

**Reluctant to Lead?**  
**Perspectives on Academic Educational Leadership**  
**in a Research Intensive University**

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as a thesis for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in Education

August 2017

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## Abstract

My research explores the leadership challenge faced by contemporary higher education institutions. Globally, the need for high quality academic leadership has never been greater. Yet growing evidence suggests few academics are keen to engage. In this study, I investigate academic educational leadership (AEL) at the University of Exeter (UoE) from organisational and academic perspectives. My purposes are to clarify early career academics' (ECAs) attitudes and stances towards AEL, what may lie behind these and to make recommendations about how to nurture their future interest in AEL.

My study adopts a theoretical and methodological pluralistic approach. Theoretically, I draw on the leadership research of Mats Alvesson and Richard Bolden, relating to organisational culture and structure. In particular, I adapt Alvesson's model of 'multiple cultural configurations'. I also draw on the socio-cultural theories of Margaret Archer relating to 'agentic reflexivity'. Methodologically, I adopt the role of 'bricoleur' (Kincheloe, 2001), drawing on an eclectic range of perspectives and principles derived from pragmatism and applied critical realism. By synthesising these, I create a 'personal enquiry paradigm'.

My theoretical research outcomes add to growing evidence about academic 'defensive routines' (Martin, 1999). I suggest that ECAs adopt diverse and nuanced attitudes and stances towards AEL, summarized in a 'reluctance to lead' typology. I identify a wide range of influential mechanisms and causal powers (M&CPs) which I summarise in an elaborated three dimensional framework. Influential M&CPs include attitudinal dissonance and misalignment between institutional strategies and processes which help explain reluctance. I argue that nurturing future AELs needs to reflect more closely the priorities of ECAs, set in a wider context of institutional cultural reconciliation and strategic realignment. Adopting a normative stance, I provide an example of how this might be possible. My methodological contribution develops through a series of three dimensional frameworks that suggest that multiple configurations of influences operate at different levels and through time at UoE.

Overall, my research contributes strongly to the growing body of theories and methodologies investigating higher education cultures. Whilst the case study findings may not be generalizable, other institutions might benefit from some of the insights provided.

## Acknowledgements

There are many people who have helped me to get to the point where I feel ready to submit my work for wider scrutiny. I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank some of them for their support and encouragement.

I am especially grateful to all of the University of Exeter elite leaders, senior academic leaders and early career academics who voluntarily gave up a considerable amount of their time to engage in conversations with me.

My recent supervisors, Rob Freathy and Karen Mattick, have both been encouraging and appropriately critical in equal measure. For them, supervising a recently retired senior colleague must have been somewhat challenging. I have appreciated the flexibility with which they have responded to my needs. My early supervisors, Carol Evans and Jonathan Gosling, both helped formulate the original ideas behind this thesis and were instrumental in my developing a critical perspective. Thanks go to all of them, and also to Anthea Asprey who help with my transcriptions and provided alternative perspectives on my interview data.

The wider support and interest I have had from members of the academic and professional community at the University of Exeter and beyond has been invaluable. For these people, I hope my study will provide some insightful observations and usable ideas. External to Exeter, I would like to thank Richard Bolden, Torgny Roxa, and Carol O'Byrne who formed part of a supportive community of critical scholars in relation to my emerging research ideas. Thanks also go to Mike Littledyke, who voluntarily read a late draft of my thesis and provided invaluable comments.

Finally, thank you for all the support I have had from my family and friends who have been kind enough not to keep asking when I intend to finish my PhD. Suddenly finding that, for me, retirement meant becoming a student once more has puzzled many of them, but they have shared in the pleasures and the pain of my journey sympathetically. Thanks to my three spaniels; they have patiently slept by my feet through many hours at the computer. Finally, special thanks to Peter who, as a scientist is somewhat puzzled by what my qualitative research will achieve; but has been there to support me throughout.

For two years my work was sponsored financially by the University and I am grateful for this. I hope the outcomes will be of use to the institution.

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## Abbreviations

The first time each of these abbreviations appears in the main text it is described in full with the abbreviation in square brackets.

ACR(s)	Applied Critical Realism (Realists)
AL	Academic Leadership
AEL(s)	Academic Education Leadership (Leaders)
ALD	Academic Leadership Development
ARL	Academic Research Leadership
ASPIRE	Accrediting Staff Professionalism in Research-Led Education
BERA	British Education Research Association
BIS	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills
CAP	Changing Academic Profession (survey)
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis
CETL	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CR(s)	Critical realism (Realists)
DCR	Dialectical Critical Realism
DES	Department for Education and Science
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
E & R	Education and Research (job profile)
E & S	Education and Scholarship (job profile)
ECA(s)	Early Career Academic(s)
EdD	Doctor of Education programme
EL(s)	Elite Academic Leader(s) and Senior Manager(s)
ELD	Educational Leadership Development
ERIC	Education Resources Information Center
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GC	Grand Challenges
GENIE	Genetics Education Networking for Innovation and Excellence
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI(s)	Higher Education Institution(s)
HELMS	Higher Education Leadership and Management Survey
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency

HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
HR	Human Resources
ICONI	Internal Conversation Instrument
LD	Leadership Development
LFHE	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
LTHE	Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
M&CPs	Mechanisms and Causal Powers
NSS	National Student Survey
OLT	Australian Government Office for Teaching and Learning
PCAP	Postgraduate Certificate of Higher Education
PCR	Pragmatic Common Referents
PDR	Performance Development Review
PROPEL	Programme for Preparing Early Leaders Project
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RIU(s)	Research Intensive University(Universities)
SAL(s)	Senior Academic Leader(s)
SD	Staff Development
SRHE	Society for Research in Higher Education
SWARM	Staff Workload Allocation Model Software
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
THE	Times Higher Education
UoE	University of Exeter
VC	Vice-Chancellor

## Prologue

This prologue sets the scene for my research journey. Young (2001 p.4) suggests that graduate students ‘bring with them their own cultural histories and ways of knowing and being in the world’. He argues that acculturation into group beliefs is deep seated; it conditions instinctive ontological assumptions and directs the use of methodologies and analytical tools. In this context, I believe, like Denzin and Lincoln (2005), that reflecting on my background is essential in order to help the reader to understand what lies behind some of the thematic and methodological choices I have made.

I started my research for this thesis in 2013 with the idea that I could ‘give something back’ to the academic community in my semi-retirement. For some years I have been interested in academic educational leadership [AEL]<sup>1</sup> and educational leadership development [ELD] in higher education [HE], but have not found the time to explore these interests thoroughly. As a result, part of the motivation in undertaking this research arose from personal interest. However, I also know from my professional work, firstly, that attitudes towards AEL and ELD are important for higher education institutions [HEIs] faced with challenging strategic decisions about the future, and secondly, that, as academics’ identities emerge, and, as they make career choices, they develop diverse attitudes towards AEL and ELD that are not always well understood.

In this prologue I reflect on my professional career trajectory as a way of explaining my interest in, and my assumptions about, AEL and ELD. I describe the way in which my academic background has led me to favour particular research approaches.

### **My professional career trajectory: an interest in AEL**

Over a thirty year career in HE both as an academic led by others and also as an academic leader myself, I have developed an interest in attitudes towards academic leadership. Subsequently, as someone with a strategic responsibility for nurturing academic leadership my interest has become more professionally focused.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms AEL and ELD throughout this study (see chapter one section 1.2 and 4.2 for definitions).

My personal career trajectory has closely mirrored that suggested by Burgoyne, Mackness and Williams (2009, p.7), although their 'management language' is not how I would describe my higher education career:

Normally professionals start their careers managing themselves as team members, progress to managing teams - first line management, then managing groups of managers and teams, then managing a function ... From there they progress to managing a business unit containing all or many functions, then to being a group manager dealing with a cluster of business units, and finally, possibly to being a member of the team managing the whole organisation.

I started out in HE working in a small team of geography lecturers in 1980. This meant that my personal and professional conceptions of leadership were nurtured in the context of a strongly collegial environment<sup>2</sup>. I experienced 'bottom up' authority powered by a belief in 'academic democracy' (Ramsden, 1998, p.26). Each of us felt we had personal leadership responsibilities and through this developed self-leadership skills<sup>3</sup>.

My more recent career has involved taking on formal academic and professional leadership roles. My first major leadership role was as an academic head of a geography department in the 1990s. More recently, I led and managed institution-wide educational development teams, in three HEIs, with responsibilities for groups of people and a range of activities and projects across whole institutions.

As I have changed roles, and particularly as I moved into university-wide positions, I have found myself, often reluctantly, drawn into a more managerial approach to leadership (Middlehurst, 1993). At the same time I have tried to retain a collegial perspective, in an attempt to maintain my personal credibility with those academics I work alongside. As Manathunga (2007) suggests, this balancing act can be difficult. I have consistently attempted to relate my leadership style to the qualities and values I developed as an academic leader. However, in my strategic institutional role, and as an academic developer, I

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<sup>2</sup> Middlehurst (1993 p.49) describes this as a community of scholars who 'work together to their mutual advantage within a self-governing collective'. This image includes conceptions of 'consensus decision making and academic autonomy, of democracy and cohesion based on a limited hierarchy of seniority and expertise, a common heritage and shared ideals'

<sup>3</sup> This is a concept which is strongly articulated by Bolden et al. (2012, p.35), who suggest that self-leadership is central to individual academic activity.

have experienced tensions in trying to do this while working alongside senior management colleagues in a professional context.

**Reflective moment** As an example, I had proposed an initiative which I called 'inspiring leaders' through which existing AELs were invited to events often led by an external speaker. These were designed to be provocative, stimulating and personally challenging. Importantly, they were asked to bring along an 'emerging' AEL, someone they felt would benefit from being immersed in the wider university community of AELs. I thought this was effective for a couple of years and feedback from AELs was good. Then the initiative was 'turned'. Senior institutional leaders decided that the events should become 'institutional briefings' led from 'the top'. As an example, meetings began to focus on setting National Student Survey [NSS] targets and reviewing progress. AELs were required to attend and the concept of nurturing future AELs fell away. Perhaps not surprisingly, I found that feedback on these events became increasingly negative. I believe we lost sense of the original purpose. I was unhappy with the direction *my* work was taking as my values and beliefs relating to appropriate approaches to ELD were challenged.

It is within this context that the practical focus of my research has emerged and the 'emotional connectedness' I have with the topic (Goodson & Sykes, 2001 p.52) can be explained.

#### **Tackling the practical challenge: Prior assumptions**

My perspective in this thesis emerges from my most recent experiences as a senior manager. I view issues around AEL and ELD as constituting a *practical challenge* for universities that my research aims to address. I cannot help but draw on my 'taken-for-granted knowledge' (Macfarlane, 2015 p.101) and assumptions about AEL and ELD, which I have 'accumulated' during my career. It is my experience that universities believe that they need good educational leaders. However, in reality, they find that identifying academics who are motivated to take on AEL roles is problematic. Efforts are being made by institutions to inspire academics to take more interest in AEL and to address this through ELD. However, these efforts have not always been very successful.

My research aims to develop a deeper understanding of whether these prior assumptions are borne out in practice, what may lie behind them and how best to address the issues I have identified. However, I want to make it clear that I realise that the 'institutional' perspective I have chosen to adopt at the beginning of my journey is not necessarily one which others would take. I am conscious that there are multiple perspectives I *could* adopt – but this is the one I have chosen as potentially 'useful'.

### **Tackling the research approach challenge: My scholarly background**

In this section I 'probe' my scholarly background in the hope that looking backwards through my career in HE will help explain my preferences for particular paradigmatic and methodological approaches.

My early disciplinary background was as an undergraduate geographer at the University of Cambridge at the height of the discipline's positivist/quantitative revolution (Unwin, 1992). This deeply formative experience has, in the past, led me to instinctively address research problems through a positivist, and latterly post-positivist, worldview (Creswell, 2009). However, subsequently, as a geography lecturer over thirty years, helping my students to understand the behaviourist, humanist and cultural (postmodern) 'turns' linked to critical social theory (Robinson, 1998) has led me to rethink how research is approached. I have become increasingly aware of emerging pluralistic approaches to research through which geographers draw freely on theories and methodologies found in both social and natural sciences. Robinson (1998) calls this geography's 'multifaceted technical armoury' and Hulme (2014 p.35) suggests this explains the geographer's ability to 'study the world without theoretical or methodological prejudice'.

At the same time, my career as an educator led me to become involved in national projects through which I was inducted into positivist, technocratic approaches to curriculum evaluation (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). These made a lot of sense to a teacher who was a product of the positivist revolution in Geography. I accepted that there is an objective reality, which can be revealed through the rigorous use of a scientific approach and quantitative methods. However, latterly, I became increasingly aware of critiques of this approach

(Shipman, Bolam, & Jenkins, 1974) and the emergence of interpretivist thinking with an emphasis on qualitative methods. My more recent research is aligned with these latter approaches (e.g. Burkill, Rodway Dyer, & Stone, 2008).

One consequence of this has been my conscious choice to write in the first person through this study. While the 'positivist geographer' of the past would not have even considered this a possibility, the educational researcher of the present sees this as integral to contemporary research. I believe that the authenticity and integrity which is reflected in this writing style is appropriate, natural and aligns with my ontological stance throughout my thesis. I mention this in the full awareness that, for some readers, this is not considered to be an acceptable academic writing style. I am not apologising for my choice, but mention it to clarify that I am aware that it has its protagonists.

Mine has been an interesting and personally challenging journey, taking me outside what Young (2001) describes as the 'comfort zones of the past' and into what Brookfield (1995) refers to as 'disconfirming experiences'. This thesis allows me to continue this journey. It will become clear later that my familiarity with mixed methods, multi-faceted methodologies and hybrid socio-cultural theories has been crucial in my choice of a methodological framework<sup>4</sup> and research methods. I have also developed a wider interest in *how* and *why* social researchers, such as critical realists, adopt these pluralistic approaches.

**Reflective moment** A challenge I have faced in planning to take a pluralistic position has been my concern about credibility. Theoretical and methodological 'fence sitting' feels a bit like being a mongrel; it has strengths and attributes which draw on its varied parentage but this is not necessarily acceptable to the pedigree breeders (and those who hold power over what is acceptable at dog shows such as Crufts!). You don't quite fit into the club, and by potentially exposing some of the 'narrow mindedness' of its members you become a threat to the status quo. To a relatively novice researcher taking a pluralistic stance to my research I have felt somewhat threatened.

Nevertheless, I have come to the conclusion that a pluralistic approach can be

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<sup>4</sup> See my personal enquiry paradigm (Figure 2.2)

liberating – it enables me to transcend the limits to research approaches imposed by some ontological positions and rigorously defined epistemological frameworks. In this context, I rather like Macfarlane's idea (2012 p.87) that intellectual work can involve 'boundary transgressing', in which the researcher moves fluidly between different 'spheres'. I capture this in the concept of 'bricolage'<sup>5</sup>. In invoking this idea, I proceed with caution, and, I go out of my way to justify my methodological decisions in my thesis.

In considering AEL and ELD from various perspectives, I am committing to a belief that I can make a valuable contribution in two ways. By joining the *academic* dialogue required for a PhD, I am contributing something to theoretical understandings about AEL and ELD and to pluralistic methodological approaches; by joining the *practitioner* dialogue, I am contributing to practical ways in which HEIs might address their concerns about AEL and ELD.

In conclusion, this prologue has summarised my career trajectory to date and helps explain why I have been motivated to undertake this research. I have taken inspiration from Brookfield (1995 p.xiii) who argues that self-reflection on 'autobiographical experiences' provides a 'rich source of material for us to probe'; This has certainly been the case here, and I trust that those who read my thesis will find this prologue useful.

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter two section 5.

## Chapter One Framing the study

### 1.0 Introduction

In the early twenty first century universities worldwide face a considerable leadership challenge. This is by no means a recent phenomenon (Ramsden, 1998; Tight, 1994; Trowler, 1998), but there is currently a heightened strategic interest in this agenda (Macfarlane, 2014). The Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE] (2009 p.46) suggests:

Leadership ... of HE is increasingly challenging. Continuous improvement is essential because what was successful in the past will not be sufficient in the future.

My intention is to add to existing research that addresses this agenda. In this chapter I start by defining the scope of my study (1.1) before clarifying some HE leadership concepts (1.2). I then introduce the rapidly changing HE environment (2.1) as a context for discussing the challenges of HE leadership (2.2). In sections 3, 4 and 5 I reflect on, and rationalise, the direction my study takes in the following chapters.

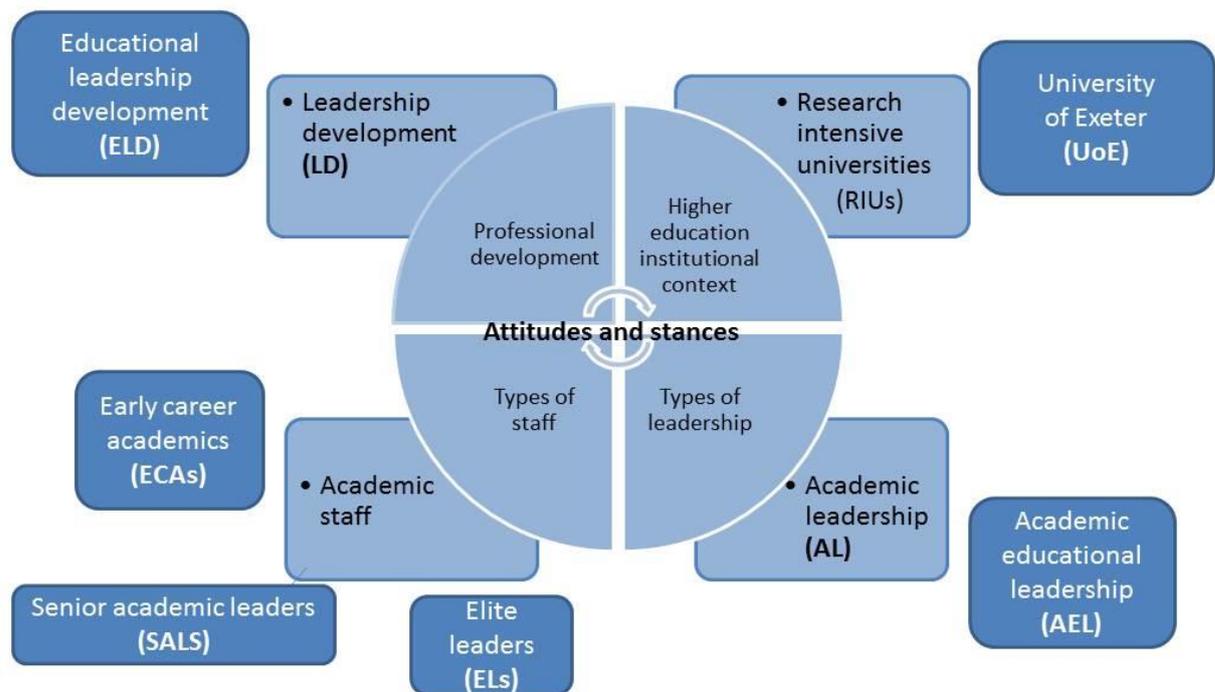
### 1.1 Scope of the study

My research explores aspects of the HE leadership challenge with a focus on understanding academic attitudes to leadership. In selecting my title I am acknowledging that I am aware that a well-established view has emerged in much leadership research, which suggests that through their attitudes and stances many academics demonstrate ambivalence towards leadership roles. My title also hints that I wish to investigate, and potentially challenge, this view. Here I align my thinking with Bolden, Jones, Davis, and Gentle, (2015 p.05) who discuss the need for research which seeks 'to debunk common myths and misconceptions'. I hope that by understanding more about academic attitudes and stances, and how they form, this research can potentially contribute to how institutions meet the demand for the 'continuous improvement' in leadership mentioned above.

However, this is a broad topic and, in practice, as figure 1.1 illustrates, my research focuses on:

- one research intensive university [RIU] (Institutional Context);
- early career academics [ECAs] although I also consider attitudes of senior academic leaders [SALs] and elite institutional leaders [ELs] (Types of Staff);
- academic leadership [AL] and, in particular, academic educational leadership [AEL] (Types of Leadership);
- leadership development [LD] and, in particular, educational leadership development [ELD] (Professional Development).

**Figure 1.1 Scope of the study**



A justification for selecting these four ‘dimensions’ is developed in section 4 below.

## 1.2 Clarifying academic leadership

To clarify the focus of my study it is important to consider what I mean by academic leadership and to differentiate it from other related academic activities (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet, & Thomas, 2011). For the purposes of this study, I refer initially to Gallagher’s definitions (2001 p.49):

- *Leadership* is seeing opportunities and setting strategic directions, and investing in and drawing on people’s capabilities to develop

- organisational purposes and values.
- *Management* is achieving intended outcomes through the allocation of responsibilities and resources, and monitoring their efficiency and effectiveness.
  - *Administration* is the implementation of authorised procedures and application of systems to achieve agreed results.

These definitions broadly align with the views of Bolden et al. (2012 p.39) who differentiate between the *activities* of academic managers and leaders. They suggest that management involves allocating tasks and enacting institutional processes usually within a formal context i.e. a *utilitarian activity*; while leadership involves demonstrating qualities and behaviours, which relate to values and identities within either informal or formal contexts i.e. a *formative activity*. This seems to suggest that there are grounds for differentiating between the two. However, in much HE discourse, leadership activity is seen as intertwined with management (and administration). For example, McCaffery (2010 p.79) suggests that they are interwoven and complementary and describes them as having 'a symbiotic relationship'.

Turning to the *roles* taken by individuals, some suggest that most leadership in HE is also management and that these are basically undertaken by the same people (Bush, 2011; Marshall, Adams, & Cameron, 2001); the point made is that management nearly always requires leadership (Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmot, 2011). Others argue these roles are normally taken by different people (Morgan, 2012; Tysome, 2014); and, importantly, that leaders often wish to avoid being identified as managers. Gleeson and Knights (2008 p.50) suggest that the rhetoric around academic leaders has grown in popularity as 'management work' has increasingly failed to 'engage the enthusiasm, commitment and creativity of staff'.

I take the view that this debate has become excessively and unnecessarily polarised. As Middlehurst (2013 p.276) argues:

(this is) messy and contested territory where the boundaries between levels are blurred and where power and authority between different actors in the system are in flux.

Bolden (2010 p.45) suggests that this 'bipolarity' debate is misleading and, as individuals conceive of their roles in highly personal ways, it can be 'potentially

harmful in practice'. Bolden (2010) and Deem (2001) both use the term 'leader-manager' as a way of capturing a more holistic conception of academic leadership roles, and, where relevant, I use this term in my study.

## 2.0 Contemporary HE: The leadership challenge

In this section I consider contemporary HE (2.1) and how this broadly underlies the leadership challenges I am interested in studying (2.2).

### 2.1 Contemporary HE

The state of contemporary HE, and the pace of change it is experiencing, are comprehensively reviewed in the academic literature (Barnett, 2013; Bolden, Petrov, Gosling, & Bryman, 2009; Knight & Trowler, 2001). Numerous analyses of global (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Blessinger & Anchan, 2015) and UK trends (Barnett, 2005; Kubler & Sayers, 2010; Mahoney & Lim, 2015; Shattock, 2012;) point to a plethora of fundamental forces which have influenced HE in recent years. The conditions that have led to these trends include deliberate politico-social interventions, linked to ideological thinking about access and equity, and economic forces, driven by the need for efficiency and effectiveness in a global, massified HE sector (Altbach et al., 2009 p.vi):

Responding to mass demand has driven many of the key transformations of the past decades. This expansion has been driven by the shift to post-industrial economies, the rise of service industries and the knowledge economy.

Key trends in the UK<sup>6</sup> include politically-motivated changes in funding models and in accountability for both research (e.g.the Research Excellence Framework [REF]) and teaching (e.g.Quality Assurance Agency [QAA]) reviews (Ramsden, 2008; P. Scott, 2011). More recently, the somewhat controversial Teaching Excellence Framework [TEF] has been added (Blackmore, 2016; Gibbs, 2016; Tran, 2017). An emphasis on widening participation and fair access has resulted in diversification and private institutions, tertiary colleges and open and online learning are emerging as new models of HE provision (Altbach et al., 2009; Gallagher, 2001). There are pressures to keep abreast of innovatory curriculum and learning environments, including technological change, as expectations of

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<sup>6</sup>Appendix 1 is a desk study I have undertaken to explore UK government policy impact on HEIs.

improvements in learning experiences are linked to rises in fees (Peach, 2010). The role of the market place has become critical and has invoked a competitive environment within which universities look to be increasingly globally competitive as well as regionally sensitive (Mahoney & Lim, 2015). League table performance has become a marker of success in this context (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education [LFHE], 2014).

At the institutional level the concept of 'supercomplexity' has gained some credence. Barnett (2000a; 2000b) describes a postmodern condition for universities in which security and continuity, which typified the past, have been replaced by a highly complex, dynamic, neoliberal and more competitive internal environment. One symptom of these upheavals has been the (frequent) reorganisation of university academic departments with new professional and leader-manager structures. This has become the norm in these supercomplex conditions.

In the context of contemporary HE, ensuring the quality of the student experience has risen up HEI priorities in recent years. In the UK, the emergence of the concept of 'student as consumer' (Barber, Donnelly, & Rizvi, 2013) has led to competitive institutional recruitment regimes that are responsive to student demand (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008a; Ramsden, 2013). This has largely been driven by political priorities<sup>7</sup>. For example the publication of 'Student at the Heart of the System' (Department for Business Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011) signalled very clearly to institutions where government priorities lie. Competitive marketing by HEIs has been evident in the UK since the late 1990s (Higher Education Academy [HEA] & the Genetics Education Network for Innovation and Excellence Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning [GENIE CETL], 2009; Watson, 2014). The high profile debates surrounding the TEF in the UK have further raised awareness of the need to prioritise student experiences (Blackmore, 2016; Gibbs, 2015; Kay, 2017).

However, institutional responses to these external drivers have been varied,

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<sup>7</sup> Hilli (2017) has undertaken a detailed review of the development of and rationale for UK HE government policies relating to HE education between 1959 and 2015 which supports my assertion that the contemporary political agenda shows an increasingly market focused emphasis on student-related priorities.

particularly in relation to student experiences. Boden and Nedevea (2010), for example, argue that traditionally RIUs have taken a different stance from the new universities in the UK to some of these challenges (see section 4.4). In summary, the picture which emerges is one of a general reorientation of the cultures, purpose and practices of HEIs driven by a shift from self-determining status to politically-motivated, centrally managed and audited national systems (Stephani, 2012); but also one of differentiated responses of individual HEIs to these challenges.

## 2.2 The implications for academic leadership

Evidence that these trends matter for AL is widespread (Locke, 2007). It is a recurring theme in the research literature that global, national and institutional changes create challenging leadership conditions, both for institutions and for individual leaders (Bolden et al., 2009; Hemsall, 2014; Middlehurst, 2013). Shattock (2013) argues that these challenges have become critical in the last decade<sup>8</sup>.

From the *institutional* view, there is evidence of a shortage of ALs to meet the challenges described in section 2.1. The recruitment of sufficient high quality candidates into AL and the relatively short shelf life of ALs are both a cause for concern (Bolden, Jones, Davis, & Gentle, 2015; Lawton et al., 2013; Scott, 2011). Nationally, Gleeson and Knight, (2008 p.51) describe Whitehall's anxiety about the reluctance of professionals generally to 'take the step up to leadership', and the resulting recent trend towards encouraging 'investment devoted to training more leaders'.

In addition, commentators argue there is a potential leadership crisis in HE (Locke, 2007; Marshall, 2008; Quinlan, 2011) created by the imminent retirement of a large number of academics who have held leadership roles in universities for many years (Altbach et al., 2009 p.89):

In much of the world, half or more of the professoriate is getting close to retirement ... too few new PhDs are being produced to replace those leaving the profession, and many ... prefer to work outside of academe.

Most universities consider leadership succession planning as increasingly vital

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<sup>8</sup> Although he does not specify a date it is intimated that this is from about 2003.

and encouraging future leaders has become a strategic priority for many (Burgoyne et al., 2009; Tysome, 2014)<sup>9</sup>.

As I have suggested, there is some concern nationally about the *quantity and supply* of leaders (Gronn, 2009; Middlehurst, Goreham, & Woodfield, 2009; Ramsden, 1998), however, there is also evidence that the *quality* of HE leadership is seen as a strategic issue. In 2003 'The Future of Higher Education' (Department of Education and Science [DES]) recognised the need for funded support for HE leadership development <sup>10</sup>. This was followed up by the HEFCE in its strategic plan (2004 p.34) where it identified 'developing leadership, management and governance' as one of its eight strategic aims. One immediate outcome was the creation and funding of the LFHE which, in its most recent strategic plan, (2014 p.2) calls the current pace of change in HE 'unprecedented' and argues that it is likely to accelerate. It points to the need for action to address the resulting leadership challenges:

The unpredictability of the future for higher education has never been so great which makes the need for high quality leadership, governance and management development even more relevant and needed.

However, from the *individual* academic's viewpoint, contemporary HE has several innate characteristics that conspire to make AL and academic leadership development [ALD] particularly challenging and unattractive. Light and Cox (2001 p.1) describe a millennium 'storm', in which, for academics, 'the demands on their time and the complexity of those demands are changing and escalating almost exponentially'. These demands include the pressures to increase research outputs, research impact and knowledge transfer and to apply for and obtain external research grants. There are also administrative burdens created by the rapid expansion in the number and diversity of students and the emergence of new practices relating to consultancy and community outreach. In addition, for many, a declining resource base puts pressure on time and on morale. A culture of accountability, underpinned by a discourse of excellence, has come to characterise the value systems that drive institutional practice. Neoliberal conceptions of centralised management *and* leadership sit uneasily alongside the long-standing cultures associated with academic

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<sup>9</sup> In section 4.5 below and chapter four I address these issues at the University of Exeter [UoE].

