on meanings, but was beyond the scope of this project.

The second note of caution relates to the sample, which was necessarily limited. This research was an in-depth study of two schools/departments of education in two post 1992 universities. Practices as performance (Shove et al 2012) are logically contextualised. Although the construction of similar authority practices in both universities suggests that there may be similar practices elsewhere, the conclusions in this research are embedded in these contexts. My hope is that

they will resonate in other research and provide a useful starting point for further discussion.

Next, although I made use of textual and observation data, interviews provided the most fruitful data, as will be apparent from the two findings chapters. Reliance on interview data means much of the focus on action is through a double hermeneutic- my construction of my participants' constructions. This means that the accounts of middle managers/leaders, as they asserted and deferred to authority, mainly shaped my construction of practices and their elements. It would have deepened the study to look at the other side of these relationships too, by interviewing lecturers and institutional managers/leaders too.

8.7 Opportunities for further research

There are three areas in which future research might prove fruitful. Firstly, one might extend research into authority in higher education management/leadership. While leadership and management has been the focus of considerable research there is little research that focuses specifically on authority itself. Yet this research suggests that a focus on authority can uncover aspects of power relations within academia – an area which, writers suggest, is under-considered. It might be useful to undertake research which compared disciplines; which followed a chain of authority from practitioners at the bottom of the hierarchy to those at the top; or which investigated authority in different contexts – different types of UK university, international universities, or other education settings.

Secondly research which investigated the ways in which different tributary authorities combine and conflict could enhance understanding of university governance. In particular, research which examined the interplay of knowledge based authorities in academia would be interesting. Research exploring the alignment (or misalignment) of structuring authorities at institution and department level, or the alignment (or misalignment) of structuring authorities with knowledge based or relational authorities at department level might have the potential to explain resistance by re-conceptualising it as a conflict of authorities rather than resistance to authority. This might offer the possibility of new models of governance, for instance by considering how democratic authority might be extended and aligned with a collegial tradition.

Finally, further research which adopts practice focused grounded theory could deepen understanding of the efficacy of this as a framework for educational research. Trowler (2013) suggests that practice focused ethnographies can be effective tools with which to research education, while Watson (2017) suggests practice focused discourse analysis as a way of uncovering power relations in small scale studies. Practice focused grounded theory, with its focus on the coding of actions could be an additional useful too.

8.8 Conclusion

The study contributes to the discussion on academic leadership and management. Findings demonstrate the complexity of authority practices in this domain. Four ideas in particular stand out: that access to knowledge and material resources confers or restricts authority; that elements and everyday practices combine to create a 'toolkit' from which authority practices can be

constructed; that grouping multiple authorities into a triad of structuring, relational and knowledge-based authorities can cast light on constructions and contestations of authority; and that knowledge-based authorities in higher education have multiple and conflicting sources that draw on different higher education discourses. I hope that these ideas may offer others opportunity for further reflection and research.

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