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1.

autonomy and collegiality (Middlehurst, 1993). Given these working conditions, on one hand, it might be assumed that academics might feel constrained to 'step up' into leadership roles to further their careers in contemporary HE cultures. However, on the other hand, as Light and Cox (p.1) make clear:

the relationship of these (leadership) activities in terms of academic career progress and status has become murkier, many of the practices (although expected and encouraged) not counting at all.

Furthermore, as Bolden (personal communication, September 2016) argues, academic identity emerges in a context which fosters individualism and, given their many priorities, there is no particularly good reason why academics might want to (or be expected to) take on leadership roles or spend time engaging in ALD. It is within this framework of contradictory perspectives that my research ideas have emerged.

### **3.0 Researching leadership in HE: A crowded space?**

In this section I briefly introduce the idea that there are potentially 'gaps' in the HE leadership research literature (3.1) before discussing how I intend to approach my own study (3.2).

#### **3.1 Existing HE leadership research**

There is no shortage of recent HE leadership research. There are many systematic literature reviews, books and articles on the subject. I have accessed over 1000 articles, books, reports and reviews for my research and whole journals are devoted to leadership.

Several recent special editions have been themed around HE leadership. For example, Bryman (2007) and Burgoyne et al. (2009) provide major literature reviews; Bolden et al. (2009) have edited a special edition of *Leadership*; Davis and Jones (2014) have edited a special edition of *the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* ; and Macfarlane (2014) has edited a special issue of *Higher Education Research and Development*.

Despite this, my growing awareness of existing research has helped me identify a few relatively under-researched areas (Chapter three section 6).

### 3.2 The research approach

Amongst recent leadership research I have found a wide range of methodologies, which potentially provide guidance on appropriate research approaches for this study. In making choices I have drawn on these, as well as my personal background. I take the view that I can most usefully undertake a qualitative study, which recognizes that 'leadership interactions must, first, be studied as they occur *in practice*, and *in context* and that I am not necessarily attempting to search for new forms of 'truth' but rather 'open up avenues which could lead to new ways of understanding' (Bolden, Hawkins, Gosling, & Taylor, 2011, p.100)

I adopt a 'personal enquiry paradigm', which I hope contributes to the originality of this thesis. Briefly, this has involved constructing a real world pluralistic methodological approach (Gray, 2004) informed, firstly, by a revisionist approach to pragmatism<sup>11</sup> and, secondly, by a critical realist [CR] perspective (Bhaskar & Norrie, 1998)<sup>12</sup>. I have drawn in particular on the methodological, theoretical and empirical work of Margaret Archer (Archer, 2007b) and interpretations of her work by Dave Elder-Vass (2012). Using a morphogenetic approach, Archer argues that structure; culture and agency are ontologically reflexive and proposes that they operate sequentially. Hence, different mechanisms and causal powers [M&CPs]<sup>13</sup> operate iteratively and are brought into play at different points in time. This thinking has enabled me to progress my research into academic attitudes to leadership.

I have chosen a retroductive-abductive approach to research design (Reed, 2009); an approach favoured by critical realists [CRs]<sup>14</sup>. This involves an iterative approach to data collection and conceptualisation and leads to a series of frameworks, which develop gradually through my study and are a feature of how I report my research.

My research approach has also drawn on the argument (Bolden et al., 2012 p.46) that HE leadership research increasingly needs to be contextualised:

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<sup>11</sup> Biesta & Burbules, (2003 p.11) describe this as an approach in which 'the inherent contradictions between objective and subjective knowledge dissolve'.

<sup>12</sup> See chapter two for my description of these methodologies.

<sup>13</sup> In chapter three I discuss this term and justify using it consistently throughout this study.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter two and Appendix 2 for a detailed discussion of this approach.

the *contextual* nature of leadership in higher education indicates the need for *ongoing enquiry within institutions* (my italics) to identify, evaluate and promote effective and desirable approaches to leadership, and the value of a tailored approach to leadership and organisational development.

This has been a stimulus to my decision to adopt a case study approach drawing on a range of complementary data to explore leadership attitudes in one institution. In particular, the empirical element of my work draws on three investigations at the UoE. The first two are studies undertaken to support institutional strategic development issues and the third was specifically undertaken to address emerging issues relating to this thesis. These are contextualised, in-depth and small scale investigations in which I use interviews to illuminate M&CPs relating to academic attitudes.

In conclusion, my early research for this study suggested that I have chosen to explore a methodologically 'crowded space'. While this potentially suggests there is little scope for originality, I believe that, by introducing pluralistic methodologies, my research could have an impact how leadership is understood and, that by focusing on particular perspectives on leadership in one RIU, my research has the potential to offer something new and insightful into what is known about attitudes to leadership.

## 4.0 Refining the research focus

I have already suggested that my research is broadly related to leadership in HEIs and, as I already made clear (section 1.1), I have chosen to focus specifically on four dimensions (Figure 1.1). This section explores these choices and some issues associated with each of the four dimensions.

### 4.1 AEL

In section 1.2 I explained my interest in AL and discussed some definitional issues. However my focus is primarily on AEL which I see as subset of AL. While AL relates to a broad range of responsibilities across research, the student experience and service activities<sup>15</sup>, AEL refers to responsibilities ranging from module or course leadership through to whole disciplinary responsibilities for student facing activities and to wide-ranging institutional

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<sup>15</sup> Service activity refers to a wide range of internal work (e.g. committee membership) and external outreach activity (e.g. external examining; links to local schools)

leadership of education-related portfolios. AEL may be a *formally* defined role (e.g. Programme Leader or Associate Dean for Education) or may be incorporated into a broader formal leadership role (e.g. Dean or Head of Department). On the other hand some AEL is *informal* (professorial posts normally carry informal AEL responsibilities).

Fung and Gordon (2016 p.57) suggest that in any of these contexts AEL will involve:

vision and its implementation, creativity, innovation, inspiration and a demonstrable impact on both student education and on the work and motivation of colleagues at departmental, institutional and international levels.

While this definition aligns with the *visionary* aspects of leadership in Gallagher's definition (section 1.2), it probably understates the importance of the role AELs play in relation to the broader student experience and the more prosaic aspects of 'implementation' which emerge as significant in this study.

I do not mean to imply that academics are the only educational leaders in HEIs. Professional education leaders<sup>16</sup> play vital roles in most institutions (Burgoyne et al., 2009; Middlehurst, 2010; Scott, 2011) and roles and responsibilities often overlap. However, focusing on AEL allows me firstly, to explore why academic attitudes are often perceived (by institutions) as particularly challenging; secondly, to draw on my considerable professional interest and experience in this area and thirdly, for pragmatic reasons, to bound the scope of my research.

It is worth mentioning here that I anticipate that my focus on AEL will become even more relevant in relation to the TEF. I find it surprising that so little reference is made to the need for high quality AEL in the current (mostly critical) analysis of the TEF (Tran, 2017). This is an opportunity to claim my study provides highly relevant and contemporary 'real world' research into the contemporary importance of AEL and ELD in the TEF environment.

It is important to make clear that different terms can be used to describe AEL activity, and they can carry different meanings (for individuals, institutions and

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<sup>16</sup> Professional leaders are those people who are not on academic contracts but play significant and often institution-wide roles in setting the institutional strategic direction.

researchers) in different contexts. For example, in the UK, HEFCE and the HEA use the term 'teaching and learning leadership' to capture this activity and the strategies associated with it. In research originating in the US (Bush, 2011; Novak, 2002), Australia and New Zealand (Marshall, 2008; Marshall et al., 2011) the term educational leadership is only used widely to describe leadership in *schools*.

As a result confusion can potentially arise in using the term AEL in an HE context as became apparent in some of my interviews (Chapters four and five). In some ways this confusion is simply semantic (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005), but, more deeply, it can invoke an explicit set of conceptual cultural meanings as Alvesson (2011 p.152) suggests when arguing that, 'leadership is... a complex social process in which the meanings of what is said and done are crucial'.

For example, Juntrasook's (2014) analysis of institutional documents and individual academic attitudes in one HEI shows the contrast between the *rhetoric* of institutional meanings, perspectives and expectations about A(E)L and the *reality* of how academics position themselves (their stances) and what they actually do (their actions). He illustrates how this emerges in the language they use. Ramsden (1998 p.76) also describes an important 'semantic gap' in which 'organisations tell one story to the world while employees feel part of a different narrative'.

At universities I have visited in Australia and New Zealand, the senior professional staff always use the generic term AL (rather than AEL or the research equivalent Academic Research Leadership,[ ARL] with the explicit aim of ensuring that the semantics align with *their beliefs* in creating a holistic approach to HE leadership. They argue that dividing AL into different 'sub-types' creates a false dichotomy and using terms like AEL/ELD potentially expose issues around academics' concerns about credibility that they wish to avoid.

Despite these issues, my preference for using the term AEL throughout this thesis lies in the breadth of activity it refers to, in a way that 'teaching and learning' does not, while at the same time allowing me to 'bound' the context I am exploring in a way that the term AL would not (Fung & Gordon, 2016).

## 4.2 ELD

Turning to ELD, one aim of this study has been to investigate what ELD means in an RIU and how academics react to this. Just how crucial this is for HE is recognised by some (Parr, 2013; Ramsden, 1998), although this has been somewhat sporadically researched. Ten years after Ramsden (1998) made an urgent plea for more emphasis on developing educational leaders, Marshall (2008 p.13) is still able to suggest that there is a persistent 'rhetoric- reality gap' which needs addressing:

We must create institutional cultures that clearly define, for all key stakeholders, the nature of leadership in learning and teaching, and tangibly, as well as rhetorically, value same.

In Australia, several national research reports and guidance documents (Debowski & Blake, 2007; Lefoe & Parrish, 2013; Marshall, 2008; Marshall et al., 2011) have addressed a perceived requirement for ELD to overcome a 'continuing culture of (leadership) amateurism' (de la Harpe & Mason, 2014 p.2). However, research on ELD in the UK<sup>17</sup> is more limited (Quinlan, 2011; 2014) and has been described as 'woefully inadequate' (Gunn & Fisk, 2013 p.42). This does not mean that that ELD is unimportant for UK *institutions* (Floyd, 2016). It is often suggested that contemporary HE leadership skills are very different from those needed by leaders in the past (Bolden, 2010; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010) and as Middlehurst (2010 p.39) argues:

developing leaders with the skills to respond to the big-picture challenges of the increasingly complex and uncertain sector will become paramount.

However, high level strategic calls for leadership development can sit uneasily alongside *academic* perspectives. Some research (Bolton, 2000; Pez , 2013; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) suggests that academics are antagonistic towards investing time in centrally-provided ELD, particularly where it focuses on reproducing institutional and organisational cultures that they are inclined to resist. Contemporary thinking suggests that 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges demand different approaches to ELD (Flinn & Mowles, 2014). For example, Marshall (2008 p.13) suggests that 'piecemeal development' is unlikely to be successful; rather, it needs to be systemic, multi-faceted, coherent and use a variety of policy instruments.

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<sup>17</sup> See chapter three section 4.1.3.

It is with this in mind, that I adopt the term 'nurture'<sup>18</sup> throughout my thesis. I believe that the use of the term suggests a contextualised, empowering and holistic approach to ELD (Harding & Amor, 2014; Snoeren, Niessen & Abma, 2015; Sutherland & Willis, 2013); one which recognises the central role of individualised learning within a supportive institutional environment and which encourages criticality in relation to current modes of HE leadership (Parker & Jary, 1995).

### 4.3 ECAs

In my prologue I make an assumption that many institutions, and particularly RIUs, find it challenging to encourage academics to take on AEL roles. This is exacerbated by perceptions they form early in their careers about the relatively low status of teaching as compared to research (Macfarlane, 2012; Middlehurst, 1993). This has led to my focus on ECAs<sup>19</sup>. In choosing this focus I am aligning my thinking with Inman (2014, p.240) who suggests that:

The implications for practice of the complexity of the journey to leadership need to be considered by organizations intent on creating effective leaders of the future.

Working with ECAs has given me particular insights into how this group experience ELD and stimulated my curiosity about whether they are really as reluctant to take on AEL roles and/or engage in formal or informal AEL activities as is often suggested.

I have been able to draw on recent research into ECAs (Harris & Nolan, 2014; i-graduate & LFHE, 2010; Tysome, 2014) much of which relates to their career trajectories (Cantwell & Scevak, 2010; Gale, 2011; Sutherland & Taylor, 2011; Sutherland, 2013). Some of this work is reported in a special issue of the *International Journal of Academic Development* (McAlpine & Asghar, 2010) and a comprehensive analysis is found in McAlpine and Åkerlind's (2010) edited volume where researchers explore (amongst other themes) some of the struggles ECAs experience in deciphering new roles and messages relating to negotiating and legitimating their academic discourses and ideologies<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Taken from Fullan (2001 p.196) who suggests 'leaders are not born; they are nurtured'.

<sup>19</sup> There are many definitions for ECAs in the literature and alternative terms are used to describe academics beginning their careers. See chapter five section 2.2.2. for my definition.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter three section 3.2.3.

I have also drawn on two pieces of personal research. The first, an evaluative study (Burkill, 2014), asked current AELs to reflect back on their thinking about leadership as they progressed their careers and the second, a small pilot study (Burkill, 2013), asked ECAs about their attitudes to AEL in thinking forward about their future careers<sup>21</sup>.

Despite this, on the whole, the journey to leadership for ECAs is poorly researched. Bolden et al. (2009, p.295) suggests that:

Current research on leadership in HE tends to focus almost exclusively on the holders of formal academic-management roles. As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how leadership is perceived among people at *earlier stages in their careers* (my italics) and how experiences and perceptions change over time.

#### 4.4 RIUs

The majority of my research has been undertaken in the context of one research intensive university (RIU) (section 4.5). This addresses the view that too much leadership research is excessively decontextualized (Alvesson, 2011). Bolden (2010) argues that, while context is increasingly cited as important in leadership research, relatively little research is published which focuses on the organisational context as an influence on group or individual behaviour. Where it is cited it tends to be 'an afterthought' (p.91). This study draws on research that indicates that individuals working in different contexts will have different perceptions of how AEL is enacted (Bolden et al., 2009; Marshall et al., 2001).

For example, Gale (2011 p.216) has suggested that investigating one type of HEI might yield important insights into the views ECAs hold about AEL. She argues that HE cannot be treated as 'a homogeneous sector' for the purposes of researching academic attitudes. In her study of a teaching-oriented university she shows that ECA's conceptions of their academic careers are institutionally contextualised and influenced by their prior experiences. In another study, Pirrie, Adamson and Humes (2010 p.103) suggest that mission groups like the Russell Group have developed distinctive characteristics based on 'competitive branding' as a 'market response to a conceptually incoherent set of political imperatives'. Therefore, in focusing on UoE (which recently joined the Russell

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<sup>21</sup> Outcomes are referred to in chapters four and five.

Group), I open up the possibility that my findings might be applicable to other similarly positioned universities.

However, there are dangers in limiting my research to RIUs<sup>22</sup>. It cannot necessarily be assumed that their characteristics and missions always differentiate them from other HEIs, or that all RIUs are similar. On one hand, Altbach et al. (2009 p.15) suggest:

Research universities are at the pinnacle of the academic system and enjoy the highest prestige. Their stature is reflected in the world rankings. Research universities produce knowledge, offer advanced academic degrees, and employ the highest qualified professors.

They argue that, to maintain this position RIUs require:

appropriate autonomy, academic freedom, and sustained financial support from national authorities, while they are at the same time part of national higher education systems.

Central to their thinking is the assumption that institutional and individual academic freedoms are hard won and powerfully defended characteristics of RIUs. Facets of this are the way in which academics interact, and who they define as their leaders. They suggest that in RIUs the 'collegial perspective' on leadership (Middlehurst, 1993 p.50) tends to dominate and leaders reach their positions 'because others see them as embodying a group's aspirations and achievements'. McKenna and Boughey (2014 p.825) suggest academics in RIUs are distinctive for the discourse of their 'staff as scholars':

whereby research is privileged over teaching, a discourse of 'academic argumentation' whereby a critical disposition is valued and is called upon by academics to resist development initiatives and a discourse of 'trust' whereby it is assumed that academics share a value system and should thus be trusted to undertake quality teaching without interference.

On the other hand, this does not provide a convincing argument that RIUs *are* different from other HEIs in this respect. While it may be true that academics in RIUs operate in protected 'niche institutions' (McCaffery, 2010 p.18) where they undoubtedly do have strongly held views about AEL, it has been shown (Bolden et al., 2013; Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Ylijoki, 2005) that these views underpin academic beliefs in most HEIs.

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<sup>22</sup> The existing research around which any generalisations can be made is limited. Hilli (2017) identifies only eleven papers which research RIUs (of these only four are in the UK context).

However, there is a possible rationale for differentiating between RIUs and other HEIs, which relates to the selective research pressures exerted on academics in these institutions (Hilli, 2017). Light and Cox (2001) argue that, while the majority of academics working in *any* university will describe the primary focus of their academic practice as a combination of (mostly) research and teaching, the primacy given to research in the early careers of academics is probably most intense in RIUs. Altbach et al. (2009 p.15) support this:

while research and teaching form central responsibilities in the university, the research function inevitably serves as the primary role of the top research universities.

Harris and Nolan (2014 p.1) suggest that ECAs in RIUs are faced with heightened research challenges and time pressures which may make them particularly resistant to taking on AEL roles. In contrast, Gale (2011 p.222) argues that ECAs in teaching-focused universities where research is 'tangential' to their early careers are more positive about teaching-related responsibilities. However, things may be changing in RIUs. Scott and Scott (2015 p.512) argue that, while their

main priorities are research activities and the maintenance of a high profile professoriate, many (research intensive) universities around the world are now focusing on teaching as an equally important activity to that of research.

One of the conclusions they come to in their research is that good AEL in the context of RIUs is essential for 'promoting and nurturing the quality of teaching and learning'.

My study considers whether ECA's attitudes to AEL roles are affected by M&CPs which might, at least in part, be attributable to their working in an ambitious RIU. I am not suggesting that these pressures are *restricted* to RIUs but my argument above leads me to be cautious about any conclusions I come to about the relevance of my work to the wider HEI community.

#### **4.4 The University of Exeter**

The UoE is widely seen as a successful RIU which has experienced rapid structural and cultural changes since 2002, culminating in joining the Russell Group in 2012 (see chapter four section 3.0). As I have suggested above,

academics working in the majority of RIUs are faced with particular strategic conditions and pressures and to some extent Exeter is a typical RIU; but it is also important to recognise that UoE has some more unique structural characteristics and approaches to academic staff career trajectories and ALD which underpin the analysis in my thesis. In this section I briefly introduce several of these and in chapter four I describe them in more detail and discuss the implications of these structures and processes.

Academic career trajectories at UoE are underpinned by a career progression model which separates them into three academic job families (research [R]; education and research [E&R] and education and scholarship [E&S]). Each of these trajectories enables progression, based on differentiated criteria, from associate lecturer to lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and finally professor.

A recent and somewhat unique development, the 'Exeter Academic' (Appendix 4 Box 11), provides role descriptions and related promotion criteria for each stage of an academic's career. Of particular interest are the different criteria designed for E&R and E&S staff. While both identify the importance of education and education leadership, there is a greater emphasis on these in the E&S criteria. The implications of this are discussed in chapter four (section 6.2.3).

An annual performance development review [PDR] takes place between academics and their academic leader-managers (the 'academic leads') and this is a key process at UoE for enabling promotion opportunities to be discussed. The implications are considered further in chapter four (section 4.2.2).

All ECAs at UoE have been, until very recently, required to undertake a five year probation period<sup>23</sup> and I have used this five year 'cut off' period in defining ECAs in this study (I discuss the rationale for this in chapter 5 section 2.2.2). Mandatory development for probationary academics has in recent years, included completing a modular academic development programme, the Postgraduate Certificate of Higher Education [PCAP] through which both

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<sup>23</sup> This has been reduced to three years since my research was completed.

education and, to some extent, education leadership are addressed. All the ECAs who participate in my study are taking or have recently completed PCAP (Figure 5.3).

A range of AEL roles are clearly identified in the Exeter Academic for E&R and E&S academics (see Appendix 4 boxes 11-14). This indicates the importance UoE places on ensuring that education is well led across the university at all levels. AEL at UoE is both centralised and devolved through a hierarchical structure. Centrally, the DVC Education has overall strategic responsibility and works with the Associate Deans (Education) to develop and implement strategy. In a devolved context Associate Deans work with departmental Directors of Education who in turn work with programme and module leaders who have a degree of autonomy for development and implementation. In chapter four the implications of this structure, the degree to which power lies at each level and the views of leaders are discussed in more detail.

While these institutional structures and processes are not all unique to UoE they come together in an integrated approach which makes a study of the university particularly interesting. One of the reasons why UoE makes a highly appropriate case study is that it has these paradigmatic characteristics which may be of interest to other institutions.

## **5.0 Conclusions: clarifying the research issues**

Despite this study being undertaken in a fairly 'crowded' research area, I believe that research in the context of the UoE could make a valuable contribution to understanding more about AEL and how to best to encourage and nurture future educational leaders. As I have suggested it is often argued that academics demonstrate ambivalence towards the leadership roles which HEIs believe are so important for their success. I wish to investigate, and potentially challenge, this view. As a starting point I begin by clarifying three **researchable issues** which are central to this study

- the attitudes of institutions and academics to AEL and ELD;
- how these attitudes are formed; and
- the implications of this for nurturing AEL at UoE.

However, as I have suggested in this chapter, researching these issues is not going to be simple. I have implied that this requires a research approach which allows deeply embedded M&CPs to be revealed, something I believe is only possible when adopting a pluralistic methodology. I describe and justify this in chapter two.

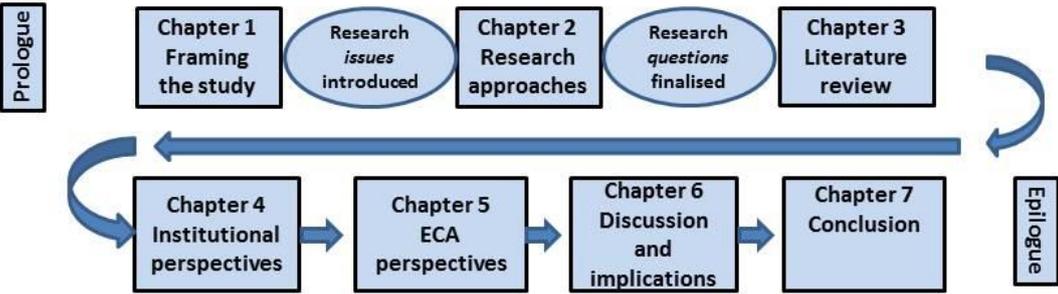
I have also suggested that existing research indicates that there are ambiguities around these research issues and opens up the possibility that well-established views are potentially contestable. This is the focus of chapter three which suggests that both academic attitudes, and the 'nexus of influential powers' (Kempster & Parry, 2014 p.88) that influence them, lend themselves to further investigation. In chapters four and five I shall investigate, in the context of UoE, whether the situation is more complex and nuanced than some past research suggests.

## **6.0 The structure of the thesis**

This thesis follows a fairly traditional format for reporting on empirically-informed educational research (Gray, 2004). In this chapter I have set out key terms and definitions and explored the broad HE context in which my ideas originate. I have identified several of the salient characteristics of UoE and I have introduced three research issues. In chapter two I introduce and rationalise my philosophical and methodological perspectives; at this stage the research questions are clarified. In chapter three I review relevant research literature in a search for well-established ideas and theories and for contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies in relation to these. In chapter four I return to the UoE and discuss institutional policies, strategies and priorities from various perspectives. Chapter five reports on the findings from interviews held with ECAs. In chapter six and seven I synthesise and critically reflect on my research findings. I consider the implications of my research with the intention of creating 'solutions to organizational problems' of practical relevance to organisational stakeholders' (Gray, 2004 p.2).

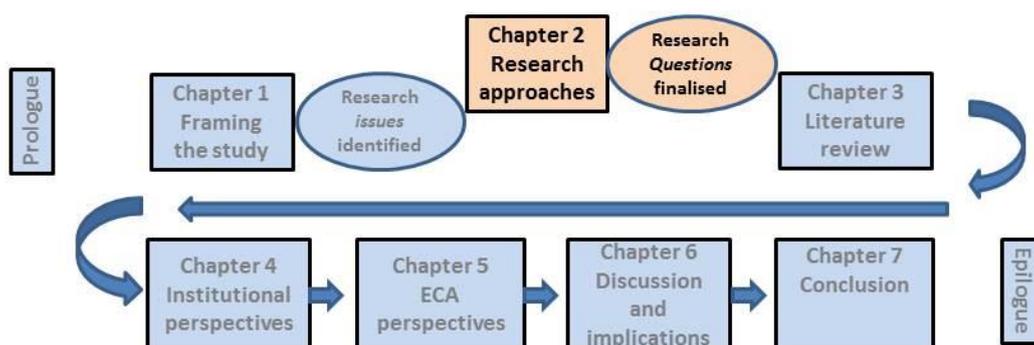
To help the reader through my thesis I provide a diagrammatic representation of the structure I have just described (Figure 1.2). This is re-introduced at the start of each chapter.

Figure 1.2 Structure of the thesis





## Chapter Two Research approaches: Theoretical and methodological perspectives



### 1.0 Introduction

Thinking about *how* to undertake my research has proved to be one of the most stimulating, but also challenging, aspects of my PhD journey. I have taken an iterative approach, constantly reflecting on and rethinking my philosophical and methodological perspectives and selecting and re-selecting my research processes. I have rejected the idea that I can simply ‘select’ one epistemological stance, and that from this I can derive associated research design principles<sup>24</sup>. This simple linear approach to the relationship between ontology, epistemology and research design, which is so often described in research texts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2014), has proved to be of little use in my journey.

Instead, as Cook (2014 p.76) suggests, approaches to research inevitably involve a personal paradigmatic lens which represent ‘an interrelated collection of beliefs, values, assumptions and methods’ and determine what we believe to be ‘legitimate and worthwhile knowledge as an outcome of the research’. This results in a research approach which can be seen as personally constructed and shaped by the orientation and situation of the researcher as an individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this chapter I call this a ‘personal enquiry paradigm’<sup>25</sup>. This term, introduced by Golby and Parrott (1999), suggests that researchers may have a unique perspective on their research bringing together aspects of different philosophies and methodologies. The approach I have

<sup>24</sup> In the prologue I argued that my background as a geographer and educationalist has led me to have an interest in pluralistic approaches.

<sup>25</sup> See section 5.

adopted takes its inspiration from a range of perspectives which I need to justify with reference to the wider literature.

My initial thinking draws broadly on research approaches that have been used for both 'basic and applied research' (Gray, 2014 p.3) in HE and other organisational settings (Bryman, 2008; Buchanan & Bryman, 2009). Tight (2004) and Williams (2014) suggest that most HE research over the last forty years has ultimately been a-theoretical and designed to underpin policy-making, support the development of new practices and address specific problems of practice or policy. Therefore, as Ng (2010 p.6 cited in Bolden, 2010 p.95) suggests, 'much of research into practice by practitioners looks towards contributing to the theory of practice (i.e. for better practice) but less towards the theory about practice (i.e. for better theories). However, I have taken particular note of Tight's view (2004) that if HE research like mine is to move beyond the a-theoretical then methodologies need to reflect this.

In this chapter I introduce 'real world research' (section 2) and suggest that an interest in 'real life situations' (Robson, 2011 p.3) does not negate the importance of social theory. As Ancona, Kochan, Van Maanen, Sculley, and Westney (2009) suggest, research into institutional phenomena tends to adopt strategic, cultural or political conceptual lenses. In this study I draw together aspects of these, in an attempt to identify processes and mechanisms which operate at UoE. This leads to a discussion of two meta-paradigms, which are favoured by real world researchers (Robson 2011 p.xi): Pragmatism (section 3) and CR (section 4). While many CR researchers cite the emancipatory work of Bhaskar (Clegg, 2005; Scott, 2005) as the primary ontological reference point for CR, I focus on applied critical realism [ACR] (Maxwell, 2012; O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014) and particularly the work of Margaret Archer (section 4.1) as the source of many of the principles I adopt in my personal enquiry paradigm (Figure 2.2).

In section 6 I focus on the design principles, which are the basis for my study, and then, go on to briefly consider methods adopted (section 7), and in particular, the primacy of interviews in my research (section 7.1). Principles relating to selecting my data sources are discussed (section 8) and finally, this

chapter introduces ethical and quality issues for my research (section 9). However, I claim that these permeate my work, and are visible throughout the thesis. I leave the detailed description of my methods and data sources until chapters three, four and five, and the methodological critique until chapter seven.

## 2.0 Real world research

The research reported in this study takes as a starting point a real world approach; one which 'seeks answers to problems faced...rather than ones concerned primarily with advancing an academic discipline' (Robson, 2011 p.xiii). As my research ultimately aims to inform workable solutions to nurturing leaders in HE this seems an appropriate place to start.

Robson (2011) is the key proponent of, and apologist for, real world research and has been for over two decades. In the first edition (1994) of his book he defined real world research as a kind of enquiry 'on and with people outside the confines of a laboratory' (p.xv) and 'in complex, messy, poorly controlled field settings' (p.xvi). He initially took a practical, pluralistic and basically *a-theoretical* approach<sup>26</sup> to research design. Real world research meant not just real settings but a particular stance on the role of theory in social research. It seems that in some ways the emphasis on 'practical' led to a de-emphasis on theory building (or testing). This may have been a deliberate strategy designed to ensure that the organisations, which commissioned much of this research, were not 'put off' by overly complex and obscure theoretical references. Gray (2014), in describing appropriate methodologies and tools for real world research, also takes this view, arguing that research in the real world tends to adopt a dominantly 'applied' approach with an emphasis on the idea that 'organisations will only see research as valid if it is seen to lead to practical outcomes' (2014 p.3).

This means that real world research emphasises the *purposes* of research and the anticipated *practical* outcomes; it focuses on identifying appropriate research approaches drawn from a range of disciplines, on accessing the

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<sup>26</sup> A-theoretical in that he did not discuss the theoretical frameworks which might be useful in real world research.

complex social settings in which organisations are based and on the need to address the sensitivities of the real world context in which researchers work. Both Robson and Gray make the point that addressing particular challenges and understanding processes, which, in turn, may help to 'solve problems', (Gray, 2014 p.3) are paramount in real world research.

This approach has been of particular significance in researching education institutions (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). For example Williams (2014 p.219), in his analysis of the trajectory taken in HE research since Robins, suggests that the quality of research may be:

judged on its intrinsic quality, the validity of its methodology and the logic of the analysis derived from any empirical evidence obtained or borrowed but ultimately *its worthwhileness must depend on its effects* (my italics).

This resonates with my research focus; a real world view of research as practical, and designed to have an institutional impact, is at the heart of my initial thinking.

However, the idea that HE real world research is generally a-theoretical has come under increased scrutiny. Tight (2004 p.399)<sup>27</sup> concludes that, while much HE research has a practical purpose, it is impossible to report on this 'without having some theoretical perspective in mind, even though this is not (always) expressed'. However, he also concludes that the extent to which theory and methodology are made explicit varies greatly. Grey, in the third edition of his book (2014), states that while real world research *may* be applied (and that this kind of research is not to be denigrated) 'the most satisfying and usable research relationships are those that can be generalised' (p.6). Basic research is 'concerned with clarifying, validating or building a theory' (p.3). He suggests that many different research approaches may be appropriate to achieve this, and as a result he argues that real world research draws from across the positivist–interpretivist spectrum.

More recently, Robson has also taken the view that a theoretical perspective is important. He argues (since 2002) that he has come 'out of the closet'

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<sup>27</sup> This is a meta-analysis of over 400 pieces of published research which overviews the explicit and/or implicit theoretical perspectives adopted.

ontologically (p.xi) as a 'self confessed realist' and explains the alignment he sees between real world research, and the theorising aspects of pragmatism and CR. For Robson, the practical purpose of research remains constant; real world research aims to address issues and challenges in their natural settings and does this through adopting a pluralistic approach to the selection of research design and method. However, developing and justifying a theoretical stance becomes increasingly important. This is basically the viewpoint I have adopted, and it was through reading Robson's work that I was first drawn to both pragmatism and CR as research meta-paradigms.

Leadership research in HE often straddles the boundary between applied/real world thinking and theoretical research. As Bolden (2010 p.77) has argued:

embedded within the leadership literature is the need for theory to be grounded in and to inform practice. Where research is conducted in a contrived setting it may be difficult to generalise to an applied setting. Likewise, unless theory has direct practical implications for how leaders go about, or are supported in, their work it is likely to be considered by practicing leaders or those charged with their development, as irrelevant or impractical.

He refers to this duality as a type of 'double dialectic' (p.77)<sup>28</sup>.

whereby what is perceived as relevant and useful knowledge for academics looking to build theory is unlikely to be the same sort of knowledge that is regarded as relevant and useful to leadership practitioners looking to resolve practical challenges.

Bolden et al. (2011) reinforce this point, and I have taken note of their warning against undue haste, in applying one's findings and attempting to reveal the practical, predictive or prescriptive implications of one's research, before taking time to reflect critically on the theoretical perspective.

Therefore, it has become apparent to me that it is important to explicitly theorise my research. However, this does not address questions about what *sort of theoretical perspectives* align well with real world research and might potentially lend themselves to practical outcomes. Tight (2004) argues that there is a

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<sup>28</sup> The idea of a double dialectic is widely used in contemporary philosophy to indicate how researchers 'chart a nuanced path that mediates between objectivism and relativism to offer creative avenues of thought for contemporary ethics and epistemology' (Moscovici 2002 p.5); thus denying the idea of an oppositional single dialectic in how knowledge is viewed.

tendency in HE research to focus on low/mid level theory<sup>29</sup>.

The emphasis on the situational, contingent and relational has also become apparent in recent *leadership* research, which Bolden et al. (2011 p.38) suggest has moved away from:

endeavouring to capture an objective and/or generalizable account of leadership' (towards) 'the underlying sensemaking processes ...and the potential of "leaders" and other actors to intervene in shaping these sense-making processes.

Like Bolden (2010 p.69), I have come to believe that in my research I can best make a contribution by emphasising discursive theories of process. This will support my interest in revealing how AEL is construed in particular contexts, at particular points in time and by different individuals and groups. I take the view that I should focus on complex interactions and negotiations, which constantly take place in organizational and socio-cultural contexts, and, for me, this suggests that the search for regularities and predictions are unlikely to be the focus of my research. However, this does not negate the possibility of searching for evidence about organizational actions and socio-cultural interactions (I discuss the importance of structure and agency in section 4), which deepens understanding of how these work and the kinds of practical actions that can usefully be derived from what I discover.

In the next section I briefly explore the extent to which this 'practical' thinking is underpinned by sociological philosophical thought. This is also important as a way of setting the scene for the the philosophical and methodological approaches I introduce in sections 3 and 4.

## **2.1 The philosophical underpinnings of a real world approach**

In the context of the social sciences, several world views (Creswell, 2009) underpin the approach taken by real world researchers. Without exploring these in depth, I believe that I need to broadly consider them as a framework for my thinking. The essential ontological differences between views of reality which focus on 'being' and those which focus on 'becoming' can be traced back to Greek philosophy (Gray, 2014 p.20), but were developed by the German

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<sup>29</sup> Low- mid level theory refers to theories which are grounded in the specific and provide potential explanations in given contexts; in contrast high level, or grand theory attempts to provide universal descriptions or explanations.

philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as described in Berger & Luckmann (1966), and more recently in the work of post-modernists and critical theorists, as described in Bhaskar (1998). These apparently contradictory perspectives have become somewhat entrenched in research paradigms where they tend to be articulated by their advocates as polarised and incapable of compromise; something that has been referred to as the 'paradigm wars' (Clegg, 2005 p.415).

As Elder-Vass (2012 p.3) suggests, this polarisation of positions is often presented in a more nuanced way, even by those philosophers who are considered to be proponents of relativism:

it is striking that many apparently structuralist thinkers have been unable or unwilling in practice to dispense with agency and apparently individualist thinkers have been unable or unwilling in practice to dispense with structure.

For example, Searle (1995), in his analysis of the construction of social reality, suggests a world view that accepts that there *are* two types of social facts/realities: those that depend on human agreement (and exist because of us) and those that exist independently of our representations of the world (and hence he also takes an objective ontological stance). However, he argues that, while our representations of this external reality are mediated through our language and beliefs and are therefore socially constructed (and here he takes a subjective epistemological stance), this does not mean that behind these constructions of the truth there cannot be (admittedly sometimes difficult to access) external realities (something he calls 'brute truths'). Therefore, Searle denies what he calls the 'verification principle of the antirealists' that the truth about external reality is inaccessible, unintelligible and it is not even worth exploring the possibility that it exists.

In contrast, Berger & Luckmann (1966) are widely considered to be key proponents of the constructionist approach to social science (McLachlan & Garcia, 2015). They deny an objective view of reality and take a relativist view arguing that (p.15) 'we contend that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality'. However, I find within their argument a clear duality (p.30). They accept the fundamental rule that 'social facts are things' (Durkheim) while also supporting the contention that the 'object

of cognition is the subjective meaning–complex of action’ (Weber). These views, they argue, are not contradictory; society does have objective facticity and is also built upon activity that has subjective meaning (p.30).

These philosophers are implicitly articulating what I believe might be called ‘bridging philosophies’ (see Marks & O’Mahoney, 2014 p.67 for a similar suggestion) in the social sciences. Bridging writers challenge the assumption that there is a tight alignment of the view taken about reality (realist or relativist) with the way knowledge about how the world is constructed (objectivism or constructionism); in this context the dualism of the ‘paradigm wars’ (Scott, 2005) starts to unravel.

Exactly *how* dualism unravels is important (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). Archer has consistently warned against the conflationary tendencies of dualistic modern social theory particularly in relation to explanation (see section 4.3.2). However, here I am specifically addressing the dualism inherent in philosophical reasoning.

Real world research has been dominated until recently by positivist (or naïve realist/scientist) paradigms (Gray 2014 p.21). However, in recent years real world researchers have increasingly favoured relativist perspectives. For example, Robson (2011 p.22) refers to a wide range of interpretivist and emancipatory approaches including phenomenology, ethnography and action theory (p.26) as important in real world research. However, Robson (2011 p.42) argues that pragmatism and contemporary realism have become the two (bridging) approaches that are of particular interest to real world researchers who:

seek to achieve a détente between the empirical tradition on the one hand, and the less thoroughgoing versions of relativism found in some constructionist approaches on the other.

In the next two sections I argue that pragmatism and critical realism are bridging philosophies that can usefully inform my ‘personal enquiry paradigm’.

### 3.0 Pragmatism and its relevance to this study

The term pragmatism is in common usage as a way of describing an attitude to life which is grounded in taking a practical or matter-of-fact approach. Its philosophical counterpart is a movement or doctrine which takes a particular view on 'knowledge, reality and human action' (Biesta & Burbules, 2003 p.3). As a philosophical movement it consists of a range of theoretical perspectives, all of which emphasise the practical and experiential in the approach taken to researching the truth. Ideologically, the purpose of pragmatic thinking is to 'generate practical consequences for society' (Gray, 2014 p.28) and the focus is on suitability for purpose and ability to create action; for pragmatists 'truth is what works' (Robson, 2011 p.43). In this way it clearly has synergies with the purposes of real world research and is worth exploring further as a philosophical underpinning for my research.

Its origins are usually ascribed to the work of Charles Pierce, William James and, in particular, John Dewey in the late nineteenth and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gray, 2014). Dewey<sup>30</sup> felt that the philosophy and practice of science had put us 'in a situation with two equally unattractive options: the *inhuman rationality* of modern science or the *human irrationality* of common sense' (Biesta & Burbules, 2004 p.17). This, he concluded, meant that 'values, morals, feelings and emotions' are poorly represented in research into the 'urgent practical problems of contemporary society'. He argued that pragmatism tries to find an answer to the question about whether 'the world of natural science and the world of everyday life can be reconciled (p.18). This led him to a new understanding of *human rationality* and the reality of experience (something which is also central to CR). The writings of early pragmatists, and particularly Dewey, continue to be important in a contemporary revival of pragmatism as both a philosophy and as a methodological approach. For example, Merton, whose work I refer to in chapter three (section 2.2), is seen as a contemporary pragmatist.

#### 3.1 Philosophical pragmatism

Some recent developments have focused on the *philosophical*. Rosiek (2013 p.693) takes the view that there has been a contemporary re-orientation of pragmatism around two themes which he calls '*reflexive realism*' and '*an*

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<sup>30</sup> These quotes are from Biesta and Burbules (2004) and are not directly attributable to Dewey.

*ontology of the future*'.

*Reflexive realism* refers to the ontological approach to knowledge adopted by pragmatists which 'collapses subject/object and knowledge/value distinctions into a single ...category of *experience*'. (p.694). This focus on life-experiences inevitably requires reflexive approaches to the past and critical reflection on what our embodied experiences (and the habits which result from these) might mean. In my research this stance on knowledge is important as it acknowledges the existence of cultural and social constructs which are real experiences for those working in HE. It can justify research into material mechanisms, which may help elucidate the reluctance of academics to take on AEL roles; it also allows an emphasis on the critical which can 'call us to some form of action within the stream of experience' (p.695). This is of relevance to my study; it helps to identify the practical outcomes of research, which have potential for addressing or ameliorating the challenges found in HE cultures, and which may be influential in forming academic attitudes.

*An ontology of the future* follows on directly from this last point. It relates to what Rosiek (2013 p.696) calls the 'inversion of the temporal frame of social inquiry'. By focusing on, and anticipating, the future the emphasis of empirical inquiry is directed by pragmatists towards remaking the present; the focus for individuals shifts from past experiences to future possibilities. In relation to leadership research, Bolden et al. (2011 p.8) suggest that most leadership research focuses on 'retrospective analysis ...rather than future and emergent acts' and that this can mean that important mechanisms are missed. I return to this idea of researching the future in section 4.1.

### **3.2 Methodological pragmatism**

Some would argue that current interest in pragmatism focuses mostly on its *methodological* implications (Dewey describes this as a process of inquiry based on a series of steps). These have been invoked in the effort to find a détente between qualitative and quantitative research, and between positivist and relativist perspectives. Gray, for example, suggests that this has its origins in the need to post-rationalise the use of research designs which employ mixed approaches and methods. This is probably overly cynical; as Robson (2011 p.43) argues there are enough fundamental compatibilities in beliefs between

contemporary qualitative and quantitative researchers to make a pragmatic perspective perfectly acceptable and very useful.

So what are the implications of pragmatism for methodology, research design and the process of inquiry? Rosiek suggests that pragmatists draw on a wide range of methodological approaches and this means that, for many, pragmatism has become the 'foundational philosophy' of mixed methods research (Buchanan & Bryman, 2009 p.518). In addition, Rosiek argues (p.697) that three aspects of Dewey's inquiry processes are associated with pragmatic research design:

- the operation of intelligence in sorting through the experiences that motivate us to inquiry;
- the creative and critical thought that helps us to frame new questions;
- the open-ended assessment of how the products of our inquiry overall affect our continuing experience.

The first of these suggests that careful reflection on experiences which have inspired an inquiry makes a good starting point. However, the process does not 'close down' the focus of the inquiry or formalise the research questions. I would argue that my prologue aimed to achieve exactly this purpose, and I have adopted this approach to gradually and progressively developing a research focus.

The second of these relates to the process by which enquiries are subsequently framed and the implications for data selection. The suggestion is made that pragmatism involves a creative process and a degree of imagination. Roxa (2014) makes similar points about the open ended and creative nature of the research process advocated by pragmatists<sup>31</sup>. Based on *informed guesses*, the data is collected to explore phenomena which can then lead to a testable hypothesis. The idea is that a 'creative act', where research approaches are not definitive from the start, opens up avenues for research which can change as the process evolves. I have deliberately adopted this approach in my work; the focus of the research and the nature of the research questions evolve as the study proceeds. For example, I have several sets of interview data collected at different points in time (Appendix 3), and decisions about the questions asked

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<sup>31</sup> Roxa argues that pragmatist research *starts* with a process of abduction which is an inquiry process also favoured by critical realists (see section 4.2.1 below).

have evolved through time in the light of preceding analysis.

The third feature of pragmatic inquiry involves the forward looking or 'prophetic qualities' of the analysis. These are not predictive (as one might argue is the case in positivist approaches to inquiry), but rather focus on how the outcomes of the research help reconstitute the present in order to contribute to a 'transformed future' (p.699). Once again this resonates with my intentions in this study, which, in part, focus on how ECAs envisage their future career trajectories in relation to AEL and how institutions might transform their practices to nurture AEL.

It is perhaps not surprising that there has been a revival in interest in pragmatism amongst real world researchers given its emphasis on experience, action and interaction and its rejection of epistemological duality (Biesta & Burbules, 2003 p.9). For example, Neame (2013 p.333), in an analysis of the literature related to organisational culture, concludes that many researchers adopt what he calls 'intuitive pragmatism', responding to the need for non-researchers to be able to understand and apply the outcomes of research. Bolden (2010 p.94) suggests:

Much research on leadership, therefore, has a strong element of pragmatism which informs how the research is framed (in terms of which questions to ask), conducted (how and where to look for the answers) and disseminated (which messages are conveyed for which audiences).

However, like Bolden, I suspect this emphasis on pragmatism draws the researcher into investigating cause-effect relationships and not into answering 'why' questions (p.94) about leadership. He argues that the pragmatist approach is essentially derived from a positivist perspective and neglects the importance of 'more discursive and constructivist approaches' (p.94).

Biesta & Burbules (2003) would not accept this view. Discussing Dewey's work in particular, they make it clear that while he was drawn to the well tested experimental methods of modern natural science, he rejected the view that the knowledge generated through these methods relates to, and can only measure, real objects; rather he prioritises the 'domain of human actions' (p.15) and sees these as 'intimately and inextricably connected' with knowledge (p.72). For this

study this is an important perspective; it allows me to address aspects of both 'why' and 'how' questions in unravelling the nature of AEL at UoE. This analysis is developed further in section 6, where I draw on CR principles to expand on the idea of theoretical duality in leadership studies.

In conclusion, therefore, I am drawn to a pragmatic approach which is real world orientated (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Patton, 1996) This allows me to select appropriate research approaches that best suit the context and focus of my inquiry. As pragmatism takes a pluralistic view of research, straddles more than one paradigm and combines world views that are both generalizable and particular, I feel it liberates me to use a wide range of approaches to my investigation (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1996).

However, Robson (2011) has argued strongly that these characteristics of pragmatism are shared (at least in part) with CR and I shall now explore the suitability of CR as an alternative, or complementary, meta-theoretical framework for my research.

#### **4.0 Critical realism (CR) and its relevance to this study**

The earliest form of realism (sometimes called naïve realism) (Robson, 2011 p.29) has a long tradition in the natural sciences. It is generally seen as aligning ontologically with positivism, accepting the objective existence of an external reality (Bhaskar, 1998, 2014) and adopting a scientific approach to research. However, in the social sciences, it is social, and in particular CR that has had considerable recent impact. Robson (2011 p.29) sees CR as a synthesis of post positivism and constructionism in which reality is seen as *both* materially and socially constructed. CR involves revealing unseen structures and mechanisms (p.29) which cannot be directly observed or measured.

It must be said at the outset, that many relativists and, particularly radical constructionists, find this approach hard to accept. Maxwell (2012) mentions the influential work of Guba & Lincoln (1989) and Denzin & Lincoln (2005) in this context. They argue that ontology and epistemology are always reflections of each other and cannot be independent. However, social realism provides an argument *for* independence. Ontology and epistemology cannot be 'collapsed'

into each other (Reed, 2009 p.433) and social realists reject the conflation of the two as an 'epistemic fallacy' (Maxwell, 2012 p.12).

In discussing the significant features of social realism that I find relevant to my work, I shall focus in particular on critical realism (CR). I have used the same approach as that taken for exploring pragmatism in the previous section – I first consider CR from a philosophical, and then from a methodological viewpoint.

#### 4.1 Philosophical CR

Philosophical CR has developed over the last thirty five years as the most widely accepted form of new realism in the social sciences. It owes its prominence to the work of Roy Bhaskar<sup>32</sup> (Bhaskar, 2014; Bhaskar & Norrie, 1998; Scott, 2005) and his writings about what he has called 'critical naturalism' (Bhaskar, 1998 p.xiii). The basic terminology and principles of CR, which have been developed by a growing number of critical realist researchers, are clarified and discussed in Appendix 2 as background to my argument that CR is relevant to my research. It is important to refer to this table, not just for the principles, but also because it links these directly to my work. A summary of these is also presented in my personal enquiry paradigm (Figure 2.2).

One particularly important term which I use throughout my study is **mechanisms and causal powers (M&CPs)**. This is an umbrella term, used by some CR researchers (Elder Vass, 2012; Vincent & Wapshott, 2014), to capture the emergent properties (causal powers) that are possessed by (material and non-material) entities and the underlying contributing influences (mechanisms) through which these are produced.

The established principles (Appendix 2) have led CR researchers to conclude that a central tenant of social (and, in my research, cultural) systems they investigate is that they are **complex, open and emergent**. The entities within these open systems cannot be studied in 'closed (e.g. laboratory) conditions and they have complex feedback loops<sup>33</sup>. The result is that there are low level (or often no) predictable outcomes. Consequently, CRs accept the inevitability

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<sup>32</sup> Bhaskar was at the centre of the CR movement and involved in the founding of the International Centre for Critical Realism and the Journal of Critical Realism. He has recently died but his work is still revered and widely quoted.

<sup>33</sup>This links with chapter three section 5 where I discuss complex open systems.

of temporal, cultural and contextual specificity of researchable knowledge. Therefore, it is within **limited contexts** that CRs 'work out a better and ... reliable explanation for patterns of events via the development of more adequate accounts of the powers, entities and mechanisms which created them'. (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014 p.9). In my research, the implication of this is that it is not my intention to search for generalizable causes and explanations, but rather to set up frameworks of possibilities which emerge from the perspectives I observe at UoE.

It is apparent from this brief review of CR principles, and my reflections on the relevance of these to my own study, that CR has the potential to provide me with a framework within which to work. However, before considering the methodological implications for my work I shall elaborate on recent trends in CR thinking that are significance for my approach.

Two diverging trends in CR research can be identified in recent years and I describe these in some detail in Appendix 2 as (emancipatory) dialectical CR [DCR] and applied CR (ACR). As indicated, these two approaches have become somewhat 'siloe'd' as the two branches have drifted apart. My study aligns most closely with the applied (ACR) approach and my research design reflects Maxwell's (2012; Figure 2.6) ACR approach. However, I have not ignored the emancipatory aspects; where appropriate I draw on dialectical perspectives relating to the exercise of power in my analysis, although I would not claim this is central to my approach.

Given my particular interest in leadership it is important to establish whether, and to what extent, CR has been adopted by leadership researchers. It can be argued that (at least implicitly and sometimes explicitly) the traditional gulf between positivist and constructionist approaches has been under scrutiny by leadership researchers; one answer to this has been to accommodate CR as a research philosophy (Bolden et al., 2011). I shall review leadership research which has implicitly adopted an ACR approach in chapter three (section 4). In summary, CR has well established philosophical principles which have relevance to my work. However, ACR has also had a significant impact on my methodology and I shall now turn to a consideration of this.

## 4.2 Methodological CR

Bhaskar (2014, p.xiv), while accepting that the 'systematized meta-theory of CR' has dominantly been viewed as a philosophical movement, suggests that 'it has nevertheless always been the driving logic of all good science' and refers to CR as 'implicit method in action'. However, in the past, beyond a general interest in modes of reasoning (see below), and a general belief that CR researchers may take a pluralistic approach to methodology and a multi-method approach to the search for evidence, 'few reliable rules about how to proceed' existed (Ackroyd & Karlsson, 2014 p.22).

It has been the emergence of ACR, particularly in the social sciences, which has resulted in explicit methodological approaches being developed. Most contemporary ACRs would argue that epistemologically, the objective, scientific and often quantitative approach adopted by experimental researchers, through which facts and knowledge are established as 'truth', is not appropriate for ACR inquiry (Maxwell, 2012). Rather, there is an emphasis on subjectivity, in which there is no infallible truth, and knowledge is seen as a 'social and historical product' (Robson, 2011 p.32). Approaches are typically qualitative and come from the interpretivist tradition of research. However, given that CR methodologies have evolved to support the search for mechanisms in social contexts, an interpretivist position is not sufficient. As O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) suggest, CR research processes can be seen to involve at least two types of research; the first focuses on the intransitive world of actual events/ mechanisms/ structures and the second on the transitive world of descriptions and theories. Methodologies, therefore, involve an iterative movement between the two. As Reed (2009) explains, this means that CR is sometimes seen as offering a 'third way' (p.430) normally requiring a 'intensive research design... drawing on a rich combination of historical, structural and discursive research methods' (p.431), and, as Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014 p.22) argue, successful CR research 'depends on intellectual curiosity not on the following of methodological rules'.

In order to develop this methodological thinking, I shall firstly, consider the inferential strategies or modes of reasoning (Olsen, 2007) favoured by CR

researchers, and secondly, reflect on the quantitative-qualitative debate from a CR perspective.

#### 4.2.1 Modes of reasoning

Bhaskar (see Bhaskar & Norrie, 1998) makes it clear that he believes that the exploratory purposes of CR<sup>34</sup> cannot be achieved by using *inductive* and/or *deductive* inferential strategies. Instead he suggested that *abductive* and/or *retroductive* inferential strategies are more appropriate. This thinking has been widely adopted by CRs ( Ackroyd & Karlsson, 2014; Meyer & Lunnay, 2012; Olsen, 2007; Reed, 2009) and exemplified by ACRs in their work (Kempster & Parry, 2014; Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014; Vincent & Wapshott, 2014).

The differences between these four inferential strategies have been summarised simply by Olsen (2007) and in more depth by Reed (2009). Induction (reasoning from data to generality) and deduction (reasoning from generality to data via hypothesis) are the primary strategies of positivism and involve a search for generalizations and laws. Given that it is not the purpose of CR research to establish generalizable truths, CRs scepticism about these strategies is understandable. Abduction (reasoning from immersion in a scene to a verbal or written summary) produces detailed descriptive accounts of motives and actions and leads to (theoretical) interpretations of these. Reed (2009) argues that this is not an approach favoured by CRs, as it fails to search for deep or hidden generative mechanisms<sup>35</sup>. However, Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014 p.27) argue that abduction *is* an important CR strategy for revealing mechanisms through intensive studies (for example through case studies or action research). Meyer and Lunnay (2012 section 2.5) suggest it can 'show how something might be...to formulate new ideas...or to see something in a different context'. My analysis of ECA interviews presented in Appendix 15 is an example of my use of abductive reasoning.

Retroduction (reasoning about why things happen, including why the data appear the way they do) is the most widely adopted strategy in ACR studies. It

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<sup>34</sup> He claims these are to identify and discover/uncover knowledge about structures, causes and mechanisms; rather than to prove/disprove propositions.

<sup>35</sup> Abductive modes of reasoning are also favoured by pragmatists and were introduced by Peirce, one of the early exponents of pragmatism. Meyer & Lunnay (2012) suggest that he was also the originator of retroductive thinking but conflated the two into one mode of reasoning. Contemporary CRs have separated the two.

involves ‘working back’ from an observed phenomena to postulate possible mechanisms or structures which may account for these phenomena being the way they are. Through careful research design the researcher moves between knowledge and observable events; empirical evidence relating to these may, in turn, lead to further rounds of ‘creative model building’ (Reed, 2009 p.438) and an emphasis on ‘the continuously accretive nature of theory building’.

Meyer and Lunney (2012 section 1.1) argue that a *combination* of abductive and retroductive inference enables researchers to ‘refine and redevelop social theory allowing data that are not in keeping with the initial theoretical framework (to) become significant’. When used together, these forms of inference can lead to the formation of more focused research questions and new conceptual frameworks (section 2.1). This is a key feature of my research approach where my data have been sequentially and incrementally added; and where consideration of prior data has informed the conceptual frameworks within which subsequent data have been collected. I return to this several times in later chapters.

#### 4.2.2 Quantitative or qualitative

I now turn to the quantitative-qualitative debate that is central to social science research methods (Creswell, 2009). Firstly, it is generally accepted by CRs that they should adopt an eclectic approach to data *sources*; the choices made will relate to the phenomena being investigated. However, most CR research uses qualitative data (see figure 2.4) to help identify M&CPs in ‘local and specific’ contexts (Brown & Roberts, 2014 p.300). This approach is reflected in the sources I use for this study (Appendix 3).

Secondly, many CR researchers adopt methodological eclectic mixed method *approaches* to their work; hence permitting choices that range over the quantitative- qualitative spectrum<sup>36</sup>. Scott (2007) suggests that there are several arguments, which support the reconciliation of the quantitative–qualitative divide, and that there are strategies which may facilitate this reconciliation. He argues that the overarching ontological approach to reality taken by CR permits

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<sup>36</sup> CRs do sometimes use statistical techniques alongside the more typical use of qualitative methods. For example, Edwards, O’Mahoney, and Vincent, (2014a) argue that the use of regression techniques may lead to the identification of outliers in the data which become the basis of further exploratory CR inquiry.

coherent solutions, which support the use of diverse methods and which take their research data from multiple sources. In my research this has been an important consideration, as I have taken the view that any source or method that facilitates understanding of academics' attitudes towards AEL is of value to my study.

Given that CR emphasises the search for influential M&CPs this presents an apparent methodological paradox and can lead to criticism (see my discussion of this in chapter seven) that outcomes of CR research (of the type described above) are incapable of generalization and cannot contribute to system-wide theories and explanations. One way of approaching this is to accept (Pawson, 2003) that mixed method CR research is capable of generating theory, but that it is normally limited to 'middle range' theorization, and does not expect to achieve the degree of generalization often associated with systems-wide analysis.

My analysis of the philosophical and methodological relevance of CR to my study would not be complete without reference to Margaret Archer's work, which I have drawn on extensively in my study.

### **4.3 Archer's contribution and its relevance to this study**

Archer is an empirical and theoretical sociologist and a key proponent of CR<sup>37</sup>. She has developed significant conceptual (Figure 3.1) and methodological approaches, which both complement and diverge from the work of other CRs. In her project, spanning 40 years, she has systematically developed theories to help explain the 'emergence, reproduction and transformation of cultural systems and social structures' (Vandenberghe, 2005 p.227). In this section I shall draw on three aspects of her work which are particularly relevant to my study: Her emphasis on culture, her approach to structure and agency and her temporal approach to morphogenesis.

#### **4.3.1 The cultural gaze**

The *social and economic* which have been dominant in much CR research has been supplemented through Archer's work, since 1988, by a *cultural gaze*. In

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<sup>37</sup> Her philosophical and theoretical arguments have largely been developed in four books: Culture and agency (1988); Realist social theory (1995); Being human (2000); Structure, agency and the internal conversation (2003).

many sociological studies culture is understood, somewhat uncritically, as the shared beliefs, values and practices which *unite groups of people* – it is simply one of the (fixed) aspects of context in which life is played out. This has been challenged by Archer. For her, culture can be seen and researched as something that is *real* and it is part of the dynamic human condition. Culture operates as part of an open system in which individuals participate and is subject to transformation or replication<sup>38</sup>. As such, the mental properties which underlie cultural beliefs are as real as material properties, and become part of the way we view, understand and explain the world (i.e. culture can be *implicated* in causation but can only be *inferred* from data). Culture exists alongside the social, not conflated with it but inextricably intertwined. It can be argued that the cultural and social occupy positions in the stratified world which are relatively autonomous, but they can be influential in both directions (p.27). Much of her work focuses on the *attitudes and stances* individuals adopt towards the structures and cultures of the organisations they belong to (I discuss these in chapter three section 2.2). She theorises how *agentic and socio-cultural structural mechanisms and causal powers* are important interacting influences on both attitudes and stances.

An aspect of Archer's thinking about culture, which is of particular interest to me, is the emphasis that is placed on *groups as agents* and how culturally normative group stances can co-exist with diverse attitudes. The concept of intracultural *conformity*, which underpins much HE research about academics' attitudes towards institutional structures (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Wenger et al., 2002), is challenged by Archer's thinking on intracultural *diversity* (1988 chapter six), which she attributes to ideational agency. In my research I have drawn on this thinking as it has been interpreted by Elder Vass (Archer & Elder-Vass, 2012). Through his analysis of what he calls 'norm circles', he describes the significance of dominant normative pressures (cultural conditioning) exerted by groups of people, leading to attitudinal conformity of individuals within groups. However, he takes the analysis further, arguing that individual normative beliefs and dispositions mediate these pressures and this can result in intra-group

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<sup>38</sup> In cultural studies creative active and dynamic approaches are emerging which link to sociology. This integration and inter-disciplinarity owes something to Bourdieu.

attitudinal diversity<sup>39</sup>. This thinking is developed below in my consideration of analytical dualism.

#### 4.3.2 Structure and agency: analytical dualism

Archer is implacably opposed to any attempts to reduce or 'conflate' social - cultural structures and human agency and, on this basis, has been critical of much sociological theory. She rejects both the 'upward conflation' of rational choice theorists and the 'downward conflation' favoured by structuralists (Vandenberghe, 2005 p.228). Whilst she accepts aspects of structuration theory (Giddens, 1986), the fact that in this approach structure and agency are 'centrally conflated', and cannot be analysed individually for their contributions to socio-cultural causation, means that, for her, it lacks explanatory power. To present the argument simply, her *analytically dualistic view* is that agency (people's personal powers) can influence structures, and, independently, that structures (into which people are born and live) have emergent properties which effect actor's decisions (Kessler & Bach, 2014 p.170). In Archer's work the contention is that there is *an interplay* between the 'parts and the people' – structure and agency – and thus she rejects the simple 'conditioning' of one over the other (Archer, 1995)<sup>40</sup>. Analytic dualism provides one theoretical dimension of my analysis (summarised in figure 6.2), through which I explore my interests in how academics (either similarly or differently) conceptualise AEL.

Archer (2003) argues that an important M&CP, which mediates between (social and cultural) structures and action, is the '**internal conversation**'<sup>41</sup>. I understand this to be the self-conscious, agentially reflexive (but conditioned) action of the individual in a situation where (objective) structures provide a set of constraints and enablements – the term used in this study to capture these is M&CPs. Taking this approach, it can be argued that, through agency, actors are self-determining and, through reflexivity, 'reasons' become 'causes' for courses

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<sup>39</sup> This idea is important in my analysis of EL and SAL attitudes (Chapter four section 7.3) where this is manifest in the contradictory stances of group members who may at times both conform to, and deny, group cultural norms. I refer to this as attitudinal dissonance.

<sup>40</sup> She explores alternative theories associated with neo-marxism; rational choice theory and discourse theory (Bourdieu) but suggests that they are 'third person accounts' and they ignore how individuals activate, evade or suspend the structural powers/properties which impinge on their lives.

<sup>41</sup> Described by Archer as the mental ability of all (normal) people to consider themselves in relation to their social contexts and vice versa. (M. S. Archer, 2000). I explore the significance of this for my study in chapter three section 2.2.

of action (projects and practices). This leads to the concept of the strategic 'active agent' – people adjust their actions/projects to their personal concerns, what they want to achieve and what they feasibly can achieve (p.133). There are different modes of reflexivity relating to personal '*stances*'<sup>42</sup> which Archer reveals through empirical research<sup>43</sup>. One result of this is the negation of uniformity, (Delbridge & Edwards, 2013) and the promotion of diversity, (Archer, 2003) that I have referred to above.

Archer is only one of many researchers to have emphasised active agency<sup>44</sup>. Vandenberghe (2005) suggests that Archer has understated the existence of these alternatives, with implications for research methods. While Archer advocates extended dialogic interviewing, he argues that active agency is best understood through the telling of life–stories, 'intersubjective communication', and/or through 'collective action'; (p.234). I do not see these as exclusive approaches and use both dialogic interviews and life stories in my study.

Archer's CR approach to dualism has underpinned Delbridge and Edwards' empirical research (2013 p.927). Using a CR framework to focus on how agents 'have differing perceptions and depth of knowledge of their contexts' (p.935), in part based on 'historical conditioning', they are able to identify M&CPs at work. They emphasise the importance of understanding various *levels* in the organization where there are 'multiple logics' in play (p.929). I have drawn on their approach in my own research framework (Figure 2.3). They also discuss the importance of 'avoiding a single analytical moment' (p.941). One important aspect of this study is their focus on Archer's approach to temporality to which I shall now turn.

#### 4.3.3 Archer and temporality

One of Archer's contributions to CR is her emphasis on temporality and its implications for structure-agency relationships. Her view is that structures are 'susceptible to influence or elaboration by agents across space and time, the

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<sup>42</sup> The four stances: communicative reflexives; autonomous reflexives; meta reflexives and fractured reflexives are described in chapter three section 2.2.

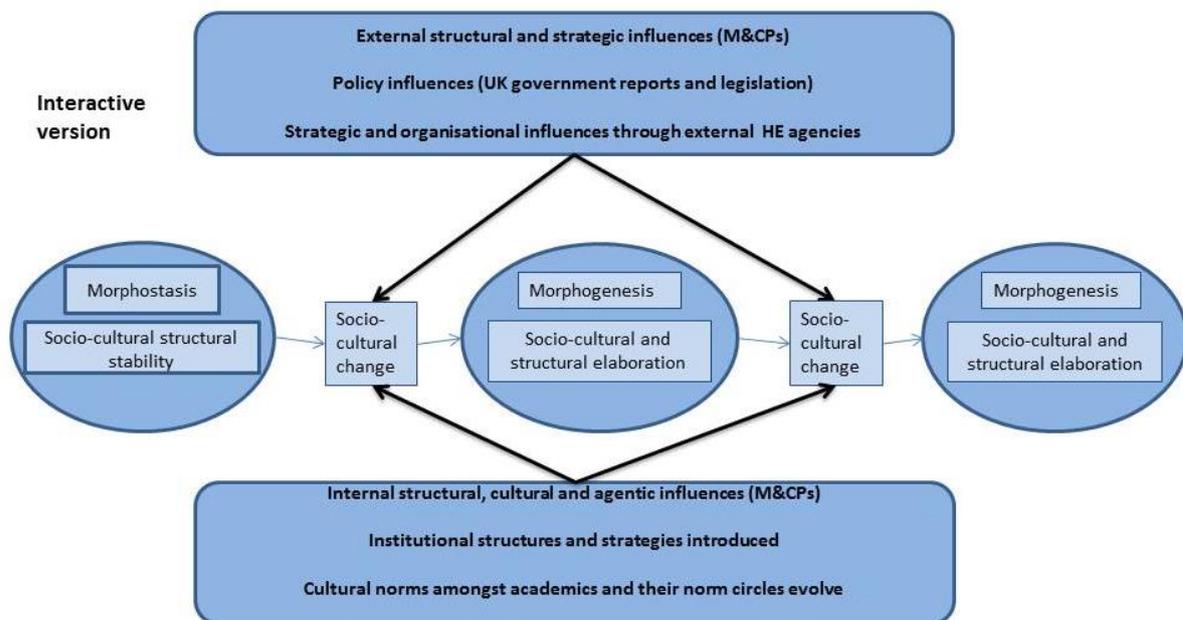
<sup>43</sup> In her analysis Archer's work draws on the early pragmatists (In particular Dewey -see section 3.1) and on the importance of the internal conversation in relation to broader social movements for change and thinking about the future.

<sup>44</sup> For example, this is central to historical analysis and humanism and has been explored in relation to 'great man theory' in leadership research (Haslam et al., 2011 p.2).

latter being captured by the notion of the morphogenetic cycle' (Kessler & Bach, 2014 p.169).

Structure and agency are (as argued above) relatively autonomous, but in her simple linear version of the morphogenetic cycle (Figure 2.1 top diagram) they interact through a temporal sequence in which structures (at T1) have powers to impinge on agents (individuals and groups), following which agents (at T2-3) respond leading to structural elaboration (at T4).

**Figure 2.1 Archer and the morphogenetic cycle**



I have developed this diagram to introduce some of the structures and actions that typically occur in the UK HE context to demonstrate the operation of the morphogenetic cycle, as it might apply in my work (Figure 2.1 bottom diagram).

The fact that structure and agency operate at different times allows researchers to examine the sequential interplay between them, and to establish the relative significance of (for example) agency, culture and (social) structure (Archer,

1988 Part II). Her development of the morphogenetic cycle<sup>45</sup>, with an emphasis on the operation of culture (in addition to structure and agency) through time, demonstrates how observable patterns of morphostasis (reproduction) and/or morphogenesis (transformation) can emerge. To exemplify this, in relation to institutions such as education systems, she explains (Archer, 2000 p.307) that 'each new generation of (active) agents either reproduces or transforms its structural (and cultural) inheritance, but this heritage itself conditions their vested interests in doing so'. I use some these ideas in my own research into the persistence of academic attitudes at UoE, and how this may be influenced by cultural conditioning.

Once again, agency is given prominence in Archer's morphogenetic approach, as she emphasises that we need *to understand what really matters to actors* ('who does' and 'why they do') to interpret how they use their personal powers ('action' in figure 2.1) during their career trajectories. This has implications for my selection of appropriate research methods (see section 7). The emphasis on temporality creates a need to access data about the past to identify 'the enduring characteristics of the organisation'. Examples include historical documents, past institutional policies and reconstructed life histories (Mutch, 2014 p.226), all of which I use in this study<sup>46</sup>.

The relevance of the past and present for the future is also addressed in the CR literature. Stevenson and Clegg (2011 p.234) suggest that Archer's interest lies in her belief that 'the capacity to imagine the self into the future involves a recognition of the personal powers of individuals to form a view about their fundamental concerns'. O'Byrne's case study (2015 p.225) draws on this to argue 'actors ... must 'seek out roles in society that allow them to pursue their ultimate concerns, and thus to become the kinds of people they wish to be'; this involves 'elasticating' their current roles to align with their personal projects. For my study I turn the gaze onto ECAs, suggesting that the way in which they conceptualise the future is important, as I pursue my pragmatic intentions to identify types of ELD which might be appropriate. I draw, not only on Archer's approach, but also on pragmatism for insights. In section 3.2 I referred to the

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<sup>45</sup> Archer (1982) acknowledges that the origins of morphogenesis lie in the work of Walter Buckley 1967(Sociology and Modern Systems Theory, New Jersey, Prentice Hall,).

<sup>46</sup> See chapter four sections 3.2 and 3.3 and chapter five section 3.1.

emphasis on the *'possible'* and the centrality of the concept of an *'ontology for the future'* in pragmatism. As Rosiek (2013 p.696) suggests:

This emphasis on the ontological status of the future possibilities as a guide for inquiry is not a simplistic futurism. ... It instead involves recognition of the way present experience is constituted in part by anticipations of the future.

It is in this context that my work considers how views about the future influence ECA attitudes<sup>47</sup>.

To reconcile the various philosophical and methodological perspectives I have introduced in this chapter, I shall now bring them together into framework of principles (Figure 2.2). I describe this as my 'personal enquiry paradigm' (Golby & Parrott, 1999).

### 5.0 Summary: Methodological pluralism and theoretical eclecticism

Throughout this chapter I have introduced a range of 'candidate perspectives', that I have argued are relevant to my work, and align broadly with my real world approach to research. In this section I summarise these (section 5.1) and discuss how it might be described as a 'bricoleur approach' (section 5.2).

#### 5.1 A personal enquiry paradigm

I now focus on a number of important principles which are relevant to my study and align with my positionality as a researcher (see epilogue). They are spelt out in detail in figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2 A personal enquiry paradigm: Summary of principles**

Principles	Background	Relevance to my study
<i>These are my principles. They reflect my personal position and define my personal enquiry paradigm.</i>	<i>Where did these principles originate?</i>	<i>Why I have chosen these principles?</i>
<b>Focus/purpose of research</b>		
The focus of research is on a (complex) real world issue.	<i>Real world research</i> provides a conceptual framework for this	My research focuses on gaining an understanding

<sup>47</sup> This is important for my research where I am interested in understanding the extent to which cultural morphostasis might originate in academics' views about AEL.

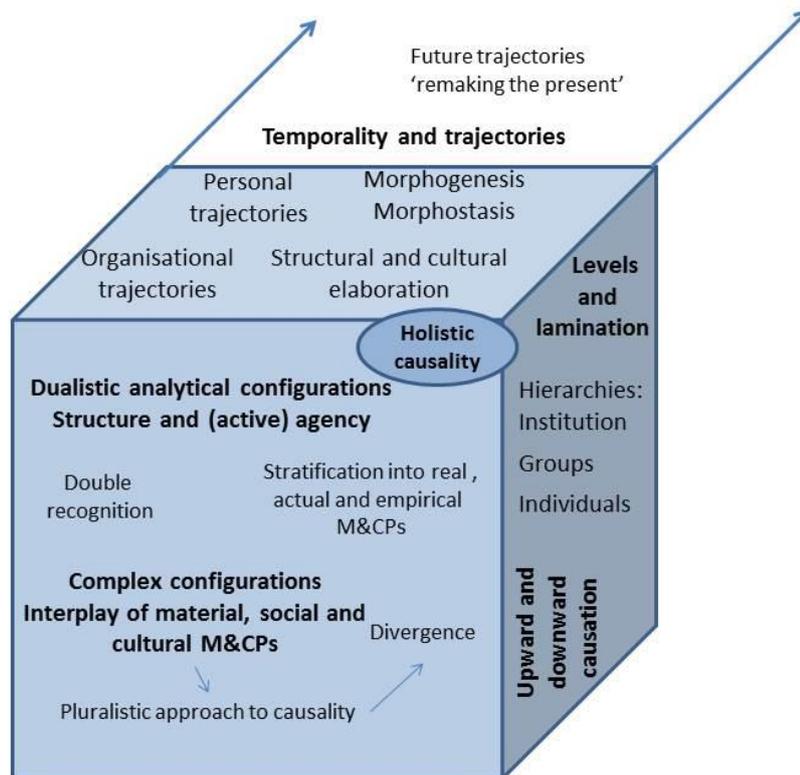
<p>The research will deepen understanding about the issue and will contribute to how best to address the issue.</p>	<p>kind of practically orientated investigation.</p> <p><i>Pragmatism</i> provides the philosophical justification for an emphasis on the practical and experiential.</p>	<p>of how academics view AEL and identifying insights into how best to nurture future leaders.</p>
<p><b>Theoretical or a-theoretical?</b></p>		
<p>The research may be practical in purpose but it needs to be theoretically informed. However, although theories and conceptual frameworks are a useful outcome of research, in complex open social systems their wider relevance is likely to be limited</p>	<p>Both <i>pragmatism</i> and <i>CR</i> encourage approaches to research which take a theoretical approach while cautiously grounding this in the complex real world and situating it in local contexts. Both suggest that this means that mid-range or local theories (as opposed to grand theories) are the outcome.</p>	<p>In exploring academic attitudes to AEL my work develops practical insights which can be operationalised; and also theoretical insights which have helped establish what the influential underlying M&amp;CPs are in one institution.</p>
<p><b>What type of theory?</b></p>		
<p>Theories can be drawn from a range of sources. I believe there are advantages in taking a pluralistic approach to theory building.</p>	<p><i>Real world researchers</i> draw their ideas from any source which seems to be useful in addressing the problem being researched.</p> <p><i>Pragmatism</i> provides a theoretical argument in support of this.</p> <p><i>CR</i> is premised on the idea that there is a complex interplay between, social and cultural theory.</p>	<p>Studying academics working in complex HEIs has meant that many theoretical approaches have been considered and inform the research process (see figure 3.6)</p>
<p><b>Approach to reality</b></p>		
<p>There is an objective reality which can be researched. Moreover, reality does not consist simply of concrete entities; it can consist of persistent M&amp;CPs about which there are multiple views about how these operate in space and time.</p>	<p>Philosophical dualism as espoused in <i>pragmatism</i> provides a theoretical rationale for this principle.</p> <p><i>CR</i> adopts a similar approach based on the <i>double recognition</i> principle. The mechanisms which influence social and cultural (non-material) reality can only be explored indirectly and through analysis of subjective views.</p>	<p>In my research the assumption is made that academics exist in an (open) system of institutional (material, social and cultural) M&amp;CPs which frame their current attitudes and stances, and the choices they make about the future. Uncovering these is central to my research.</p>

<b>Approach to explanation/ causality</b>		
<p>There are multiple possible explanations for how we experience the world and our attitudes about them. People respond in different and divergent ways. Any attempts to explain these are inevitably pluralistic, highly contextualised and subject to change.</p> <p>However, tentative explanations <i>can</i> be derived from empirical data for highly contextualised situations.</p> <p>Explanations come through understanding the influential interplay between structure and agency</p>	<p>CR adopts a pluralistic approach to causation which Archer calls <i>analytical dualism</i>. Human agency (central to relativist thinking and subjectivity) and structures (encapsulated in post positivist thinking and objectivity) both have a role to play in explanation. They can be explored individually but the interplay between them is very significant. Concepts such as contradiction, complementarity and conditioned action are employed to address the ways in which structure and agency interact. There is no assumption that the outcomes will be convergent and CR de-emphasises uniformity and emphasises the likelihood of <i>divergence</i>.</p>	<p>In my research I have considered the extent to which agentic autonomy is central to academic cultures and looked for evidence that structural changes in HEIs are influencing academic attitudes and stances.</p> <p>Key to my research is what academics do with the situations they find themselves in and the extent to which there is any commonality or divergence in the way they react.</p>
<b>Modes of reasoning /processes of enquiry</b>		
<p>I accept that there needs to be an inferential approach to my research but I favour tentative and emergent approaches which probe for conceptual constructs rather than less flexible and more rigid approaches associated with testing hypotheses.</p>	<p>CR and <i>pragmatism</i> favour <i>abduction</i>. This enquiry process allows for conceptual frameworks/ theory to emerge tentatively through an accretive process which involves reflexive thinking.</p> <p>CR also promotes <i>retroduction</i> (often in conjunction with abduction) which acknowledges the pre-existence of a possible theory which is explored and evolves through the process of research. These are generally seen to be preferred over the positivist approaches to deduction and induction.</p>	<p>My research starts from a position where various ideas about academic attitudes and stances are identified from research literature. I then go on to confirm and explore (new) emergent ideas about what might influence the way academics view AEL at UoE.</p> <p>I emphasise the importance of retroduction in my work (although abduction is also used).</p>
<b>Stratification</b>		
<p>In searching for explanations it is important to discover the deep meanings in empirical evidence/data (usually derived from discourse). From these it</p>	<p>CR provides a framework for stratification based on understanding the <i>empirical, actual and real</i>.</p>	<p>In my <i>empirical</i> research data are collected about the views/preferences of academics (relating to AEL) to establish the</p>

<p>is possible to infer what kind of underlying M&amp;CPs are important.</p>	<p><i>Archer</i> suggests that deep meaning is associated with understanding the personal 'inner conversations' of the individual.</p>	<p>nature of <i>real</i> M&amp;CPs which may influence attitudes and stances and how they emerge.</p> <p>In taking a deeper view, I have also considered the <i>actual</i> institutional structures and cultures within which these views are formed.</p>
<p><b>Levels and laminated systems</b></p>		
<p>Causes and explanations relating to a real world problem are likely to differ when it is studied at different levels of an institution. Explanations at one level may, or may not, be implicated at a lower (or higher) level.</p> <p>This means that research needs to capture the complexity of causality at different levels and attempt to explain how these combine to create outcomes.</p>	<p><i>CR</i> provides a theoretical frame for the idea that entities are organized hierarchically into <i>levels</i> and at any level they can be understood as <b>causal</b> in their impact. <i>Causality may operate upwards or downwards</i>.</p> <p><i>Lamination</i> suggests that what is relevant at one level may not be at another. <i>Holistic causality</i> refers to the complex and contextual picture of the real world problem which emerges when these are brought together.</p>	<p>In my study the idea that there are different levels in the organisation of the university is important.</p> <p>Micro level research potentially suggests very different outcomes from research which adopts a meso/macro gaze.</p> <p>Bringing these together requires a nested dimension to my research which helps to describe and explain how academics think about AEL.</p>
<p><b>Temporality</b></p>		
<p>Emergent concepts and explanations are often only relevant at particular times and places. The causal processes associated with structures and active agents lead to changes (in both) which create new conditions.</p> <p>Anticipating the future is an important aspect of explanation when the focus of research is on addressing practical issues.</p>	<p>In <i>Archer's view</i> of temporality <i>morphogenesis</i> is the process by which structure and agency impinge on each other in a sequential (linear) way. Each is investigated separately but their interplay results in <i>cultural elaboration</i>.</p> <p><i>Pragmatism</i> provides the concept of 'ontologies of the future'; by focusing on and anticipating the future. The emphasis of empirical inquiry is directed by pragmatists towards <i>remaking the present</i>.</p>	<p>In my research both 'looking back' (the senior academics who have formally adopted leadership roles do this) and 'looking forward' (the ECAs who anticipate their future career trajectories do this) are important. This has required a temporal dimension to my research.</p>

Key elements my personal enquiry paradigm are summarised in figure 2.3. This three dimensional methodological framework focuses on several ACR principles brought together under three themes: dualist analytical configurations; levels and lamination and temporality and trajectories.

**Figure 2.3 Pluralistic approach to methodology: A three dimensional framework**



This provides a visual summary of how I take forward my methodological approach to analysing attitudes and stances adopted towards AEL in UoE and the framework is revisited in chapters three, four and five and presented as an elaborated framework in chapter six (figure 6.2).

## 5.2 A bricoleur approach?

In searching for an appropriate metaphor for describing my pluralistic approach I have been drawn to concepts which acknowledge that research is complex, highly interwoven and requires a multi-perspective approach. As Shay, Ashwin, and Case (2009 p.374) suggest, 'all theoretical frameworks simplify but they simplify in different ways' Therefore, drawing on a particular theoretical framework for studying HE organisations involves seeing them 'in terms of particular kinds of social processes and not others' and that 'no single perspective can deal with the complexity' of these processes. Adopting a

reflexive approach to this issue has led me to my pluralistic personal enquiry paradigm. I am aware of the dangers involved (as a relatively inexperienced researcher) in 'unravelling' carefully crafted and well established philosophical perspectives for my own purposes; some might argue that this approach lacks depth and could even be seen as somewhat 'naive'.

However, hybridizing of different theoretical perspectives is a recognisable trend in research. More researchers are choosing to move 'beyond the dualism of mutually exclusive categories' (Vidovich, 2007 p.287) and opt for 'theoretical eclecticism' (p.290). He describes how the 'selective coupling of different perspectives' allows for bridges to be built between the macro and micro focus of enquiry and objective and subjective analysis. Metaphors such as 'bridging' (Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014) (used to describe attempts to bridge different conceptual and philosophical positions) or 'magpie research' (Carter, 2013) ('cherry-picking' aspects of approaches that seem relevant to a research project) have been introduced. From a slightly different angle, I find the concept of researchers as 'boundary transgressors' (Macfarlane, 2012 p.87) compelling. Macfarlane suggest that, not only do many appear to operate across disciplinary/ methodological boundaries, moving beyond the comfort zone of a subject specialism, but also, that this is what academics *ought to do*. This perspective provides some confidence that my approach is appropriate and, potentially, would be well received by other researchers in my field.

One powerful metaphor that has been adopted to capture methodological and theoretical eclecticism, is that of the bricoleur<sup>48</sup>. Rogers (2012 p.1) suggests this metaphor, used in relation to qualitative research, captures a:

critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry. ... it denotes methodological practices explicitly based on notions of eclecticism, emergent design, flexibility and plurality. Further, it signifies approaches that examine phenomena from multiple, and sometimes competing, theoretical and methodological perspectives.

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<sup>48</sup> Bricoleur is a French term which describes the creativity of the skilled craftsperson in using materials left over from previous projects to craft new artefacts, and which is used by Denzin & Lincoln (2005), to capture the eclecticism associated with much qualitative research.

The concept of bricolage has been used by others in capturing research perspectives in HE (Bolden, 2010; Louvel, 2013) and I refer to it later in my study.

It is particularly appealing in the context of CR research, which by its nature adopts multiple perspectives. It has been used, for example, in DCR research (Kincheloe, 2001 p.679; 2005) to avoid both ‘the superficiality of methodological breadth and the parochialism of unidisciplinary approaches’ and to allow researchers to acquire a ‘better conceptual grasp of the complexity of the research act’. In particular, Kincheloe argues that bricoleurs are enabled to ‘gain a more complex understanding of the intricacies of research design’ which I now move onto in section 6.

## **6.0 Research design**

In this section I turn to a consideration of research design. My approach in section 6.1 is to consider research designs which might be considered to align with the research principles in figure 2.2 before I revisit my case study approach (section 6.2). I introduce my research methods (section 7) and data source (section 8) and finally, address issues around the quality of my research (section 9).

### **6.1 Possible research designs**

In general terms *intensive research designs* have been favoured by ACR and pragmatist researchers as providing a sustained and in depth focus on how M&CPs operate in specific contexts. Given that the process is time-consuming, a very small number of cases are usually considered appropriate.

Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014 p.27) argue that, while intensive designs are commonly adopted for ACR research, they are not inevitable. They identify eight specific research designs that are used most frequently in ACR (each of these is exemplified in Edwards, O'Mahoney, and Vincent. (2014b). These are categorised firstly, by whether the research is intensive or extensive and secondly, by the extent to which the researcher is detached or engaged (Figure 2.4). It is apparent from this that the research designs favoured by ACRs are

not exclusive to critical realist research (e.g. case studies, action research and surveys are widely used).

The categorisation of research design strategies in figure 2.4 is somewhat spurious and I would argue that, in reality, there is more overlap between the categories than is suggested, and that combinations of these strategies are often used in CR research.

**Figure 2.4 Eight research designs for realist informed research**

Research procedures	Distinctive research strategies			
	Intensive -----		-----Extensive	
	Focus on mechanism (context given)	Typical context-mechanism interaction	Historical intersection	Focus on context (mechanism given)
Detached study	Case study	Comparative case study	Generative institutional analysis	Survey and census data
Engaged study	Action research	Intensive realist evaluation	Barefoot historical research	Extensive realist evaluation
Enquiry approach	<b>Abduction</b>	<b>Abduction</b>	<b>Abduction/retroduction</b>	<b>Abduction/retroduction</b>

*(based on Ackroyd & Karlsson 2014 p.27)*

In order to clarify how appropriate any of these research strategies are for my study I have drawn on Reed (2009 p.439) who suggests intensive ACR research designs needs to meet these criteria:

- research questions are highly focused on establishing how generative mechanisms work in a particular case/phenomena/outcome;
- a combination of ethnographic, textual, historical and structural data is used (although in any one study these are not all necessarily present);
- the process of combination and recombination of this data results in deeper understanding of connections and relationships within the underlying structures and mechanisms;
- this process involves repeated movement between empirical data and theoretical analysis in a type of casual analysis associated with abduction and retroduction;
- constant iteration will help to establish the exact nature of the (often many) generative mechanisms which underpin the case and support the development of abstract conceptual frameworks which may (or may not) be useful in other contexts.

The following sections, and further elaboration in chapters four and five, will illustrate that my choice of a case study strategy does indeed meet these criteria.

## 6.2 The case study approach

In figure 2.4 intensive research is typified by the use of case studies (detached) and action research (engaged); I am not in a position where I could undertake action research and therefore focused my attention from an early stage on the case study approach.

Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014 p.28) suggest that rigorously conceived case studies are a widely favoured approach in ACR research; however, these are a *particular type* of case study, which 'concentrates on identifying particular but nonetheless highly formative causal processes' (p.29). The case study is an expedient way of doing this<sup>49</sup>. It assumes that 'clues about the character of generative mechanisms are found in many places' (p.30) and it encourages the researcher to follow these. Maxwell (2012 p.47) describes this as a 'modus operandi' strategy; it is rather like 'detective work'; where M&CPs are not directly observable the researcher searches for 'clues'. Delbridge and Edwards (2013 p.944) suggest that this kind of extended case study approach 'uncovers not simply the deeply embedded and conditioning effects of logics but also the shaping (and historical) role of social arrangements and the agentic projects of actors'.

An ACR case study differs from non-ACR case study design (Robson, 2011 p.178) in that it does not attempt a complete and holistic account through an emergent study of a phenomena/ organisation. It does, however, have a lot in common with other approaches adopted and adapted by ACRs such as ethnography (Rees & Gatenby, 2014) and grounded theory (Kempster & Parry, 2014) that also take their focus as the local context and draw on more than one sort of evidence<sup>50</sup>.

My study typifies the case study approach to research design and has less in common with the other seven research designs identified in figure 2.4; it is a study in a particular context (the focus is mostly on the UoE) of particular phenomena which have been observed (attitudes to AEL and ELD), and I draw

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<sup>49</sup> Case studies have been seen as 'soft options' and of somewhat dubious value unless they are carefully devised and subject to traditional quality checks. Hence the emphasis is on rigour.

<sup>50</sup> Action research also has characteristics in common although it is argued that the immersion of the researcher in the context means this is a more engaged type of study (Ackroyd & Karlsson 2014 p.37).

on several sources of evidence to explore these (p.179). My aim is to explain something new about what is happening.

My decision to undertake a single case study was not taken lightly. At an early stage I considered using a comparative case study approach<sup>51</sup>, which I subsequently rejected. I am aware that case studies have been treated with some suspicion and are undervalued in social science for several reasons (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The greatest challenge is whether it is possible to generalise and/or theorise from a single case. In choosing this approach, I am accepting that generalisations and theoretical perspectives that emerge from my study are going to be contingent, partial and qualified. On the other hand, I tend to agree with Flyvbjerg when he argues (p.228), ‘formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” is underestimated’.

In addition, as Robson (2011 p.185) suggests ‘in one sense all enquiries are case studies... they take place at particular times, in particular places with particular people’ and often employ more than one data source. Therefore, in selecting a case study approach, I am not tying myself to a particular and narrow definition of a case study; I am drawing on some of its characteristics which align with my own approach to research design.

In particular, it is the *flexibility* of case study design, which attracts both ACRs and pragmatists, and that is at the heart of real world research of the kind I am undertaking. I offer the view that it is not necessary to slavishly follow either a positivist approach to case study design (Yin, 2014), or a social constructionist approach (Gilgun, 2011; Stake, 2005); while both of these have relevance neither is sufficient in an ACR study. It is better to think in terms of a case study which focuses on how individuals interpret something ‘out there’ from their personal perspectives.

Finally, I do not accept that the case study need necessarily adopt an abductive approach (see figure 2.4 bottom row). Vincent and Wapshott (2014 p.155) argue that in developing new knowledge about institutional mechanisms

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<sup>51</sup> I have data collected from two comparable RIUs on which I could have drawn in this study.

through case studies there are ‘specific tactics’ which can be useful which involve constant movement between theory and evidence. They suggest that a *literature search* helps to establish underexplored concepts/existing theories (my chapter three) and then, through *both* abductive and retroductive processes of enquiry, new forms of understanding emerge which help explain characteristics of the phenomena which are currently under-explained (my chapters four and five). This involves phases of more ‘*exploratory and expansive research*’ (abducting novel theories) before ‘*targeting*’ the research (a retroductive process) at understanding specific M&CPs(p.159).<sup>52</sup> My study deliberately adopts this retroductive-abductive approach. Figure 2.5 captures the application of this phased approach in my study.

**Figure 2.5 A linear CR case study process applied to my thesis**

Phase of study	Chapter	Process of enquiry		Key methods (where introduced)
Phase 1 <i>Exploratory</i> search for theoretical constructs and generative M&CPs in relevant leadership and HE literature.	<b>Chapter three Literature review</b> an important source of information for identifying previously researched M&CPs and under-researched themes.	Secondary research which draws on the ideas and theories of other social and organisational researchers.	Through each stage the emerging concepts/ mechanisms are refined and the next phase allows some probing of these. New ideas may still be emerging in each phase. Methods are emergent and respond to the outcomes of previous phases of the study.	Comprehensive literature search based on qualitative evidence synthesis methods (Chapter three section 1)
Phase 2a: <i>Exploratory</i> research into institutional background and institutional strategies leading to identifying M&CPs.	<b>Chapter four Institutional context</b> This includes analysis of a recent historical account, documentary evidence and current strategies.	Abductive – novel ideas and theories emerge		Textual and documentary analysis (Chapter four section 3)
Phase 2b: <i>Targeted</i> research into elite leader and senior academic attitudes to AEL leading to additional and refined M&CPs.	<b>Chapter four Elite leaders and Senior academics</b> Analysis of view and perceptions of senior staff.	Abductive / retroductive ideas are discussed with key stakeholders; theories continue to emerge but others are being applied against what is observed.		Semi structured interviews with Elite leaders and senior academic leaders Chapter four sections 5.1 and 6.1)
Phase 3: <i>Targeted</i> research into ECA attitudes – refining the mechanisms further.	<b>Early career academics</b> Views and perceptions of early career academics mostly about the future.	Retroductive / abductive: theories are being applied against what is observed and new ideas also emerge when ECAs theorise about AEL		Dialogic interviews and theorised interviews with ECAs (chapter five section 2.2)  Interpretative evaluation: Pragmatic common referents group activity Chapter five section 7)

### 6.3 Interactive or systemic research designs

The process described in figure 2.5 suggests a linearity or sequencing of research processes which is not entirely realistic. As Vincent & Wapshott (2014

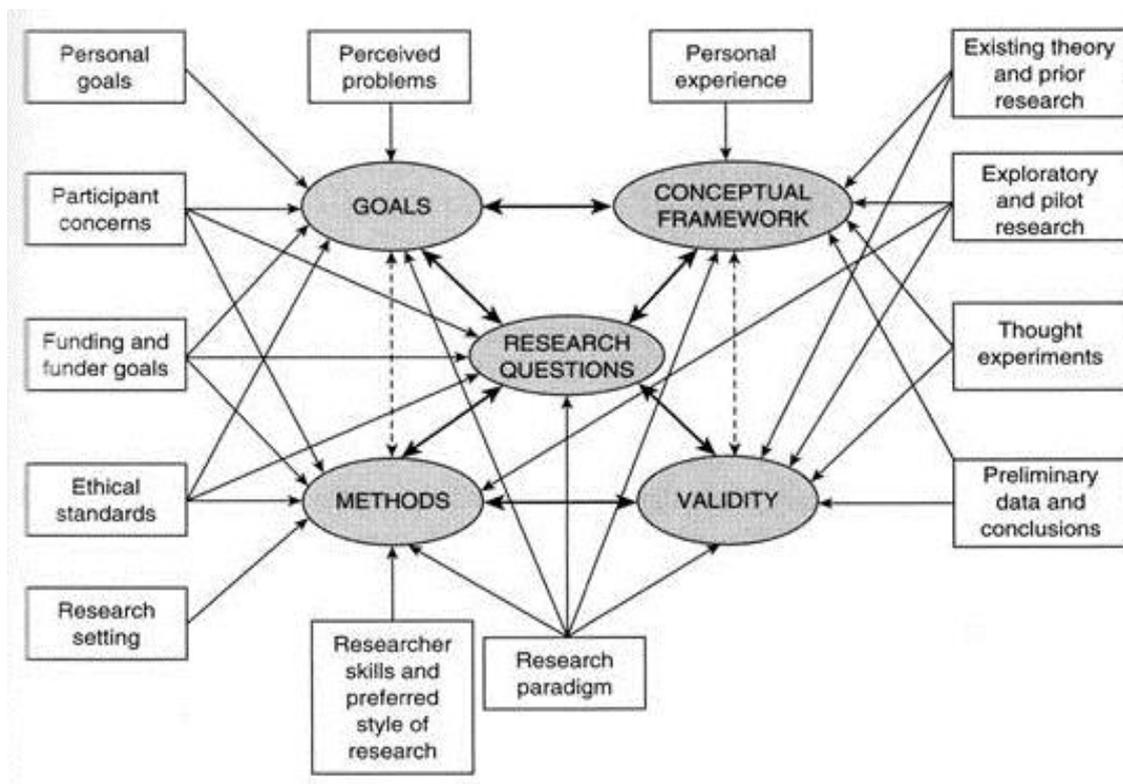
<sup>52</sup> The idea that there is a sequential or serial approach which can be separated into a series of steps or stages, is also central to Dewey’s pragmatic theory of inquiry. Biesta & Burbules, (2003) spell this out in detail (see section 3).

p.155) suggest, the actual inquiry process is seldom linear and 'is usually quite messy and likely to involve false starts'. This has certainly been my experience.

Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014 p.22) suggest that in ACR research design processes are *eclectic and creative*, may involve alternatives to or combinations of designs, and will often be iterative.

Maxwell (2012 p.76) argues that, while most published guidance on research design is fixed, and follows either a typological or a linear prescriptive approach, ACR favours research designs which are less linear than this. He proposes an interactive or systemic approach (Figure 2.6). This has five key components which are interconnected through a complex set of two way influences, are 'flexible' in that the links are not subject to rigid rules, and critically, they have emergent properties.

**Figure 2.6 Research design components**  
(Maxwell, 2012 p.81; reproduced with permission)



He argues that this way of conceptualising research design is of particular relevance for CR studies and I would argue that it also aligns well with the principles I have identified in figure 3.2. In this context Maxwell (2012 p.71) argues that research design is in itself a 'real entity' and as such it is subject to

reflexive analysis and to emergence – the intended design is likely to change as part of the research process and the ‘real’ design of the study, what Maxwell calls its ‘logic-in-use’, will differ from the ‘reconstructed logic’ reported in the study (p.74). I have certainly found this to be the case. At several points I have reconsidered my research design and reconceptualised aspects of the process leading to significant non-linearity. The ‘reconstructed’ linear process I describe in figure 2.5 has, in reality, been a more iterative process, reflecting the impact at different times of most the variables Maxwell identifies (although not funding and funder goals).

The approaches discussed above have only recently been adopted in organisational and leadership research (Buchanan & Bryman, 2009) as researchers move away from positivist and scientific designs towards qualitative and contextual designs in their ‘quest for truth’ (Bolden, 2010 p.13). Whilst CR is not mentioned explicitly in most leadership research, there is increasing evidence of the emergent research design associated with CR (Reed, 2009).

## **7.0 Methods**

I have already made it clear that, for CR, research methods are not prescribed and researchers tend towards pluralism in their choice of methods. There is a long tradition of multi or mixed method research (Gray, 2014;Tashakkori, 2003) and increasingly highly regulated approaches for undertaking this kind of research have evolved (Creswell, 2009). Real world researchers, and CRs in particular, suggest that mixed methods (but not necessarily those that include both qualitative and quantitative methods) and a range of data sources are essential for revealing the complex characteristics of layered, open and complex organisational systems.

Like many CRs, I have not engaged in ‘methodological imperialism’ (Hurrell, 2014 p.243) but have chosen methods based on their fitness for purpose at a particular stage in a study. They are guided retroductively by a partial knowledge of the potential M&CPs which may be active at the level being studied; something O’Mahoney and Vincent (2014 p.15) call the ‘domain specific theoretical framework’. Therefore, my methods have emerged as the study unfolds and were not all decided on at an early stage in the research (see

figure 2.5 for how this has been important). As a result, I have decided that the best way to introduce and justify my precise choice of methods is in the appropriate sections in chapters four and five. In these, I describe, justify and critique the selected methods in relation to the specific purpose of each empirical study. The mode of analysis is considered and any ethical issues discussed. However, the use of interviews in all three empirical studies requires some general discussion.

### **7.1 The primacy of interviewing as method**

CR research frequently draws on the outcomes of interviews as a way of accessing 'the interviewee's understanding of a particular organisational phenomenon that is seen to exist outside of the person' (Cassell, 2009). The critical point here is that interviews are seen as providing insights into the 'real world' of M&CPs which are central to the ontological approach to reality adopted by CRs. However, these insights are supplemented by other sources which are critical in an analysis of multiple and complex realities. This is different to the view taken of interview data by social constructionists, where the interview leads to the co-production of a 'text' rather than an account of any external 'reality' or real world phenomenon (Alvesson, 2003). It also contrasts with the view taken by positivists where interviews are conducted in a standardised way, by neutral observers, in order to generate results which may be aggregated (Smith & Elger, 2012, 2014). The potential of interviews to contribute to a CR understanding of reality draws on interviews as 'meaning construction'; casting light on 'insider accounts' of the underlying resources and structures within which individuals operate, *and* on how they deal with these through their internal conversations (Archer, 2003).

The CR interview process can vary from being highly flexible with the aim of facilitating dialogue as encouraged by Archer (2003) and often used in abductive inquiry, to more theory-led approaches popularised by Pawson (2002) and often used in retroductive inquiry. The design of the interview, the selection of participants, the context within which the data is collected, the way the interview is captured and the role played by the interviewer as 'active, investigative and analytically informed' (Smith & Elger, 2014 p.130), are all important in CR research. In chapters four and five I discuss how I have

designed each interview strategy, and in chapter six I evaluate each of them for 'adequacy and completeness' (p.120).

## 7.2 Transcription and analysis

In my three sets of interviews I vary between adopting approaches to transcription involving the use of extracts, identified through a process of multiple careful listening (chapter four), or total transcription (chapter five). I shall describe and justify my reasons for adopting different approaches to transcription in those chapters.

In general CRs use well established approaches to analysing qualitative data (Maxwell, 2012 chapter 7) including categorising and connecting data. During this process CRs particularly note discussions about broader contexts, including material, embodied and institutional references (Sims-Shouten & Riley, 2014 p.58). In order to avoid overly reducing the flow of conversational data through these analytical processes, CRs often use cameos (mini- case studies) or short narratives to maintain the integrity of the context and to do justice to individual participants as actors and agents. In my work this approach has been adopted in exploring ECA career trajectories (Appendix 15).

Finally, the use of computer software for analysing data is seen by CRs as offering potential and considerable efficiencies and I have made use of this in chapter five<sup>53</sup>. However, the way the software categorises and classifies data means that the technology can dictate the analytical approach and may dull researchers' critical powers. Maxwell (2012 p.124) argues for caution and awareness or this suggesting that 'such tools privilege certain analytical strategies and inhibit others'.

## 8.0 Data sources

I have already described and explained how my eclectic approach to data sources sits well with both pragmatist (Biesta, 2007) and CR approaches (Maxwell, 2012). I have briefly indicated the major sources I have used in figure 2.5 and in Appendix 3 I have provided more details for my data sources. This indicates the *range of sources* and the *chronological order* in which they were

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<sup>53</sup> I have used NVivo and described and justify the process in chapter 5 (section 2.2.3).

explored; it also reiterates that the data collection methods emerged in response to my greater awareness of the *theoretical perspectives* which might be of use. It is clear that the data has been collected over a period of several of years and, as Gray (2014 p.199) suggests, care needs to be taken with integrating the results when some data 'lags' behind the rest.

I have purposefully chosen sources which provide observations from different *levels* of the institution and from different stakeholders/groups (Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014). However, it is important to note that CRs do not assume that this method involves triangulating data for validity purposes i.e. to find a **convergence** in the data. Rather it accepts that each data set is individual and that **divergence** in explanations is likely (Maxwell, 2012).

## 9.0 Quality of research

In this section I discuss aspects of researcher positionality (9.1), how I understand quality in my research (9.2) and the ethics processes I have put in place (9.3). In chapter seven I shall return to these in a reflexive commentary. However, it is important to state from the outset that an awareness of ethics and credibility underpin my entire research process.

### 9.1 Researcher positionality

I have made it clear in the prologue that I recognise the position I adopt in relation to my research is framed by past and present experiences and the values I hold. In this chapter I have describe an intellectual reality that I construct from a range of research positions. I have explained that I believe my research, and the understandings I will come to through this, are partial, local and situated in a particular context. In chapters four and five my interpretations of what participants say and the theoretical frameworks within which I have chosen to interpret these are also mine. The relationships I have tried to develop with interview participants and other stakeholders have been highly engaged, and I have been particularly aware of any unequal power relationships which might be an issue (Gilgun, 2010).

CRs view the inevitability of taking a personal position (rather than attempting to adopt a neutral objective approach) positively but argue that that a researcher's beliefs and ideas need to be self –monitored. Maxwell (2012 p.99) suggests that

CR researchers should do this by keeping 'subjectivity statements' or 'identity memos'. I have chosen to use a self-critical reflective research diary for 'in-process monitoring' (p.98); over several years I have captured some of the moments when my thinking has been in particular flux (Gilgun, 2010). Although this has not been explicitly transcribed into my thesis, it has had some impact on my research approach. For example, in chapter four (section 6.3) my reflections on the role I have adopted as both evaluator and researcher reflect entries in my diary and shows my concern for the theoretical, political and ideological differences between research and evaluation (Williams, 2003).

## 9.2 Research quality

It is important that all research is subject to quality criteria of some kind as a way of establishing its value, authenticity and how much it can be trusted. The reliance on measures of reliability and validity which underpin much positivist research, and are built into its initial research design (Cohen et al., 2007), are replaced in interpretivist research by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability *after* the account has been developed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, Maxwell (2012 p.148) suggests that, for CRs:

understanding of validity leads to a quite different approach to issues of quality, credibility or trustworthiness.... Rather than relying only on the designs or procedures used in a study to assess its quality, a realist perspective focuses attention on the credibility of the *interpretations and conclusions* drawn ... and the ways in which the researcher used the study's data to assess these interpretations and conclusions in the light of plausible alternatives.

Different sources of data are often considered individually (Maxwell 2012 p.132) and subject to self-validity (Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014); CRs argue against attempts to find convergence (i.e. the idea that data can be triangulated for validity purposes) as this may compromise our understanding of complex and divergent M&CPs. Rather, different data sources spell out varied perspectives which can be drawn together to identify differences, as I have attempted to do in my study. In chapter five (section 7) I adopt an approach to evaluating (rather than validating) my interview outcomes using a pragmatic common referent [PCR] method. This is discussed as an appropriate approach in chapter five (section 7).

Both positivists and interpretivists are, in different ways, dismissive of CR research on the basis that there is no real way of assessing its 'validity'. One of the major issues in CR is that the realities it claims to reveal can only be inferred, not observed. Inference is problematic for many researchers for this reason. Maxwell (2012 p.27) argues that it is important to consider the 'validity threats' raised by this kind of research but argues that *simplicity, adequacy and logical coherence* are the important measures of validity in this situation and that a robust consideration of alternative explanations is required throughout the research process. Acceptability of CR research is therefore based on the credibility of inferences and interpretations.

Maxwell provides a framework for this process based on interpreting the study in relation to:

- Descriptive validity – based on the records kept of what has been seen or heard;
- Interpretative validity – based on the meanings of the participants and respect for their perspectives;
- Theoretical validity – based on a robust process of abstraction and the construction by the researcher of concept (concept validity) and relationships (causal validity).
- Generalizability (external validity) – the application of outcomes beyond the research context to a wider context. This is particularly problematic when dealing with time and place specific nature of interview data;
- Evaluative validity – the robustness of the evaluative statements made by researchers.

Not all of these have significance in a localised study like mine (external validity, for example, is not something I prioritise) but in chapter seven (section 6.1.4) I shall review my study with this framework in mind.

Maxwell (p.145) also discusses the importance for CRs of assessing how data is 'mined' to create evidence; this is not based on the methods used, but more on the appropriateness of method in the context and *in relation to the mechanisms* under investigation. CR deviates from qualitative research in this emphasis on accepting what constitutes evidence; something which could be seen to align rather closely with quantitative/ scientific research methodologies.

Finally, in relation to the quality of research I would like to explore the idea that taking risks is an integral part of research work and that 'being brave'

sometimes means that the results cannot be validated. Instead, they remain as tentative ways of viewing the world, which open up possibilities for future investigations. Lipton's (2004) view on this is reported in Roxa (2014 p.53) where he considers the 'likely' and the 'lovely' aspects of any research which infers explanations. Likely explanations are those which stay very close to the observations and are 'safe' in that they are likely to be validated; lovely explanation moves into the realm of adding meaning to explanation which cannot be supported by the observations – it can be speculative. Being 'brave' involves being speculative and this can be enlightening, but is not so easily validated. I am sometimes inclined towards taking a brave approach and report on the potential implications of this in chapter seven (section 6.3).

### **9.3 Research ethics**

The ethical dimensions of my study have been informed by four things. Firstly, there are external guidelines on ethical procedures for social scientists which I have considered (British Education Research Association [BERA], 2011; Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC], 2010). Secondly, institutional rules and regulations determine the approach I am required to adopt and are overseen by other experienced researchers. Thirdly, there is considerable guidance in the research literature (Gray, 2014; Macfarlane, 2009; Williams, 2003) and some in the ACR literature (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014) on ethical research. Finally, my own ethical stance to my work, which I have developed over a long career, is deeply embedded in the research process in a less formulaic way than that suggested by the regulatory frameworks.

Chapters four and five each include a section on the ethical dimensions of the research reported. Here I shall briefly highlight what is generally significant about ethics in this study. The four 'procedural principles' (Gray, 2014 p.85), which underpin my research with ELs, SALs and ECAS, are widely accepted and are central to institutional guidelines: avoidance of harm, avoidance of deception, the right to privacy and the principle of informed consent (described in the ethical consent in Appendix 10). These principles are a way of acknowledging that research is 'a social process with consequences for those it touches' (Williams, 2003 p.154), and for which I need to take responsibility. An ethical approaches permeates my research in that I recognize that there are subtle ethical issues that can arise in the selection of the research focus, at any

stage in researching UoE, and in reporting the results of the research (Gilgun, 2010).

In particular, my focus on leadership and probing the idea of academic reluctance at UoE requires sensitive handling and awareness that participants may be reticent to talk completely honestly to an ex-colleague, even when the power relationship which once existed is no longer in place. Bolden et al. (2011 p.176) make this point well:

leadership research should not be regarded as an impartial data gathering exercise, but as an intervention in its own right. The very act of enquiring ... may well change in significant or subtle ways the aspects of individual/group and /or organizational functioning. Interviews, questionnaires and other social research methods do more than simply capture information – they set in motion a process of dialogue and reflection that may well change the very thing that they are designed to explore.

As a real world researcher, this is an outcome I would anticipate and hope for; institutional change is implied in my third research question (section 10.0 below). In my epilogue I return to reflect on how my research has set in motion an institutional dialogue, as Bolden anticipates.

## **10.0 Conclusions: clarifying the research questions**

This chapter has provided a methodological and methodical framework for the research I shall report throughout the rest of this thesis. It has focused on two research meta-paradigms, pragmatism and CR, both of which are appropriate for a study which has real world implications. I have suggested that it is credible to create a pluralistic personal inquiry paradigm for my research, which draws on both these meta-paradigms and their associated methodologies and methods. A key point which I have made is that these both favour flexibility and emergence as research approaches and that retroduction, as promoted by CRs, provides a process of enquiry through which I can explore emergent ideas. It allows me to acknowledge that while there are some pre-existing theories about attitudes to AEL, which form a starting point for my further research, new ideas will inevitably emerge and new concepts will evolve as a result of the research process and that these may cause the research approach to change direction.

The framework for my personal enquiry paradigm is summarised in figure 2.3

and this creates a methodological and theoretical framework for the rest of my study. In summary, the study will focus on clarifying attitudes towards AEL as one aspect of the organisational culture at UoE through an analysis of a) the interplay between structure and agency, b) the causal relationships between hierarchies and levels and c) temporality and organisational and personal trajectories.

This, in turn, has implications for my research questions. In chapter one I discuss the research issues which inform this study; here, I clarify how these have evolved into research questions as I have developed my personal enquiry paradigm:

- Question one. What are the attitudes and stances adopted towards AEL at UoE?

This question draws on the principles and methods of CR and pragmatism in a search for the way in which individuals describe their personal views about AEL. The use of the terms *attitudes and stances* draws from Archer's research and is used throughout the thesis.

- Question two. What are the mechanisms and causal powers (M&CPs) that influence these attitudes and stances?

This question adopts terminology (M&CPs) used by CRs. The focus is on investigating the complex configuration of *institutional (structural) and agentic contributory influences* on attitudes and stances at different *levels* and at different *times*.

- Question three. What are the possible policy and practice implications for nurturing AEL?

This question is central to the real world research which underpins my study. While questions one and two have the potential to contribute to theory this question is normative<sup>54</sup> in that the focus is on contributing something practical to

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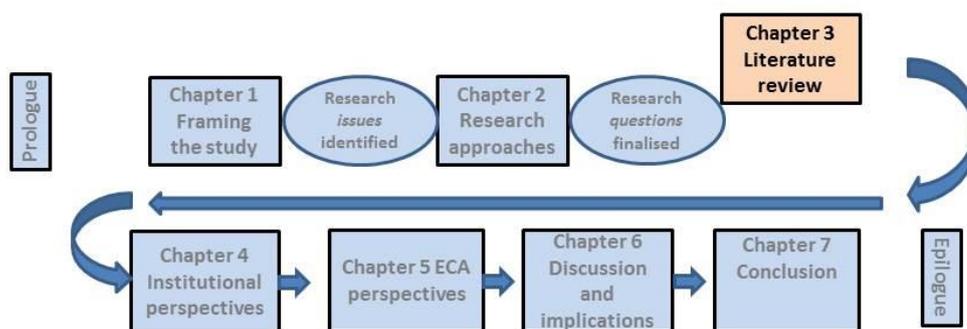
<sup>54</sup> Bolden (2010) suggests there are dangers in adopting normative assumptions about the ability of limited and highly contextualised research findings to provide solutions. Therefore, in asking this final question I purposefully use the word 'possible' to avoid suggesting that my research will inevitably result in recommendations or solutions which might be applied beyond UoE.

institutional strategy.

Moving forward the three research questions are explored in the rest of my study; chapters three to six each consider aspects of all three questions. Chapter three is a review of relevant research undertaken by others. This contributes to an understanding of the attitudes and stances of academics generally and identifies M&CPs which have emerged in prior research. Chapter four provides analysis of AEL and ELD policies and processes within UoE and sets the structural context for attitudes and stances. It is based on historical accounts, policy documents and interviews with a range of ELs and SALs (Figure 1.1). Chapter five investigates their attitudes and stances to AEL and ELD and analyses contributory M&CPs for a small number of ECAs through the use of interviews. Chapter six revisits each of the questions individually. Finally, chapter seven brings the most significant findings for all three questions to the foreground.

Although I have concluded this chapter with three research questions, it is important to re-emphasise that my research *design* was not preconceived and the methods are not 'designed into' the study to address these questions. Instead, the questions are researched in an open and emergent way, allowing the research methods to emerge as the study evolves (Figure 2.5). I believe this means that it is both more authentic and helpful to the reader if I describe my methods in detail when I introduce my research in chapters three, four and five.

## Chapter Three Reviewing the literature



### 1.0 Introduction, aims and approach

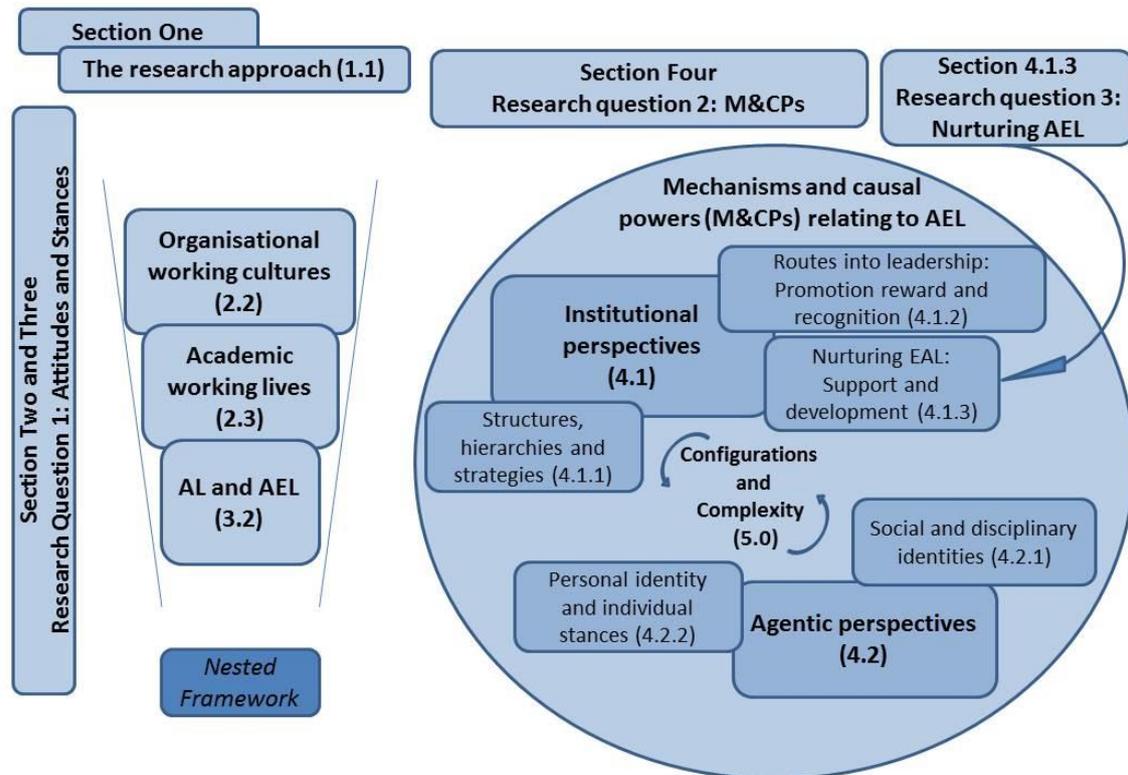
My intention in chapter three is to provide a comprehensive overview of research literature relating to my three research questions. I take a lead from O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014 p.13) who suggest that a literature review is an integral element of the research process in which 'researchers can often get a head start by... discovering the ideas that already exist' and then focusing on 'an area which is new, novel or for other reasons under-researched'. I also undertake what they call an 'immanent critique' (p.14); looking for contradictions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and gaps in the literature that might require further investigation or could lead to thinking which challenges prevailing conceptual orthodoxies.

I have approached this review as a nested framework that starts broadly and narrows its focus (Åkerlind & McAlpine, 2010). This is a well-tested approach that manages the breadth of a literature review while helping to justify choices made in selecting from available literature. It also serves as a convenient ordering tool (Parker & Jary, 1995) and is used in CR research for exploring relationships and mechanisms at different levels (Vincent & Wapshott, 2014).

Figure 3.1 illustrates this nested approach graphically and shows the links between my research questions and the structure I use in this chapter. In this section I clarify my research approach. In section two I overview literature relating to attitudes and stances towards organisational working cultures and in section three the focus narrows down to consider attitudes and stances towards AL, and in particular AEL (research question one). In section four I review

evidence relating to M&CPs which appears to be important in understanding these phenomena.

**Figure 3.1 Structure of chapter three**



### 1.1 The research process

My literature research process is perhaps best described as a qualitative evidence synthesis. This is a generic umbrella term described by (Cooke, Smith, & Booth, 2012 p.1436 as an ‘appropriate, but not necessarily comprehensive’ approach, drawing mainly, but not exclusively, on qualitative literature. In section four, I have also drawn on realist synthesis principles, seeking to unpack how M&CPs work in complex organisational contexts (Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey, & Walshe, 2004). The process has been iterative; I have returned to the literature many times during my retroductive research approach to explore additional evidence which might align with emerging concepts.

As with most literature reviews, I have faced challenges in identifying the most significant and relevant references. I have adopted an inclusive approach (Rayner et al., 2010), based on accessing different types of published materials and research which use a range of methodologies. In this chapter I have not

described or discussed the methodologies and methods used by authors unless they seem particularly relevant to my research interests.

I have also put 'boundaries' around my literature search which I clarify below. These are sometimes referred to as inclusion criteria; however, as I did not apply these strictly as would be the case in a quantitative evidence synthesis (Cooke, Smith, & Booth, 2012) I shall avoid using this term.

#### *Dates*

With the exception of a few important early sociological studies, I have limited my review to post 1985 publications following the Jarratt report into organisation and efficiency in the UK HE sector which had an impact on institutions and academic working lives (Parker & Jary, 1995). However, the majority of the literature postdates the 1991 UK government white paper (HMSO, 1991) as this had significant consequences for the reorganisation of HE in the UK (described in appendix 1).

#### *Geographical locations*

I have favoured (but not exclusively) literature on research in the UK and Australian higher education; the first because it sets the context for my own case study and the second because Australian researchers have taken a leading role internationally in researching AEL and ELD.

#### *Sociological research*

Most of the literature I review takes a sociological perspective. This preference has its origins in my familiarity with this literature based on my background as a geographer and my ongoing interest in sociological thinking, particularly in relation to framing concepts such as structure and agency. I have consciously omitted many psychological references relating to motivation. This reflects the need to restrict the breadth of literature reviewed. I am aware this could be a limitation of my study (Chapter seven section 6.1.1).

#### *Use of selected databases and relevant journals*

I carried out key word/phrase searches using online search engines, which interrogate international databases including Education Research Complete

(EBSCO), 'The British Education Index' and 'ERIC'. These cover a wide range of educational, sociological and organisational journals and other texts.

Targeted retrieval terms include:

- words relating to organisational work, culture and leadership associated with academia, research intensive universities and early career academics;
- attitudinal words including motivation ; reluctance; resistance to lead;
- conceptual terms including those related to academic identity and career trajectories.

#### *Collateral trails*

I use this term to refer to 'following up' references found in my initial searches. In particular extensive literature reviews relating to academic leadership ( e.g. Bryman 2007) led me to several leadership and higher education journals<sup>55</sup>, which I subsequently searched in more detail. This approach also led me to key authors in my area of interest. I have found that this kind of 'citation pearl growing' has been particularly important to 'compensate for any deficiencies in retrieval terms' (Cooke et al., 2012 p.1436).

#### *Key organisations*

In addition to governmental reports I have drawn on publications from the LFHE and the Society for Research into Higher Education [SRHE] both of which have a tradition of publishing around my research topic.

I am very aware that, despite having accumulated a data base on over a thousand references, setting boundaries has meant omitting some relevant research. I am also acutely aware of the large amount published each year which, potentially, means I have missed recent research. To attempt to address this I have kept in touch personally with several key researchers in the field who have provided access to unpublished recent work.

In the next section I synthesise research which relates to attitudes and stances

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<sup>55</sup> These include *Leadership; Academic Leadership; Academic leader; Educational leadership; the Journal of Leadership and Organization; Tertiary Education and Management; Educational Management, Administration and Leadership; the International Journal for Academic Development; Higher Education; Studies in Higher Education and Higher Education Quarterly.*

identified in research on organisational cultures.

## **2.0 Attitudes and stances towards organisational cultures**

In section 2 and 3 I address research question one although at this stage the research does not focus specifically on UoE.

Question one. What are the attitudes and stances adopted towards AEL (at UoE)?

I take the view that in order to answer this question it is important to take a nested approach; I start with a broad review of attitudes and stances to working life (section 2) before narrowing the review to focus on leadership (section 3) and specifically on AEL (3.2.4).

In section 2, after briefly clarifying how I am defining organisational cultures (2.1), I introduce some socio-cultural perspectives on workplace attitudes and stances (2.2) before focusing on academic working lives (2.3).

### **2.1 Approaches to defining and researching organisational culture**

Organisational cultures can be defined as normative sets of beliefs, values and meanings which, through groups, people and systems, influence workplace attitudes and behavioural norms (Floyd, 2016).

As Alvesson (2011) argues much research suggests (somewhat deterministically) that these are influenced by 'top-down' processes that give rise to embedded socio-cultural structures. However, as Margaret Archer (2003) argues, through 'bottom-up' processes, individual judgement, values and behaviour may be equally significant in influencing institutional structures and processes. I explore these influences in section 4.

### **2.2 Socio-cultural perspectives**

Some well-known sociological research, which addresses workplace attitudes and stances, is briefly explored in this section. In a comprehensive analysis of early sociological research, Knights and Willmott (1999) describe how insights into the emergence of industrial society (Marx, Durkheim and Weber) are helpful in presenting a historical perspective on understand contemporary workers' attitudes and stances.

While any comparison between the working conditions of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial workers and contemporary academics is somewhat tenuous, they both have at their foundation an understanding of how individuals juggle agentic possibilities in relation to disempowering organisational cultures and structures.

This is suggested by Musselin (2007 p.182) who, echoing Marx, describes the 'late industrialisation' of academic activity:

Even if still far from an industrial activity, some features of industrialisation can be observed, if one defines it as the passage from craft production of ad-hoc products to the production of mass products ... through three mechanisms: specialisation of tasks, rationalisation and normalisation.

She highlights the increased specialisation within academic roles, the related loss of 'professional power' (p.180) and how academics view the supposed downwards delegation of power in HEIs as a somewhat cynical manoeuvre which undermines the importance of loyalty and trust whereby 'extrinsic and material aspects become secondary to moral and intrinsic features' (Potter, 2015 p.23).

Weber's analysis of organisational cultures in which workers traditionally bring to their jobs a sense of self-worth and dignity as a legacy of their past socialisation within 'social carrier groups', (Weber, 2002 p.19) is also reflected in contemporary academic research. Becher and Trowler's analysis (2001) of academia in which they suggest that academic attitudes and stances originate in the predictable cultural behaviours of 'academic tribes' echoes what Weber describes as 'patterned actions'. His idea that organisational disruption of the legacy of enduring cultural ideas and values leads to 'cynicism and resigned compliance' (Knights & Willmott, 1999 p.151) has become integral to contemporary academic research (Archer, 2008b; Barnett, 2000; Clegg, 2008; Pirrie et al., 2010; Trowler, 1998). Halsey (1992) points to the relevance of Weber's theories in understanding changing academic attitudes in traditional universities which he sees as thwarted by bureaucratisation. The 'motivational urgency' (Potter, 2015 p.25) and meaningfulness of work are lost in what Halsey (1992 p.328) calls the 'de-professionalisation and proletarianisation' of the academic workforce. I return to this thinking later in this chapter.

Much of the sociological work I have described above suggests that workers' attitudes lack variability. However, the pragmatist work of Merton and critical realist work of Archer discussed below (see figure 3.2) illustrates that there is considerable variability in attitudes and stances, a theme that I shall return to frequently in this study.

Merton (1968; first published in 1949) provides an analysis of individuals' attitudes and behavioural responses to 'frustrating' changing organisational cultures. His typology of 'adaptive behaviours' (p.194)<sup>56</sup> includes *conformity* which takes several forms (I, II & III), which were widespread stances in 1949; and *non-conformity*, and in particular 'retreatism' (IV & V)<sup>57</sup>, which he suggests was relatively uncommon.

**Figure 3.2 Merton's and Archer's typologies**

(includes both direct quotes and paraphrased text Merton's and Archer's publications)

Merton's typology (1968) of stances	Archer's typology of stances (2007)	Archer's reflexive modes (2007)
<p><b>Adaption I Conformity:</b> involves accepting goals, values and norms because they believe in them. This can be seen as overt conformity or even over-conformity.</p> <p><b>Adaption II Innovation:</b> involves accepting goals and values but finding new norms by which they are delivered; these are adapted to their own ends.</p> <p><b>Adaption III Ritualism:</b> involves apparent conformity through a form of surface compliance; the norms of the institution are conformed with but the goals and values are not accepted.</p>	<p><b>Evasive</b><sup>58</sup> – This is an active and voluntary agentic stance which involves taking an accommodative approach to relationships with structural and cultural constraints and enablements. This will tend to reproduce inherited structural contexts.</p> <p><b>Strategic</b> – This is a pro-active and individualistic stance which involves interacting with, mediating within, circumnavigating or harnessing the causal powers of constraints and enablements to their own ends. This may involve radical change and making things happen; alternatively deliberate self-restraint may be used strategically to tailor goals to what</p>	<p><b>Communicative</b> individuals develop stances in consultation with other trusted people; they are basically contented, tend to dovetail their aspirations with other aspects of their lives and actively choose to retain contextual continuity even when this may truncate aspects of their ambitions.</p> <p><b>Autonomous</b> individuals are independent and self-reliant taking decisions alone and follow these though with determination; their lives are dominated by work and home lives are 'accommodated'. This often involves contingent transformation and contextual discontinuity.</p>

<sup>56</sup> Described as institutional 'morally regulated and expected behaviours' (p.405).

<sup>57</sup> He describes this in terms of 'deviant' social behaviour; a term which I would avoid applying to contemporary academics.

<sup>58</sup> This is the term Archer uses for compliance.

<p><b>Adaption IV Retreatism:</b> involves the rejection of cultural goals and values and the institutional norms for achieving these; this reaction is typical when individuals anticipate that goals are personally unachievable in relation to prevailing norms.</p> <p><b>Adaption V Rebellion:</b> involves the rejection of cultural goals and values and the institutional norms for achieving these; rather than withdrawing from engagement these are replaced/substituted by new values.</p>	<p>is possible under circumstances which are not of their making.</p> <p><b>Subversive</b> - This is a proactive stance which involves neither accommodating nor evading constraints or enablements, but rather, exhibiting outward immunity to them. This involves advancing their projects in the face of constraints by resisting their powers, and/or by pursuing them with indifference to whether or not enablements are on their side.</p>	<p><b>Meta- Reflexive</b> individuals are agential idealists; they are unsettled contextually and constantly question and critique themselves, the organisations they work in, society and the relations between these. They tend to be dissatisfied absorbing the costs and shrug off the incentives created by the organisation; this allows them to 'buy' freedom of action, but at a considerable cost to themselves. Their lives are punctuated by changes in role/location as they seek social contexts which harmoniously alignment with their ideal world.</p> <p><b>Fractured</b> individuals are passive lack internal control and are subject to external environmental control.</p>
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Merton's analysis suggests some interesting ideas about attitudinal variability. Firstly, the difference between conformity and non-conformity may be *temporal* i.e. non-conformity may represent a temporary adherence by individuals (or a group) to a past set of goal and values. Secondly, it may be *hierarchical* i.e. non-conformity to particular cultural values may be replaced by conformity at another level. Thirdly, Merton suggests (p.236):

there are distinct kinds of behaviour which, in contrast to their manifest appearance of conformity to institutional expectations, can be shown ... to represent departures from these expectations.

He argues that this 'institutionalised evasion' (p.398) is often tolerated by institutions but becomes less so when management styles and socio-cultural conditions are in flux. In these contexts this typology has been widely referred to in the HE literature on academic attitudes (Bolden et al., 2012; Fanghanel, 2012; Henkel, 2005; Trowler, 1997) where non-conformity (IV & V) is seen as increasingly prevalent in contemporary academic life(see section 2.3 and 2.4.2).

In Archer's work she undertakes a comprehensive analysis of cultural and societal trends, focusing on individual attitudes and stances. Like Merton, she argues that the individual agential responses cannot be predicted in a

deterministic way and they can be affected, but are not entirely moulded, by socio-cultural influences. She describes three active agentic 'stances'. In figure 3.2 I have aligned these with Merton's typology to show *similarities* - largely based on differentiating between compliant and non-compliant stances - and *differences* - relating to the personal implications of actions and mechanisms which are found in Archer's typology but are missing from Merton's.

Archer (2003 p.163) argues that, in order to understand the responses of individuals to structural 'constraints and enablements', it is important to examine their 'inner dialogues' (p.15), something I refer to in this study as 'agentic reflexivity'. This leads her to suggest that stances are mediated through one of four reflexive modes: communicative (C); autonomous (A); meta-reflexive (M) and fractured (F) (Figure 3.2). She introduces the idea that attitudes and responses are contingent and contextualised and can relate to groups as well as individuals. These may change with time, and in response to shifting relationships between individuals/ groups and their structural and cultural contexts (Archer, 2007 p.316). Archer's typology is presented in detail here as I use it as the basis for analysing ECA attitudes and stances in chapter 5 (section 3).

The key point I have made in section 2.2 is that many significant sociologists have contributed to the understanding of attitudes and stances in organisational cultures. My analysis highlights the work of Archer and Merton who have created continuums of stances of satisfaction- dissatisfaction in their analyses of working lives. Merton's emphasis on temporal and hierarchical nonconformity and Archer's analysis of reflexive inner conversations leading to 'idealistic attitudes' (2003 p.267) have provided particular inspiration for my empirical work in chapters four and five.

### **2.3 Academic working lives**

In section 2.2 I introduced several general socio-cultural theories relating to attitudes to working life; in this section I narrow the frame of reference to explore *academic* attitudes and stances. Firstly, I consider whether academics might be generally satisfied with their working lives (2.3.1) before focusing on dissatisfaction (2.3.2).

### 2.3.1 Satisfaction with academic life

Given that many academics have chosen to pursue research careers in which they are totally absorbed and they have the privilege of working with colleagues and students who share their enthusiasms, it might be assumed that they would be satisfied with their working lives.

The earliest international survey of academic work found a profession that was resilient, determined, focused on core functions, happy with career choices and trajectories and generally not demoralised (reported in Teichler, Arimoto, & Cummings, 2010)<sup>59</sup>.

A national study of over 11,000 university employees in 2008 (i-graduate, 2010 p.2) suggests that this continues to be true for academics in the UK:

(they) felt very positive about the sector as a whole, their institution and their role. Nearly all staff (96%) felt that working in higher education provided a worthwhile career; three-quarters of staff would recommend their institution as an employer; and most staff were very positive about their job role, feeling comfortable with the demands of the role, and that they had opportunities to work on their own initiative, and enough flexibility to have a good work-life balance.

This study emphasises the important influence of the 'psychological contract' (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2013 p.2) in generating positive attitudes to work amongst academics. This can be described as a set of obligations consisting of informal promises, expectations and perceptions that are at the heart of a respectful and harmonious relationship between employers and employees and are central to intrinsic academic satisfaction (Fanghanel, 2012). Others (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Henkel, 2000) have shown that, despite a sense of tightening constraints, academics are satisfied, believing that they retain a degree of autonomy which is missing in other professions. Research in 2014 involving 838 academics (Peters & Ryan, 2015) also suggest that positive intrinsic factors (including challenging work, autonomy and opportunities for growth) are of great importance in motivating academics.

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<sup>59</sup> Although the first international Changing Academic Profession [CAP] survey was led by the Carnegie Institute in the early 1990s, I accessed this work through Teichler, Arimoto, & Cummings( 2010).

A 2016 survey of 1,150 HE staff attitudes to teaching (Grove, 2017 p.34) suggests that teaching is a substantial source of satisfaction for 88% of respondents and that 70% see it as equally or more rewarding than research. This survey is of particular interest to my research in that it rebuts 'frequent accusations that the majority of academics neglect teaching to concentrate on their research passions'. Also of interest in this context is a very recent study based in four UK RIUs which suggests that their academics are mostly positive about their departmental (but not necessarily their institutional) experiences of both research and teaching and, in particular, that positive attitudes relate to the strong synergies between the two (Hilli, 2017).

### **2.3.2 Academic dissatisfaction**

In contrast to the evidence that academics are generally satisfied, a prevailing orthodoxy has emerged in much of the research literature (Fitzgerald, White, & Gunter, 2012; Locke, Cummings, & Fisher, 2011) which suggests that academics across the world are often dissatisfied (Fredman & Doughney, 2012), disillusioned (Reybold, 2005) and increasingly negative towards aspects of their working lives. Major studies, ranging from Halsey's (1992) surveys in 1964, 1976 and 1989 in the UK; to Martin's (1999) study of Australian academic working lives in the mid-90s; through to international studies such as the recent CAP survey of 19 countries by 100 scholars (Bentley, Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2013), illustrate just how persistent these attitudes have become. This trend is not exclusively related to academia (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Michelson & Ryan, 2014) but it has certainly gained momentum in HE in recent years (Bolden et al., 2012; Henkel, 2000; Trowler, 2001). I maintain that a prevailing orthodoxy about academic negativity, and in section 2.4 I shall explore this further.

## **2.4 Research into academic negativity**

### **2.4.1 The characteristics of academic negativity**

I have already referred to research by Halsey (1992), in which he provides insights into the negative attitudes of academics to changes in their working lives, as characterised by *discontent and despair*. Other large research projects also describe *dispirited* academics. Martin's (1999) 1995/6 survey of Australian academics reveals a range of attitudes including *disillusionment, despondency and frustration* (tempered by occasional optimism). Interestingly for my study,

she emphasises that leaders are amongst those who report that they are *undervalued, poorly consulted and stressed*. Taylor (1999) supports this idea, arguing that what he calls 'institutional disruption' creates change and undermines academics' sense of their 'cosmopolitan identities' (p.42). The change from a known past to an unknown future results in a sense of loss which can engender *negativity, uncertainty, anxiety and ambivalence* in their working lives. In Henkel's research (2000, 2005), she takes the view that attitudes to academic work are threatened by a 'disturbed equilibrium' (2000 p.21) associated with external policy and organisational change<sup>60</sup>. The clear moral and intellectual boundaries and beliefs, which traditionally underlie the identities and working practices of academics, and through which they negotiated convivial working conditions, have come under incremental pressure. She suggests that the dominant trend has been a general *rise in tension and negative attitudes* amongst academics.

In more recent research, Fanghanel (2012 p.2) considers what she calls 'the moments of practice' in academic working lives from the perspectives of the cultures and regimes in which they operate, the structures in which they work and the personal beliefs and ideals they hold. She views universities as 'turbulent spaces' and academic life as increasingly pressured and uncertain engendering general negativity and related *stress, despair and despondency*

Smaller scale and more highly contextualised qualitative studies frequently echo the outcomes of these larger research projects. However, the methodologies adopted allow a more nuanced analysis of the academic attitudes identified. For example, results from a major ESRC study in 2007-9 have been brought together by Gornall, Cook, Daunton, Salisbury, and Thomas (2014). This edited work is of particular interest as it introduces very recent data, and uses qualitative research methods including CR of a similar kind to mine to bring into sharp focus the negativity felt by academics in both their 'seen and unseen' working lives (p.1). However, in several of the chapters the suggestion that negativity is not necessarily felt universally is also evident. For example, Barnett (2014) contrasts the *pessimism* that abounds in academia with evidence of

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<sup>60</sup> Henkel relates cultural shifts in HEIs since the mid-1980s to three external cultural models – the corporate enterprise, the entrepreneurial university and the learning organisation.

optimism (also found in Martin, 1999) visible in the 'micro-spaces' of the institution (p.302).

In Garratt and Hammersley-Fletcher's, (2009) study of eight academics in a post-92 university, they analyse some of the subtle variations in *resigned attitudes* that permeate academic life. However, in a critical riposte to this article, Pirrie et al. (2010) argue that the article overstates negative views about the neo-liberal and new managerial causes of academic 'unhappiness' (p.100) and ignores important influences such as the role of competing forms of these ideologies, the legitimacy of the state, the organisation's expectations of accountability and the competitive attitudes of university mission groups. Neglecting these structural nuances, they argue, has resulted in an incomplete analysis of the idea of academic negativity and an overemphasis on academics as '*passive victims*' (p.105).

This section has allowed me to characterise the nature of negativity in the contemporary academic workforce and to confirm that disillusionment, (expressed in different ways by the words I have highlighted in italics) is well evidenced. This begs the question of whether it matters if negative stances are so prevalent. At a *personal* level, the experience of negativity does matter as it influences how academics feel about their working lives (section 4.2). At an institutional level, the way in which negativity is activated in practice can have an impact on academic cultures, institutional processes and student satisfaction<sup>61</sup>.

Some research I have cited argues that attitudinal negativity is sometimes tempered by optimism. As Fanghanel (2012 p.20) found some are able to 'buck the trend' 'seize opportunities' and 'find niches'. This suggests that it is important to investigate what research suggests about assumptions of attitudinal homogeneity. Is there more variability than this section has suggested?

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<sup>61</sup> In a letter to *Times Higher Education* (2016 p.27), Niranjana argues that 'unhappy academics, shackled by a web of bureaucracy are bound to pass their dissatisfaction, often unconsciously, down to the student body'.

#### 2.4.2 Evidence around variability in academic attitudes and stances

In section 2.1 I suggested that organisational cultural research has provided evidence of variability (Archer 2007; Merton 1968), here I shall focus on research which has revealed variability in *academic* attitudes and stances.

Many researchers argue that academics experience their work in different ways (Locke & Teichler, 2007; Locke et al., 2011). Recent research indicates that there are contrasts in the attitudes of academics to their working lives between countries (Locke, et al. 2011; Shin & Jung, 2014), between institutions (Locke, 2007) and within institutions (Palmer & Collins, 2006; Rosser, 2004). There are also contrasts associated with role (O'Byrne, 2009; O'Connor, Carvalho, & White, 2014; Parker, 2004), gender (Acker, 2014) and career stage (Karpiak, 2000; Locke & Bennion, 2013). Bryman, (2009 p.21) argues that satisfaction and dissatisfaction can co-exist in any context and both can be experienced by the same individuals in relation to different aspects of their work:

Those working in HEIs certainly tend to display quite high levels of satisfaction with the work itself and with particular facets of it, such as the opportunity to use their initiative. However, they also tend to be considerably less satisfied with such things as pay and promotion prospects.

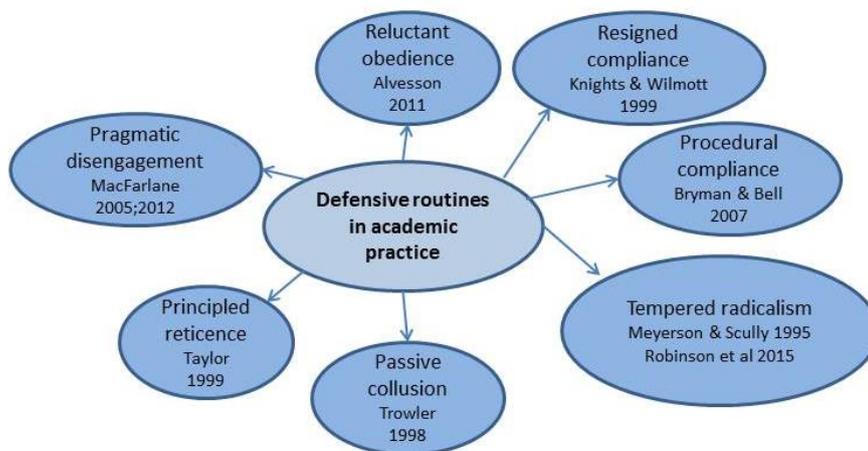
Researchers have adapted existing typologies, or devised new ones, to categorise this variability by attitudes and/or stances. Adapted versions of Merton's linear typology (Figure 3.2) have been used (Fanghanel, 2012; Henkel, 2000; Parker & Jary, 1995) with a focus on how individual academics position themselves to reflect the congruence and/or dislocation between them and their wider working contexts. Archer's linear typology (Figure 3.2) has also been used, for example by O'Byrne (2009) who uses the typology to interpret the variable stances adopted by academics, and the actions which, she argues, follow from these. These have in common that they create a *linear* continuum of academic responses to working contexts, ranging from the positive (and conforming) through various kinds of reluctance and/or subversion to resistance or rebellion. This research is particularly important for me as it has influenced the approach I adopt in chapter five section 6.

Garratt and Hammersley-Fletcher (2009) adopt a non-linear typology, suggesting that academics experiences vary between 'notions of 'entrapment',

‘victimisation’, ‘resistance and transgression’ and ‘taking flight’ (p.315). They use terms such as ‘unwitting victims’ and ‘being pulled in a variety of different directions simultaneously’ (p.315) suggesting a more passive and less empowered agentic view of the stances academics take. However, to counteract this view, they also describe academics as having ‘chameleon-like qualities’ (p.316)<sup>62</sup> allowing them to manage tension and ambivalence, meaning they are able to ‘ultimately further cultivate opportunities for professional autonomy and academic freedom’.

It seems from this research that academics can maintain agentic autonomy while, on the surface at least, responding to the cultural norms of the organisation. In figure 3.3 I use the generic term ‘defensive routines’ (Martin,1999 p.1) to capture how several researchers articulate these ambivalent stances; those to the top and right are from general organisational research; those to the bottom and left are based on academic research.

**Figure 3.3 Defensive routines in academic working practices**



All these defensive routines imply that there are ways in which individuals adhere to or comply behaviourally with institutional norms and requirements on the surface (‘passive’, ‘principled’, ‘obedient’, ‘compliant’); however, at a deeper level they are uncommitted, or only partially committed, to these (‘resigned’, ‘disengaged’, ‘reticent’)<sup>63</sup>. It appears that there is fairly widespread evidence in the research of what might be called **behavioural-attitudinal dissonance**.

<sup>62</sup> This has similarities to Merton’s ‘institutionalised evasion’ (see section 2.2).

<sup>63</sup> These behaviours are both invisible and visible in ways that resonate with Goffman’s (1959) ‘front stage- back stage’ analogy which I discuss later (section 4.2.2).

This behavioural-attitudinal dissonance is sometimes visible in academic practices. Parker and Jary (1995) argue that these can be seen as a kind of self-imposed constraint to achieve security and recognition; they suggest that, in this context, *responsible autonomy* gives way to *compliant subjectivity* where rules are responded to and reinforced.

In introducing these concepts I provide evidence that academics adopt defensive stances which might influence their attitudes towards leadership and I return to this in section 3. Before looking for evidence that this is the case, I shall report on some research about ECAs attitudes and stances as background for chapter five.

#### 2.4.3 Evidence about ECA attitudes and stances

Locke and Bennion's (2013 p.12) analysis of academic satisfaction using Higher Education Statistical Agency [HESA] data shows:

Young academics generally appeared to be the most satisfied group and older, established academics who were not professors seemed to be the least satisfied.

They argue that well established and older academics are more likely to adopt negative attitudes and stances than ECAs, who have only ever experienced the new academic cultures, are 'positioned differently' (Archer, 2008b p.387), and might be less likely to experience high levels of dissatisfaction. Taylor (1999) also argues that older, well-established academics faced with changes to their traditional roles and cultures feel an acute sense of loss; they can feel trapped, find it difficult to adapt, and many, as Becher (1989) suggests, are left behind as 'losers'. This is important in understanding attitudes to leadership: Parker and Jary (1995) suggest that it is older academics who have failed to (or decided not to) adapt, who reluctantly feel obliged to conform by taking managerial role which convey 'collegial status' (p.330) in order to feel secure (Figure 3.4 below).

The idea that new academics *are* much more likely to 'adapt to' (Henkel, 2000 p.264) or 'take for granted' (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007 p.79) contemporary institutional cultures is partially supported by research. Åkerlind & McAlpine, (2010) found that ECAs, who are often forced to build careers in several different HEIs, quickly develop a sophisticated understanding of the skills and knowledge required to be successful in contemporary HE. In Gale's study of

seventeen ECAs (2011 p.224), she found dedicated and motivated ECAs able to focus on the primary role of teaching in a vocationally-orientated post-92 university as the 'centrality of their early career existence'. Smith, (2010 p.577) in her study of twenty three ECAs from eleven universities shows that there is some negativity but that positive attitudes are more prevalent than negative attitudes:

For some, the transition to academic life is unremarkable, and identity is untroubled. For others, this appears to be a more troublesome time and a good deal of dissonance is encountered.

However, Deem et al.(2007 p.85) argue that 'internal inequalities and a decline in collegiality' can contribute to uncertainty for beginning academics. Archer (2008b p.401) in a study of eight young academics suggests that:

experiences of tension, rupture and identity conflict ...contradicts some anecdotal evidence reported within other studies, in which younger academics have been described as eagerly engaging with new performance regimes.

Her analysis suggests that younger academics *increasingly* experience non-linear and disrupted early careers in which their search for 'principled authenticity' can be influenced by 'marginalisation and exclusion' (p. 387). This undermines their personal projects; they hope for collegiality, collaboration and (non-instrumental) self-fulfilment but tend to be disappointed – resulting in anything but 'eager engagement'. In a study of one Canadian RIU Acker & Haque (2010 p.101) found that the challenge of multiple unfamiliar professional responsibilities means anxiety and stress levels are high and fatigue is rife amongst ECAs. One finding of their research reveals that many ECAs take up their first posts in demanding *teaching* roles and see these as a 'necessary evil' (p.108) in which they often feel exploited. In moving to posts in RIUs these experiences contribute to negative attitudes towards teaching-related responsibilities.

It seems that ECAs can experience both negative and positive attitudes to their work. However this is not something that is always visible. Recognising that it may be unwise to adopt a negative 'outwardly facing persona', Archer (2008b

p.398) describes how ECAs adopt 'practices of protection' (c.f. the defensive routines in figure 3.3) which might be interpreted by others as an outward sign of satisfaction but may be inward signs of negativity. Henkel (2000) also makes this point, suggesting that this results in agentic disengagement of a type I would associate with Archer's meta-reflexive stance and her strategic stance through which they are 'determined and resourceful in pursuing their ambitions' (Archer 2007 p.181). Gale (2011) and Matthews, Lodge and Bosanquet (2014) also endorse the importance of diversity arguing that ECAs located in different institutional settings and disciplinary cultures experience different levels of early career satisfaction and/or de-motivation. McAlpine, Amundsen and Jazvac-Martek. (2010 p.138) describe ECA's experiences as something of a balancing act in which, as initial aspirations are undermined by relentless pressures:

the experience of positive over negative emotions/responses may be vital in sustaining individual motivation and commitment rather than disillusionment and alienation.

It seems that ECAs can develop negative attitudes to aspects of their working lives early in their careers but the way this is translated into their stances and actions is perhaps not always predictable. One response is a somewhat cynical surface compliance associated with fear of the employment consequences if they are seen to become disengaged or subversive.

This can be a major concern for those who strive to retain a reasonable work-life balance and/or have external responsibilities (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010). A less cynical response is described by Gale (2011) who shows that ECAs often *choose* to avoid confrontation by becoming somewhat individualistic and isolating themselves from mainstream academic concerns; they do this by focusing closely on the (often) satisfying experience of working closely with students. Robinson, Bristow, and Ratle (2015) in their study of ECAs also argue that it is not unusual for ECAs to adopt an independent and dualistic stance, behaving as 'tempered radicals' (n.p.)<sup>64</sup>. In their study this can lead to a clash of values and a sense of isolation and hypocrisy. The importance of understanding

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<sup>64</sup> Meyerson and Scully (1995 p.586) define tempered radicals as those who 'identify with and are committed to their organizations and are also committed to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from and possibly at odds with the dominant culture of the organization'. They apply this concept to leaders.

the lengths ECAs will go to in order to retain their preferred academic values is also described by Fitzmaurice (2013 p.613):

Becoming an academic is experienced as a cognitive and emotive process, and is a moral endeavour grounded in virtues of honesty, care and compassion.

In conclusion, section 2 has revealed that, in a context of general dissatisfaction about their working environments, academic, and in particular ECA, stances can be diverse. I address potential explanations for this in section 4 where I return to the active agentic potential associated with their 'inner conversations'.

In choosing to spend some time on academic attitudes to their working lives, section 2 has suggested that they are increasingly disengaged from their institutions. In the light of this, I now go on to provide evidence that existing research suggests that these attitudes and stances may have an impact on academic motivation in relation to leadership.

### **3.0 Attitudes and stances towards leadership**

In section 3 I shall consider research relating to leadership (3.1), AL (3.2) and AEL (3.2.4). Schein (1992), was one of the first authors to write about culture and leadership; he argued that attitudes to leadership are implicated in creating, managing and even destroying organisational cultures (3.1). Alvesson (2011) suggests that much early leadership research focused on elite institutional leaders (the hero leader syndrome) (3.2.1) however, as my research is also about ECAs, I shall also consider leadership research that has a focus on a more local level (3.2.2).

#### **3.1 Attitudes and stances towards organisational leadership**

Evidence of defensive routines (figure 3.3) is a feature of much leadership research and I have selected three studies to illustrate this. Knights and Willmott (1999 p.80) suggest a common response to leadership found in research literature involves 'distancing behaviour' -characterised by indifference, fuelled by anxiety. They argue that this reaction is routinely disguised in *compliant* but *apathetic* approaches to leadership obligations; behaviours which they view as benign forms of resistance. This analysis has similarities with Merton's ritualism, Archer's strategic stance and the defensive routines in figure 3.2.

Another relevant, if rather old, organisational study considers attitudes amongst 374 managers/ leaders from six UK organisations in the public and private sectors (Scase & Goffee, 1993 p.179). It focuses on 'reluctant managers' who they define as:

those who are less than fully committed to their jobs and have great reservations about giving priority to their work, their careers and, indeed, their employing organisations.

They argue that as responsibilities have intensified and work commitments have become more pedestrian in the face of declining resources, workers have become more *instrumental* and *calculative* about taking on routine managerial roles and are reluctant to take on responsibilities over which they have little control, in contexts about which they are increasingly *frustrated*. Threats of redundancy and the 'dehumanising effects' of career success on wider lifestyles and relationships underpin their *disengagement*. This process of 'cognitive distancing' (p.33) hardens as work is increasingly viewed instrumentally and self-fulfilment is achieved beyond the workplace;

Sinclair, (2007), drawing on Foucault's critical theories of leadership, power and resistance (also discussed in Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Strathern, 2000), suggests that *disillusioned* leaders are widespread and that they adopt tacit behaviours as ways of exercising power; these include *resistance, subversion and non-cooperation*. However, she asks questions the effectiveness of their agentic power, suggesting that individual autonomy and is prescribed by a 'constrained repertoire' (p.139) and leaders are 'deeply disciplined as agents for maintaining the cultural status quo' (p.131)<sup>65</sup>. This thinking has been echoed in Bolden et al. (2011) who also questioned the agentic potential for leaders to exercise power; they refer to coercive 'corporate cultures' which can 'oppress employees into behaving according to certain values' (p.95).

I am not convinced that the 'distancing' described in Knights and Willmott's and Scase and Goffee's research is widely manifest in an HE context where academics are at least passionate about some of their work. However, Sinclair's and Bolden's research does resonate with the idea that academics in middle

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<sup>65</sup> This appears to be an implicit critique of Archer's reflexive modes of thinking, and the apparent freedom to choose which she implies (Figure 3.2).

management often find themselves in uncomfortable positions, adopting dual identities and *disillusioned* by the shift they have experienced from 'regulated autonomy to institutionalized distrust' (Deem, 2007 p.1). That this might potentially result in 'professional avoidance tactics and behaviours' (p.21) is entirely credible (section 3.2). In section 3.2 I search for further evidence about whether disillusionment about AL is found in the research literature.

### 3.2 Attitudes and stances towards academic leadership

As I suggested in chapter one, AL is widely researched. Kligyte and Barrie (2014 p.157) suggest this burgeoning interest is a response to concerns about the significance and complexity of leadership:

Today's university leaders have to respond to external demands with business-like efficiency and accountability, while navigating the maze of diverging cultural norms, narratives and (the) work ethos of academic environments.

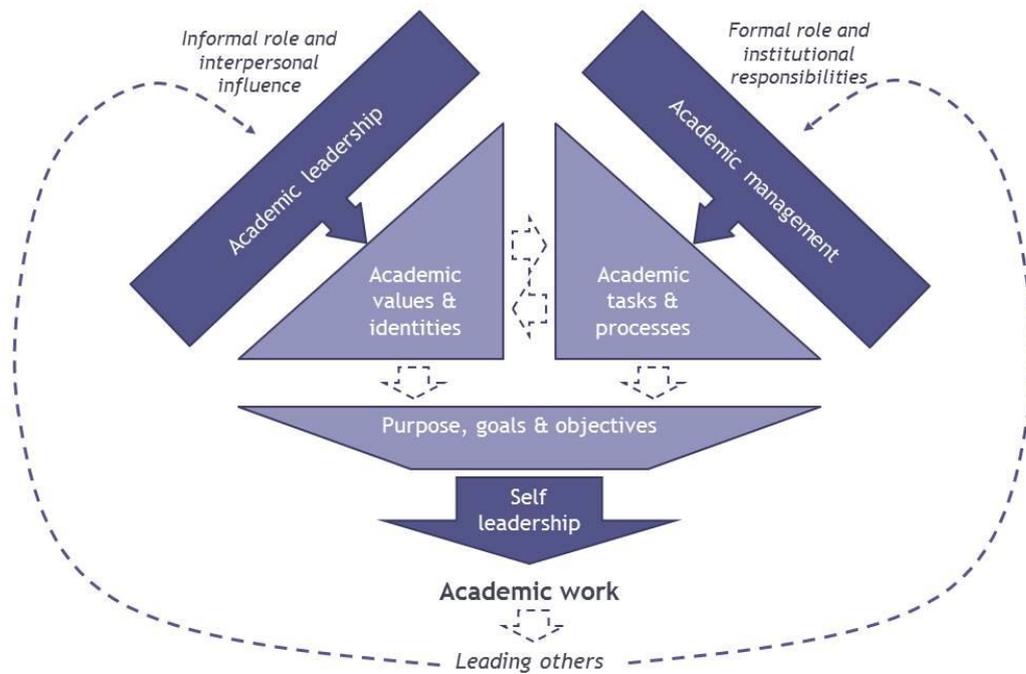
However, it is also driven by the need to understand the attitudes and stances of academic leaders and those who may become leaders. Bolden et al. (2012 p.35) argue that low motivation to lead is evident in their study of over 350 academics from 23 UK HEIs. They link this to the way academic leadership is perceived, and how it relates to management and administration (Chapter one section 1.2). Using the analogy of 'sinking ships and sailing ships' (figures 3.4 and 3.5), they model the increasingly toxic relationship between leadership, management and administration in contemporary HEIs.

Figure 3.4 suggests leaders and managers influence different aspects of academic life; leaders influence values and identities while managers are responsible for tasks and processes. However, there is a degree of alignment between these roles (and sometimes they are vested in the same people) which encourages a 'common purpose and mutually compatible goals' (p.36). In this context academics engage positively with their leaders and reasonably productively with their managers. This scenario is being replaced by one in which there is considerable *dissonance* between the roles adopted by managers and leaders and between academics and their formal managers. This is expressed in the sinking ships model (figure 3.5) where academic leadership is in a state of *tension* with both institutional and academic management. The alignment between them has 'fractured' and academic leadership is 'driven

underground'. *Frustration, disengagement and disillusionment* accompany this state of affairs amongst academics and those who see themselves as managers and/or leaders.

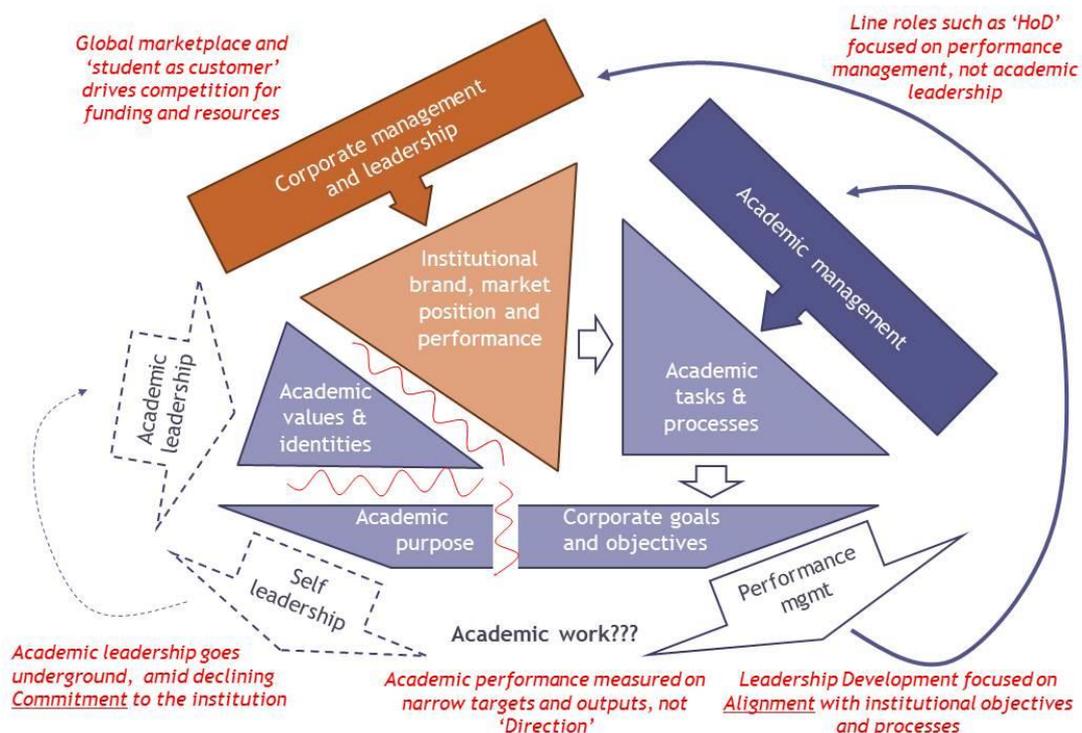
**Figure 3.4 The 'sailing ship' model of academic leadership**

(Bolden et al. 2012 p.35 published by, and reproduced with permission from, the LFHE)



**Figure 3.5 The 'sinking ship' model of academic leadership**

(Bolden et al. 2012 p.36 published by, and reproduced with permission from, the LFHE)



While these two models helpfully unravel some of the key underlying issues in relation to academic attitudes to leadership, and how leaders are responding to changing working conditions, I feel that they overemphasise the divide between academic leaders and managers. Bryman (2009 p.29) describes how the 'demonization of management and the elevation of leadership has been unhelpful' arguing that 'both are necessary' and 'they frequently shade into each other' so that distinguishing between them becomes a 'semantic exercise' that it is unhelpful to apply in concrete situations (p.10). For many academics the reality is that they adopt 'hybrid roles' (Winter & Bolden, 2017) in an attempt to retain their academic credibility and, at the same time, pursue institutional career progression. I also suspect that, as Macfarlane (2005, 2012) suggests, it is only amongst senior professors that the flexibility to disengage or 'go underground' exists. For most, the role of leader-manager involves adopting a range of defensive routines (Figure 3.2).

In the following three sections I consider how existing research reports on *differently positioned* academics attitudes and stances to being and becoming leaders, and the possible implications.

### **3.2.1 Attitudes and stances towards leadership: the academic leader**

As I anticipated above, dissatisfaction with academic working life *in general* (section 2) can be instrumental in creating leader disillusionment (Deem, 2001; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Sinclair, 2007). Taylor (1999) argues that as institutions fracture, academics in middle management roles experience fragmented identities needing to 'patrol their borders' in order to 'manage tribalism' but still sustain core values and to retain the confidence of colleagues. They may adopt defensive routines (Figure 3.2) such as 'principled reticence' (p.87) and become adept at 'buffering and bridging'; these are forms of procedural compliance in which they *symbolically* accept imposed institutional structural changes but they absorb, deflect or cynically accommodate these to align them with an academic (departmental) ethos.

In some contexts compliance can give way to acts of resistance by leaders Bolden (in conversation 2016) suggested resistance and reluctance amongst leaders is not a sign that they are 'against being leaders' *per se*, but, rather that, in the 'unpalatable frameworks' imposed on them, and dominated by

institutional priorities, these attitudes and stances emerge. On balance it does seem, as Gentle and Foreman suggest (2014 p.5), that leaders experience 'considerable tension resulting from feeling answerable both upwards and downwards within the university'; something they suggest can be compared to a 'pincer movement'.

In contrast, some evidence suggests that leader-managers develop active agentic approaches to enhance their workplace satisfaction. Clegg and McAuley (2005) demonstrate that academic middle managers have at times adeptly replaced managerialism with new forms of collegiality that reduce confrontation and enhance satisfaction. Henkel (2000 p.247) suggests that some academics resist the term 'manager' favouring 'leader' helping them experience increased satisfaction as they 'negotiate the boundaries and move between two worlds'. In Floyd and Dimmock's (2011) study of seventeen heads of department they describe some academic leaders ('jugglers') as enjoying their work and aspiring to higher levels of leadership. However, it is not clear how this attitude arises for some, while many more departmental heads (described as 'copers' and 'strugglers') experience 'frustration and identity conflict' (p.392).

What many of these studies seem to neglect is the probability that any one academic leader-manager will most likely experience multiple attitudes and emotions. In Parker's (2004 p.46) autobiographical study of becoming an academic manager he describes how he felt 'self-esteem and self-loathing in equal measure'. He says he felt guilt and insecurity but also (p.48) 'happy... about having the power and legitimacy to do something about things I care about'. He admits that even when doing things well, 'I am doing things I'd rather not do' (p.49). This seems to me to be a thorough-going reflection on the multiplicity of emotions many academic leaders feel.

### **3.2.2 Attitudes and stances towards leadership: The academic follower**

My study is about academics' attitudes to 'stepping up' to leadership and therefore the concept of followership (Bolden et al., 2015) is important. It can be argued that at different times, and in particular contexts, all academics are leaders *and* followers and that their relations and practices are 'mutually constituting and co-produced' (Collinson, 2005 p.1419). Where followership

becomes 'empowered and exemplary' it can be described as effective distributed leadership (Bolden, 2010 p.89). Haslam, Reicher and Platow (2011) have shown that, in these contexts, followers are seen as active in *shaping* leader identities and leaders become representatives of group identities.

However, Bolden et al. (2012) suggest that followers often perceive that they are over-managed and not trusted. This reflects Alvesson's (2011 p.159) view that in 'high end knowledge working' the need to be led from above is often seen as of marginal importance. Followers show a preference for low intervention strategies suggesting that leaders should generally be 'negotiating upwards not controlling downwards'.

Academia seems to present contradictions; Lumby (2012 p.06) suggests academics appear to both 'reject the necessity for leadership and desire its presence'. However, tensions arise when followers turn to colleagues for alternative sources of leadership (from those academics whose ideals and values they respect), while those who are considered by their institutions to be formal leaders are not so readily trusted (Bryman, 2009; Winter, 2009). As Billot et al.(2013 p.91) suggests 'negotiation, responsibility, and mutual respect' appear essential to ensure effective followership/leadership interactions. Where this does not happen academics become increasingly disengaged and demotivated not only about their leaders but also *about taking on leadership responsibilities themselves* (O'Connor et al., 2014; Rosser, 2004). Some research reflects and explains this ambivalence towards taking on leader-manager roles. Floyd & Fung (2012 p.22) suggest, somewhat bluntly, that:

the point about academia in contrast to many other jobs is that nobody who's an academic really wants to be doing anything managerial. They want to be academics.

In this context it can be suggested that distributed leadership can have negative connotations; academics show 'some scepticism of this latest fad' and can view the concept as 'anti-academic'. Furthermore, if they are persuaded to take on formal leadership roles, this can 'disrupt the creative and innovative outcomes of non-formal arrangements' (Gleeson & Knights 2008 p.51).

It seems from existing research, therefore, that many followers (as potential future academic leaders) have developed negative attitudes and are not motivated to take on formal leadership roles, reinforcing the evidence about their attitudes and stances to working lives discussed in section 2.4.1.

### 3.2.3 Attitudes and stances towards leadership: the early career academic

It is central to my study to ask whether existing research suggests academics early in their careers have developed particular attitudes and stances towards academic leadership and in this section I address the literature related to ECAs.

Floyd (2012) makes the point that most academics do not start their careers *expecting* to take on formal leadership roles only doing so under some duress<sup>66</sup>. However, Bolden (2010 p.143) suggests that ECAs are more inclined towards leader-manager careers than many older academics. As HEIs show increasing commitment to distributed leadership, Bolden et al. (2015) suggests that leadership is becoming accessible earlier in academic careers than a more conventional and established view of formal hierarchical leadership would suggest. In one study (2010 p.143) he describes how young career track academics 'actively sought out opportunities for influencing management and leadership ...and supporting, facilitating and leading activities'. However, Bolden et al. (2009) also argue that distributed leadership can become a somewhat empty rhetorical concept used by HEIs to *claim* leadership is distributed in contexts where it is clearly only given lip service. They suggest that this institutional cynicism may influence ECA attitudes.

In contrast, Harris and Nolan in a study of three HEIs (2014 p.1) explore 'an apparent reluctance on the part of 'early career' academics (ECAs) to take on leadership roles'. They confirm that early career academics in their study *are* generally reluctant to lead and that this attitude is not contingent on a particular set of experiences, but is 'an ambivalent attitude (which) prevails towards the general notion of leadership and its applicability to the academic role'.

Underpinning this ambivalence is a sense of exclusion, vulnerability and a lack of transparency about decision making processes as ECAs are pulled in various directions. This study also suggests ECAs may learn negative (or positive)

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<sup>66</sup> Professor Jonathan Gosling (in conversation 2015) also suggested that young academics are often 'badgered' into leadership roles to which they are essentially 'allergic'.

attitudes to leadership from their earliest mentors and leaders including their PhD supervisors. For example, these colleagues can encourage ECAs to feel positive about leadership and more readily take opportunities that come their way; on the other hand, they may choose to 'protect' ECAs from the punishing commitments – the 'poisoned chalice' (p.27) associated with leadership and management roles for as long as possible. Their views cannot help but influence ECAs, 'perpetuating negative perceptions and seemingly legitimising them' (p.2).

However, influences can be more complex than this analysis suggests. Other research suggests that working alongside good leaders is particularly influential for *early* stage ECAs but it becomes less so later in their careers (Bolden, 2012 p.35):

The process of *becoming an academic* requires the support, guidance and inspiration of others, however, once one has *become an academic* one does not, it seems from our findings, usually feel the need to seek leadership from elsewhere.

If this is the case, it suggests that ECAs may see potential in leadership roles early on, which could then diminish in time.

Juntrasook (2014 p.20) addresses how academics, including ECAs, develop their attitudes to leadership. His research has particular resonance in relation to my interest in academic negativity, focusing on:

different ways in which these academics drew on, articulated and brought particular meanings of leadership into existence in their talk, *and how these might conflict* (my italics) with their institution's expectations.

Bolden et al. (2012 p.46) argue that this somewhat contradictory evidence about ECA attitudes to leadership requires more research into 'the formative experiences and acculturation of junior academics' if we wish to 'nurture the next generation' to respond to opportunities for leadership. This has been a stimulus for my research and in chapter five.

### **3.2.4 Attitudes and stances towards academic educational leadership**

As I suggested in chapter one, HE research has 'largely overlooked' AEL and education leaders' attitudes to their work (Quinlan, 2014 p.32) and, according to

Gunn and Fisk (2013 p.42), what exists is 'woefully inadequate'. This said, there *has* been some important research in this area in which there is some evidence of positive attitudes to AEL, but more typically of negativity.

Gibbs, Knapper and Piccinin (2008) have undertaken one of the largest international studies of AEL in RIUs working from the assumption that the 'degree of research-intensiveness of the university' (2008 p.418) is an influence on both the nature of and attitudes towards AEL. They conclude that in the 11 RIUs studied a highly devolved, collegial organisational structure a 'bottom up', emergent approach to AEL is typical in departments characterised as 'exceptional'. In turn, this is associated with teachers and leaders becoming positively engaged in decision making through self and distributed leadership. However, in explaining this they suggest that no *one* approach to AEL stands out as highly successful (p.416):

leadership was found to take different forms in different discipline areas, in different organisational cultures, and in response to major problems affecting the department.

As this research relates to exceptional departments it provides little guidance on how AEL might be conceived of more broadly. Their conclusions suggest that positive attitudes to AEL are highly *contextual* and relate to *collegial* cultures. However, other research supports their conclusions. Deem et al.(2007 p.72) suggest that institutions where AEL has high value and status this is reflected in positive attitudes. Martin, Trigwell, Prosser and Ramsden (2003), in their study of 50 AELs and 20 lecturers, also explore attitudes and stances amongst heads of departments and course co-ordinators of large first year programmes. They argue that many educational leaders' attitudes are positive and that this directly influence the stances academics adopt.

However, in others HEIs, including many RIUs, AEL is held in relatively low regard by academics and most try to avoid these roles. Sewerin, Jonnergård, and Birgersson (2010 p.8), in their research with Swedish scientists, suggest AEL work involves having to 'prevent and manage differences, uncertainty and conflicts' at very different levels and over different timescales. Experiences of 'fragmented workdays in combination with lots of lonely work often result in

frustration and a high workload leading to stress' (p.9). Quinn (2012 p.18) also addresses the stress faced by AELs and describes how they typically 'hunker down and withdraw' in times of pressure; something he calls 'leadership resistance'.

Among those who transition into AEL roles, negativity will often create an identity crisis. Ladyshevsky and Jones (2007 p.84) focus on the challenging shift required when taking on a formal AEL role in one Australian university:

a shift of loyalty from the discipline to the institution; from specialist to generalist; from individualist to collectivist. With little developmental support people usually focus on the managerial or transactional aspects of the role .... unfortunately, the leadership or transformational aspect of the role is often neglected.

In addition, they argue that these individuals usually strive to maintain their research identities while undertaking AEL responsibilities. Given that education processes tend to be highly centralised in most universities, the tensions with disciplinary cultures and academic identities are exacerbated. It is not surprising that this study found that institutional expectations are seen as unrealistic and these roles are not popular. It seems, as Martensson and Roxa (2016 p.248) suggest, that there is a rather difficult 'balancing act' that AELs have to perform to meet an institutional mandate while 'maintaining a mandate from the teachers they work with and lead'. Similarly, Winter and Bolden (2017 p.10) describe how AELs have to work through 'two windows'.

In conclusion, in sections two and three I have discussed evidence which addresses my first research question. The evidence suggests that academics have varied attitudes and stances towards work and leadership. However, there is clear evidence that many academics adopt negative attitudes to aspects of their working lives. It is also evident that this negativity is true for attitudes and stances towards leadership and affects whether academics are motivated to take on leadership roles. Furthermore, there is some evidence that this is particularly true for ECAs and for AEL. Throughout these two sections I have started to point towards what might be influential factors (M&CPs) behind these attitudes and stances; in section 4 I shall consider research relating to these more systematically.

## 4.0 Mechanisms and causal powers

In this section I address research question two.

Question two. What are the mechanisms and causal powers (M&CPs) that influence these attitudes and stances?

I have searched the literature for M&CPs relating to AEL and then synthesised them into categories (Figure 3.1). This helps to clarify those M&CPs that emerge as dominant in the research literature, and provides a theoretical framework which I return to in the analysis of my empirical data in chapters four and five.

Much of the research pointing to academic negativity originates in how academics perceive the 'new higher education' (Trowler, 2001 p.184) which permeates their working lives (Evans, 2001; Holmwood, 2012; Martin, 1999). This is normally attributed to perturbations in the academic system at various levels (Fanghanel, 2012; Locke et al., 2011) and the breakdown of the motivational influences of the psychological contract (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2013) since the mid-20th century.

In organising section four, I have viewed AEL firstly, from an *institutional* perspective (4.1) and secondly, from an *agentic* perspective (4.2).

### 4.1 Institutional perspectives

The research literature, which takes the view that institutional M&CPs are key drivers of academic attitudes to leadership, tends to focus on three areas; centralised structures and strategies, career forming reward and recognition processes and support and development opportunities. These are discussed in sections 4.1.1.to 4.1.3.

#### 4.1.1 Institutional structures, hierarchies and strategies

Centralised hierarchical structures and strategies are seen to be key influential M&CPs, particularly when these are perceived by academics as imposed 'hostile cultures' (Henkel, 2000 p.207). Decisions made at institutional level about educational structures and strategies have a central role to play in determining whether academics see these as 'congenial or recalcitrant' (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014 p.12). Behind the emergence of contemporary institutional structures is the view that traditional academic structures and

cultures no longer meet the educational and operational demands of HEIs, and they may create barriers to institutional success. As Coates and Goedegebuure (2012) suggest, one 'rational' institutional response is to 'recast' the academic workforce with 'new conceptualisations of roles and expectations' (p.876). This approach, in turn, is likely to increase academic intransigence and negativity (Graham, 2015; Gunn & Fisk, 2013), especially if these new structures also undermine academic normative attitudes. Accepting the institutional viewpoint, Hotho (2013) is highly critical of the 'inadequacies' academics demonstrate in their reluctance to align with institutional structural change. Managers perceive such attitudes as *irrational* and often implement further strategies to circumvent or neutralise these, which can inadvertently exacerbate the situation. As Blackmore (2016 p.32) argues, even where HEIs introduce 'top-down structural changes and financial mechanisms' that are aimed to encourage motivation by 'accessing the values of academics', unless these pay attention to 'motivational consequences', they are unlikely to change negative attitudes towards AEL. For example, Corrigan (2013) argues that introducing flattened leadership hierarchies does not automatically lead to improvements in leader motivation. In fact this can be viewed negatively by academics as a 'façade' (p.70) through which responsibility is delegated but power continues to be centrally held. AELs are reluctant to commit to objectives determined elsewhere and often reject the empty rhetoric of devolved leadership *as well as* the contemporary reality of centralised managerialism.

As a response to this challenge, Ramsden (2013 p.15), in a particularly important report about the executive leadership of education, suggests, transformational leadership 'through vision, inspiration, exemplary practice, collaboration and trust', all of which can provide academics with 'a sense of ownership and commitment to change', is a motivational catalyst. Typically this involves building an institutional climate and appropriate structures through which teaching is seen to be valued. He argues (p.2):

Finding the right balance between setting unambiguous strategic goals and devolving decision-making to academics and students (sometimes known as 'assertive-participative governance') is a central challenge for senior executives.

He suggests that this balance is likely to vary in different contexts.

Decisions about institutional educational strategies are driven, in part, by external political imperatives (Appendix 1). These give contradictory messages about research and teaching which are 'being forced apart, at the prestigious and influential end of the institutional spectrum' (Blackmore, 2016 p.33). He argues that international and national league tables mean teaching is 'shouldered out of the way and starved of resources by prestige-seeking research'. As a consequence, AELs are demotivated as they perceive that national and institutional strategies 'marginalize teaching and privileged research' (Taylor, 1999 p.120), either consciously or unconsciously. Although Fung and Gordon (2016) found that executive leaders in Russell Group universities increasingly emphasise 'parity of esteem' in their missions, they encountered considerable cynicism about whether this rhetoric translates into reality. Wareing and Elvidge, (2007 p.21) also make this point forcibly when discussing educational strategic planning; they identify a gap between the rhetoric of learning and teaching strategies and the reality of how alienating this discourse can be for AELs who are responsible for implementing them. They argue that to address this gap there is a need to:

navigate a pathway between the empty rhetoric of strategic planning and the possibility of implementing productive institutional change which results in better education.

Smith's discourse analysis of education strategies (2008 p.395) suggests:

a set of highly impersonalized texts, where staff are largely absent and students are objectified. Such findings raise questions about whether the learning and teaching strategy discourse disengages the very people who 'make and shape' policy, thus inhibiting institutional enhancement of learning and teaching practices.

In conclusion, structures and strategies can often be seen as negative influences on academic motivation to lead. However, perhaps the most influential structural mechanisms relate to academic recognition and reward and I discuss these in the next section.

#### **4.1.2 Routes into leadership, promotion, reward and recognition**

ECA's face complex career-building challenges amongst which leadership ambitions are not necessarily dominant (Cantwell & Scevak, 2010; Gale, 2011; McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010; Sutherland & Taylor, 2011; Sutherland 2013).

However, where they *do* express an interest in AEL, the institutional ‘signals’ they receive suggests that focusing on education could ‘harm you career’ (Fung & Gordon, 2016 p.15). (Scott & Scott, 2015 p.524) have shown:

There was disgruntlement with the mixed messages that were emerging from this institution’s central administration which paid lip service to prioritising teaching and learning while there was little real recognition or reward for exemplary teaching, particularly in terms of promotion and tenure.

Their research shows that coherent and cohesive policies and structures are necessary for enhancing motivation. For many HEIs, but not all, awareness of this has been one important catalyst for revising promotion strategies. Two major HEA reports (2009a; 2009b) allow RIUs to be identified as a separate sub-category. Of the thirty six RIUs, only seventeen have policies that explicitly address teaching and learning promotion criteria (while they all identify research and administration promotion criteria). This leads the authors to suggest (p.19) that evidence of education in promotion strategies is ‘inconsistent and often absent’. There are several issues which limit the value of this research in relation to my study. Firstly, as Fransman (2014) argues the study’s findings are complicated by layers of policies which make up the ‘policy systems’ owned by schools, departments or faculties frequently with different agendas; these sub-institutional policies and practices are not part of the data available to the authors and this may disguise more explicit evidence of educational criteria. Secondly, when these *are* referred to in the promotion criteria, *AEL* is seldom mentioned. This seems surprising given that academic promotion frequently relates to leadership activity. Thirdly, the report (p.7) suggests that academics often see education criteria as ‘empty rhetoric’ in that (p.19), ‘when criteria are articulated, they are not always implemented’. It is particularly apparent that those working in RIUs feel that there is a significant discrepancy between their *desire* for an emphasis on education criteria and what they *perceived* exists in institutional promotion practices. The 2009 report has been updated by Cashmore, Cane, and Cane (2013) who suggest routes for promotion in relation to AEL are increasingly evident in institutions and that many more RIUs have introduced criteria for education up to professorial level based on national guidelines (HEA, 2013)<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> The HEA (2013) provides education promotion criteria which incorporate leadership descriptors.

In recent years RIUs have become increasingly conscious of asymmetric promotional opportunities and many, although not all, have been anxious to ensure that their focus on education is well articulated as a motivating mechanism for AELs (Fung and Gordon, 2016). However, implementation and acceptance still seem to be patchy; many academics continue to assume there is a 'promotion ceiling' (p.26) relating to education; for many it is treated as a second class career for those who have failed at research (Graham, 2015; Parker, 2008).

Fung and Gordon (2016) identify persistent barriers in RIUs associated with role descriptors that lack specific criteria for AEL and with salary differentials, which separate research academics from education academics (see also Fairweather, 2005). In this context, where criteria are poorly defined and unevenly rewarded, the reticence of academics to take on AEL roles is understandable. They suggest there is a need to address this (p.45):

Arguably, the most productive way of solving the challenge of rewarding educators in research-focused higher education institutions is by articulating more effectively the notion of academic leadership and impact in the education ... domain, and by ensuring that the levels of esteem, opportunity and status for those who lead in that area are on a par with those experienced by research leaders.

They also show that, even where strategies are explicit and institution-wide, there is a problem with the constitution of promotion panels and the bias shown by panel members towards research rather than education. This reinforces the idea that normative mechanisms are deeply embedded and that addressing attitudes to AEL is a significant challenge involving 'fundamental cultural changes' (p.53).

In many HEIs, esteem and status issues are (also) addressed in more informal ways recognising that not all academics are motivated primarily by promotion (Peters & Ryan, 2015). They and others (Fung & Gordon, 2016; Land & Gordon, 2015) discuss the increase in the use of more informal rewards and prizes often based on collegial or student opinions/surveys. There is, however, a degree of cynicism amongst education-focused academics about why institutions create these devices. 'Despite the good intentions of these initiatives', whether they have any significance in relation to enhancing status or

encouraging academics to take on AEL roles is doubtful (Macfarlane, 2011 p.127).

The discussion above suggests that institutional promotion structures, reward and recognition can be important positive influences, but this is challenged when other research into contemporary attitudes to careers is considered. As already discussed, Scase and Goffee (1993 p.78) make it clear that 'the trio of job security, hierarchical advancement and financial remuneration' no longer provide a predictable, secure and motivating context for working lives. Consequently, workplace career aspirations are no longer the 'supreme social reality' for many and 'personal conceptions of success' have broadened beyond the workplace. In relation to ECAs, this thinking has particular relevance; contemporary academics find it necessary to constantly reframe their positions with reference to 'personal progress and contribution rather than permanence and status' (Åkerlind & McAlpine, 2010 p.156) as their careers emerge in highly contextualised, organic and often unpredictable ways (Floyd, 2012; Neame, 2016). 'Precariousness of work' and 'rootlessness' (Taylor, 1999 p.101) become issues which belie the whole idea of a 'career trajectory'. Taylor calls this a modernist concept, which he argues has little contemporary relevance for ECAs. For him the term carries assumptions of pre-existing structures that 'map a pathway providing guidance on what is valued and what is more optional'. ECAs find this pathway 'poorly lit and lacking in clear markers'. HEIs, which build structures around 'any of the more traditional expectations and assumptions', are likely to find they are unsuccessful in inspiring academics to follow AEL pathways; in fact they 'act to constrain thinking in quite unhelpful ways' (p.107).

Fung and Gordon (p.22) suggest this is particularly true in RIUs:

academics across the institution, from their different positions and perspectives, see a great deal of will to provide high quality education and to reward those who make this a reality. However, disjunctures in communication, processes and infrastructure sustain the traditional culture of ascribing more prestige to research than to education, and continue to act as barriers to change.

Others who have researched this agenda have also argued that the language used in institutional promotion policies is simply, in most cases, 'visionary

rhetoric' which contrasts with the 'prosaic reality' experienced by staff and students (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005 p.12). Finally, Scott and Scott (2015 p.524) suggest, rather more forcefully, that traditional conceptualizations around education-related careers create 'a social justice issue whereby teaching responsibilities became a form of academic oppression'.

In this section I have brought together research which suggests there is a kind of *perceptual dissonance* between institutional intentions and the way they are received by academics. In this context HEIs find that they need to work hard to nurture and motivate academics to take on leadership roles. In section 4.1.3 I bring together existing research, which considers whether this is addressed in institutional approaches to nurturing AEL.

#### **4.1.3 Nurturing AEL: Support and development**

In this section I continue to explore research question two but, in addition, address the research literature which underpins research question three:

Question three. What are the possible policy and practice implications for nurturing AEL?

Nurturing academics to lead is a complex process around which considerable research literature has accumulated. Generally in the past, the institutional perspective was that AL was learnt informally from colleagues and/or through a process of self-development and reflection. It was also often assumed that good leaders simply emerged 'accidentally' (Grove, 2016) in an institutional culture which provided a 'fertile environment for leadership to grow' (Ramsden, 1998 p.255).

However, most institutional managers no longer feel this is appropriate (Gentle & Foreman, 2014; Tourish, 2012). They tend to believe that 'senior academics' rely on past experiences that are misleading in providing effective guidance to others (McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010a p.7), and that senior academics *themselves* need training to help them come to terms with their changing roles (Tysome, 2014 p.12)<sup>68</sup>. In addition, Floyd (2016 p.173) argues that central institutional support is required for those who are taking on A(E)L roles, particularly where they are 'stuck in the middle' between organisational goals and the expectations

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<sup>68</sup> For example, many HEIs require their senior academics to attend the external leadership courses such as those provided by the LFHE.

of staff who they lead. He accuses institutions of having operated 'a culture of neglect' leaving new manager-leaders without support. Deem et al. (2007 p.141) agrees, suggesting that this has created a dangerous 'culture of amateurism' amongst AELs who, as a result, are ill-prepared to lead, or indeed challenge, 'the orthodoxies' related to managerialism. Locke, Whitchurch, Smith, and Mazonod (2016) suggest this is particularly true in RIUs.

However, some research suggests this 'negligence' is overstated. In almost all HEIs, centralised systematic and targeted leadership training and development programmes, drawing on practices used in other organisations, *are* in place. These are often led by HR departments tasked with aligning ELD with institutional priorities (Marshall, 2008) and replacing or supplementing existing informal processes. HEIs in Australia and New Zealand have led on innovative practices. The impetus has come from national funding provided to enhance academic motivation to take on AEL (McInnis, Ramsden, & Maconachie, 2012; Ramsden, 2008; Sutherland, 2013; Sutherland & Taylor, 2011; Sutherland, Wilson, & Williams, 2013). Marshall et al. (2011) report on large scale Australian studies aimed at revealing how best to organise academic systems to 'identify, support and develop leaders who are capable of envisioning a future for learning and teaching' and 'to create the circumstances by which the vision can be realised' (p.90). One intervention reflecting these conclusions, and particularly relevant to ECAs, is the Programme for Preparing Early Leaders [PROPEL] (Lefoe, 2010; Parrish & Lefoe, 2008). There have been similar national ELD initiatives in the UK involving the LFHE and the HEA<sup>69</sup>. In addition institutional ELD is widely available and taken up by academics (Peters & Ryan, 2015)<sup>70</sup>. In all these cases the emphasis is on the planned development of leaders by centralised agencies/units.

Although these initiatives are well funded, designed with the best intentions and widely marketed as successful, they often run counter to research evidence, which suggests that relying on centrally devised ELD is not particularly effective (Burgoyne et al., 2009; Eraut, 1994). Debowksi & Blake (2004, p.3) argue that a combination of centralised and person-centred programmes is most effective for

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/training-events/professional-development/ALP>

<sup>70</sup> 88% of the participants in the LFHE HELMS survey had been involved in one leadership development activity in the previous twelve months; 70% had been involved in more than one.

supporting module and course leaders early in their careers, while more senior AELs need comprehensive development opportunities, which are less centralised, more diverse, responsive to context and refined to address their own conceptions of ELD, to be successful. There are three arguments that support this view.

Firstly, relying on centralised processes tends to contradict existing research relating to contingent leadership and contextual learning (Bolden et al., 2009; Burgoyne et al., 2009). The contingent leadership model (Marshall, 2008) recognises that leaders, faced with widely varied issues learn to adapt best through 'situational analysis' (Bush, 2011 p.23) and by mastering a wide repertoire of leadership practices. Ramsden (1998, p.135) states 'the best training for making decisions correctly is practice in applying principles to real situations'. Middlehurst (1993) argues that contextual immersion also provides rich opportunities to exercise initiative and take risks.

Secondly, there is evidence that academics are poorly motivated to take part in centralised training initiatives delivered in a vacuum. Bolden (2010 p.25) considers these to be a somewhat misplaced institutional investment in the human capital of selected individuals that inadvertently may contribute to academic reluctance to engage. Instead, support from senior academics (Bolton, 2000) based on 'the popular trilogy of coaching, mentoring and action learning' (Debowski & Blake, 2004, p.24), and carefully related to 'personal as well as institutional priorities', is seen as more motivational (Creanor, 2014 p.573).

Thirdly, academics can be cynical about top-down managerial initiatives that appear to reinforce the status quo and 'unthinkingly' perpetuate 'managerialist thought' (Flinn & Mowles, 2014 p.12). These are often designed to address structural and cultural challenges, which institutional managers see as important. From this perspective ELD becomes a behaviourist intervention (Knights & Willmott, 1999) designed to manipulate individuals; something Deem et al. (2007) call identity politics. In this context, Giroux (1988, 2009) suggests that antipathy to professional development arises from the instrumental and reductionist nature of bureaucratised and overly ideological activities, which

stultify personal development as transformative intellectuals. He and Deem et. al. both argue that LD needs to provide the opportunities to challenge prevailing orthodoxies associated with managerialism, and to encourage the creativity associated with alternative approaches. Neither of these, they suggest, are normally facilitated by institution-led (E)LD<sup>71</sup>.

This all suggests that, on balance, many contemporary attempts to nurture academic interest and abilities in ELD may well be counterproductive (Parker, 2004, 2014); they can lead to demotivation and reluctance to engage in both the activities offered and in the leadership roles themselves. Bolden et al., (2012, p.35) found that:

substantial scepticism was expressed about the extent to which HEIs could develop and enhance academic leadership through formal management-related processes. Instead leadership was seen to involve a process of identity construction relating to one's growth and maturation as a fully-fledged academic professional and member of the academy.

They argue that most academics believe that they develop *themselves* and that this normally happens spontaneously. If this is the case, alternative ways of developing leaders through 'co-operation and community' might be more productive and motivating. In support of this, Floyd (2016 p.176) provides evidence that ALD is most acceptable where it is not only experienced at the local level but is '*devised* from the bottom up' (my italics). This collegial model of ALD provides a focus on local/departmental issues and also shifts perceptions about the locus of power and control:

Consequently, leadership development activities move away from being seen as a controlling mechanism run by senior academic managers—or by human resource departments who are sometimes perceived to have little or no understanding of core academic values and practices—to an on-going programme of development owned by the individual and seen as emancipatory and professionally relevant.

In relation to ECAs, Harris & Nolan's (2014 p.1) research suggest that ELD is best started early and should serve the dual purpose of addressing institutional priorities *and* supporting personal career development:

strategically we need to nurture talent at all levels in the organisation, not just for succession planning for leadership, but also to develop

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<sup>71</sup> I refer to LD here because neither of these authors specifically mentions ELD.

and provide opportunities for individuals to develop within their role, or to take up opportunities in other key roles.

Like Floyd, they suggest that (p.4) focusing on individual agency is a profitable way of capturing an individual's 'purposeful response to the structures that surround them' (p.4).

Deem et al. (2007 p.157) also emphasize the need for early ELD opportunities for ECAs, but suggest these might best be 'unwittingly' achieved through the day to day work of leading teaching in 'a context in which they can comfortably retain their credibility as academics' (see section 4.2.1). The motivational implications of explicit disciplinary initiatives with an implicit emphasis on ELD have been effectively demonstrated by Martensson and Roxa (2016) in their evaluation of localised development. In contrast, Weller (2009 p.25) presents evidence that suggests peer-orientated approaches may reinforce 'restrictive norms of practice' and warns that the outcome may be 'parochial and performative constructions of teacher professionalism'.

In conclusion, some researchers suggest that motivational ELD is best organised through centralised and formal processes and others think that it typically succeeds best if localised and informal (Pickering, 2006). Burgoyne et al. (2009, p.7) argue that there is a 'middle way'. There are significant 'passage points' where formal development or intensive training initiatives are effective and motivational in helping people make transitions; at other times informal approaches are probably most effective. Whether an ECA's transition into leadership is one of those passage points, as Matthews et al. (2014) suggest, is unclear, leaving research question three open for further research.

Although much of the research reported in this section suggests that contemporary ELD activities are poorly received by academics, this research generally fails to take account of the diverse preferences of small groups and individuals; something Bolden et al., (2015 p.29) describe as their 'mindsets'. This diversity is typically attributed in research to the agentic perspectives of academics to their working contexts and is addressed in section 4.2.

## 4.2 Agentic perspectives

This section considers some of the literature that draws on agentic perspectives as explanations for attitudes and stances towards AEL. Much of this research relates to 'identity work' (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003 p.1165). In relation to HE, Henkel (2000) sees identity as *the* central cultural feature of academic life defined (p.225) as:

'a complex and heterogeneous mix of individual and community values, commitment to particular forms of knowledge or epistemological frameworks and a sense of worth or self-esteem ...worked out predominantly in the roles and tasks of research, teaching, administration and, increasingly frequently, management'

Knights and Willmott (1999) suggest research into identity in contemporary organizations can be contradictory, as a result of 'competing understandings of human nature that either deny or affirm a belief in human autonomy or free will' (p.53). Group (social) identities formed in academic disciplinary communities (4.2.1) and personal identities and stances (4.2.2) can both be viewed from either of these perspectives.

### 4.2.1 Social and disciplinary identities

Merton (section 2.2) suggests that most individuals belong to 'reference groups'<sup>72</sup>, which help form their attitudes and order their experiences; these are the focus of their social and professional ties and the persistent social networks within which their identities are developed and against which they evaluate their own characteristics and performances. HE research indicates that for academics these groups operate within tight disciplinary networks (Floyd & Fung, 2012; Henkel, 2002; 2005) or communities of practice (Huber, 2009; Li et al., 2009; Wenger et al., 2002) which are defined by clear moral and intellectual boundaries and established systems of values and beliefs. These disciplinary units are seen to be the primary context in which academic identities and attitudes are formed (Henkel, 2000). The best known research is Becher's (1989) widely cited study; he adopts an epistemologically essentialist approach to highlight how disciplinary cultures emerge, condition academic attitudes and then become permanently differentiated through a kind of cultural inertia.

Within this context it can be argued that ECAs are inducted as scholars into

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<sup>72</sup> These are similar to the 'norm circles' referred to by Elder-Vass (2012) (chapter three section 4.3). I use this term in chapter four and in chapter six.

practices and beliefs which they in turn go on to champion, if necessary through acts of 'resistance' to external or institutional policy (Trowler, 1998 p.61). Their attitudes to taking on disciplinary leadership roles are, at least in part, formed within, and explained by, these disciplinary cultures (Blackmore, 2007). For example, Becher's analysis focuses on the organisational, social and cognitive differences between, in particular, the sciences and humanities (Deem, 2001; Kekale, 1999). Scientists tend to expect to be line-managed and small group leadership opportunities emerge early in their careers; humanities scholars work individually and leadership is not central to career development at an early stage. However, it has also been argued that, if academics in *any* discipline are members of collaborative and supportive communities, which share good practice and value their involvement (Debowski & Blake, 2004), then this creates conditions conducive to positive attitudes to disciplinary leadership. Ironically, these positive attitudes may not then be reproduced at institutional level; As Blackmore (2007 p.226) suggests:

many faculty decline to make a transition into across-institutional roles, with a consequent reduction in the pool of talent available for senior positions in higher education.

However, re-evaluation of Becher's work (Trowler, 1997) suggests that, not only is disciplinary essentialism an overly simplified explanation for academic attitudes<sup>73</sup>, but also that contemporary disciplinary communities have become increasingly subject to 'disturbed equilibrium' (Henkel, 2000 p.21) to the extent that, for some, they are seen as a 'myth' (Middlehurst, 1993 p.49). Where this is the case academics are more likely to show ambivalence towards taking on disciplinary leadership roles.

Central to understanding this ambivalence is the concept of academic collegiality<sup>74</sup>. Taylor (1999) considers collegiality to be one of the three cosmopolitan values associated with academic professionalism in RIUs (the others being academic freedom and autonomy). The apparent contradiction between autonomy and collegiality has implications for leadership attitudes;

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<sup>73</sup> Methodologically, it is sometimes seen as elite and restricted to RIUs, is overly descriptive and fails to explain the mechanisms by which cultures translate into attitudes and actions.

<sup>74</sup> Collegiality is a mode of *behaviour*, defined by relations between colleagues which are mutually supportive, geared to the good of the collective over the individual and not fixated on rank. In relation to leadership it is commonly defined *structurally* as a form of collaborative decision-making. (Bacon, 2014 p.03).

positive approaches to AEL are potentially connected to strong collegial communities, and more negative approaches to communities that value individual autonomy.

Henkel's (2000) research explores the way in which national policies have impacted institutional cultures and, in turn, led to a decline in 'the collegiality model' through which disciplinary teams traditionally negotiated on the basis of 'accepted rituals and sagas' (p.55). In the new managerialist context she suggests both academic autonomy and collegiality are challenged as disciplines and departments come 'under scrutiny' (p.64). She, Fanghanel (2012) and Bolden et al. (2012; Figures 2.4 and 2.5) suggest there is an associated decline in collaboration, and rise in competitiveness which can be seen to underlie reluctance to take on less congenial leadership roles.

However recent research has questioned this orthodox view of collegiality. Kligyte and Barrie (2014 p.158) suggest the much reified 'enduring cultural view of collegiality', as sitting in opposition to HE managerialism and leadership, is a 'powerful but largely tacit ... subliminal fantasy'. They suggest that the concept of collegiality is 'slippery' and oversimplified in the HE leadership literature where it is often seen to be an important 'interface between leaders and the led'. However, in reconceptualising whether collegiality interfaces with attitudes to leadership they do conclude that, whilst it has no direct influence, it *is* powerful in shaping academics' attitudes and therefore their stances.

Bacon (2014 p.24) also suggests that the management/leadership vs. collegiality discourse has been 'too hackneyed for too long'. However, his survey also points to the importance of collegiality as central to how the forty two academics in his survey *describe* their attitudes to leadership. Spiller's (2010) study of fifteen ALs in one RIU in New Zealand points to the same conclusion; although, while she believes the language surrounding collegiality may be misused, the term is persistently used by academics to describe powerful moral drivers which shape their attitudes to leadership.

Macfarlane (2015 p.103) describes the traditional 'collegiality model' as a myth that needs 'debunking'. He suggests that past decision-making was dominated

in reality by an almost 'exclusively male oligarchy of full professors'; a self-appointed group which never really involved the majority of academics.

This leads me to question whether contemporary nostalgia for the past is misdirected, especially as most ECAs have only ever experienced a managerialist approach to HE leadership. Bacon (2014) describes a new neo-collegial approach based around inclusive collaborative decision making; he argues this would address current disincentives and inspire ECAs to take on leadership roles. However, I would argue that negativity surrounding distributed leadership (see section 3.2.3) is a potential barrier to the success of this approach.

It seems therefore although academic social identities develop in the context of disciplines, and are often closely linked to conceptions of collegiality; the relationship with attitudes to leadership is contested in the literature. They can have had both a positive and negative influence on attitudes towards taking on leadership roles. As these are formed in a complex interrelationship with personal identities and stances I shall now consider these in detail.

#### **4.2.2 Personal identity and individual stances**

Individual academics strive to create their personal work-life visions based on a commitment to a sense of self-esteem and to avoid becoming 'victims' of organisational practices (Martin, 1999). Achieving this involves an identity management strategy (Taylor, 1999). Individuals try to master approaches to maximising winning, minimising losing and to suppressing negativity in order to avoid embarrassment, threats and feeling incompetent (Anderson, 1997; Argyris & Schon, 1978). However suppressing negativity can be difficult; academic identities can be fragile, subject to change and fraught with tensions and ambivalence (Evans and Nixon, 2015); these all influence attitudes to leadership as I have discussed in section 3. Below I discuss some relevant M&CPs with a focus on three dimensions: Trajectories, levels and multiple identities.

##### *Trajectories*

Henkel (2000) argues that the traditional modernist view of fixed identities as 'the essence of the self' (p140) is discredited in post-modern research

where identities are seen as emergent and part of 'personal projects', captured in narratives, which look back and forwards. In rapidly changing HE cultures, as Fanghanel (2012 p.10) also argues, an individual constructs a fluid narrative of their identity; this involves a degree of 'ideological fuzziness', is 'complex and rarely unidirectional' and depends on how individuals construct and reconstruct their 'sense of self'. Evans & Nixon (2015 p.10) describe academic personal identity as a 'bricolage' - a 'complex bundle' of traits that are picked up and put down as a 'pragmatic accommodation to contingent events'.

In a particularly useful piece of research Inman (2011) draws on other research work, including Ribbins (2003), to formulate an academic leadership career trajectory framework. The four stages identified in this classification are formation (pre-academic career), accession (pre-leadership experiences), incumbency (while in a leadership role) and reclamation or retirement (post-leadership). In understanding the attitudes of ECAs the *accession* phase is important. She suggests it is characterised sequentially by experimentation, development and consolidation during which ECAs develop identities focused around the motivation to learn, be challenged and 'make a difference' (p.236). While this framework has a certain beguiling simplicity, it suggests a level of simplicity and linearity which she herself criticises in her later work (Inman, 2014).

In contrast, others have suggested that it is important to understand how the personal project of individual ECAs become *differentiated* (McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010b; Neame, 2016; O'Byrne, 2015) and how each envisages a personal future 'identity-trajectory' (McAlpine & Turner, 2012 p.525). Henkel argues that narratives of disillusionment and accommodation around leader-manager roles (see section 2.3.2) can be best understood in relation to how individuals experience career-unsettling changes at critical moments such as transitioning into unfamiliar leadership roles. Individuals 'manage a range of conflicts and tensions' (p.243) in different ways, all linked to their concern to conserve their academic identities and values (p.261).

### *Levels*

Malcolm & Zukas (2014 p.2) suggest that identity projects are subject to considerable fluidity as 'connections and conflicts are experienced and negotiated' in a complex framework of levels (from discipline through to national level). Academics whose leadership roles involve working beyond their own departments are particularly affected. Winter (2009 p.121) identifies a 'schism' between these academic-managers, whose identities and values often become congruent with managerialism, and managed- academics, who defend a different set of values. He argues that academic-managers internalise the values, goals and working patterns of corporate management systems; managed-academics defend and promote distinctive accounts of their own professional identity by invoking values of self-regulation, collegial practice and educational standards (p.121). In the resulting 'fractured work environment' (p.124) many managed-academics reject identities based on power and discourse and aligned with new managerialist ideologies (Deem & Brehony, 2005) and become antagonistic towards personal opportunities to take on leadership roles. Some institutions, wishing to inspire these demotivated academics, purposefully engineer dualistic nurturing strategies which blend corporate and professional values (section 4.1.3).

### *Multiple identities*

The somewhat simplified view presented so far fails to acknowledge that most ALs adopt 'multiple or hybrid leadership identities' (Winter, 2009 p.129) in which individuals can be torn between two or more 'value sets' (Taylor, 1999). Sinclair (2007) describes how leaders reframe their identities to become self-regulating 'deeply disciplined' agents (p.131) but also, become increasingly externally constrained. In this context she suggests a constantly re-shaped sense of self is evident (p.78) in which, 'we almost always have some power to act, but we are always also imprisoned: the two experiences coexist' (p.78).

ALs may also hide their 'inner professional' identities behind a façade through which they manage their 'outer organisational' identities (Winter, 2009 p.122)<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> In some ways this is analogous with Goffman's (1959) idea of the way that individuals perform in the frontstage (formally and adhering to conventions) and backstage (informal and personally authentic).

Meyerson and Scully (1995) argue that ALs purposefully 'manage impressions' (p.590) by presenting (at least) two identities in order to win approval from different audiences<sup>76</sup>. Interestingly, they suggest that, where this results in an outward display of inconsistency, it may lead to lost credibility amongst academic colleagues and become counter-productive.

As an alternative way of articulating the idea of multiple identities, Deem and Brehony (2005 p.227) suggests that middle level (e.g. Heads of Departments) academic leader-managers become 'tri-lingual', moving easily between the discourse of discipline, traditional ideas about higher education and the language of new managerialism. They may become adept at the 'new speak' but still be openly reluctant to internalise the ideologies associated with managerialism. Both Parker (2004) and Floyd (2012) make related points; leaders at this level are reluctant to disguise their traditional academic identities and may openly defend academic interests, bringing them (desirable) collegial credibility and self-esteem.

Followers can also have dual identities where there is a conflict between their personal identities and their institution's public rhetoric. In their study of twenty one academics Churchman and King (2009) show that they develop strategies to isolate themselves and 'fly below the radar' (p.152) in order to avoid being co-opted into positions (including leadership roles) relating to purposes that they do not value.

In relation to ECAs, Åkerlind and McAlpine (2010b p.161) suggest that the 'personal face' – how they feel, their intentions, values, purposes and experiences – exists in a 'reciprocal relationship' with the 'public face'. They suggest that, in developing attitudes to and prioritising future aspirations, ECAs are motivated by the 'personal' but that this is often 'invisible'. This means that they may be seen by others as insecure and vulnerable with passive and compliant identities. However, Smith (2010) argues that research into the private identities of ECAs has revealed their *resilience* when faced with 'destabilising' (p.276) identity challenges and has shown the 'creativity and subversion' (p.727) with which they are able to find 'gaps' where they can

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<sup>76</sup> Gentle & Foreman (2014) call these public and private transcripts.

exercise their autonomy and defend their values providing a possible explanation for defensive routines (figure 3.3). Bristow et al. (2017 in press; no page) also suggests that ECAs are highly capable of developing 'resistant-compliant' identities, which are deployed actively as agentic responses to micro-variations, in the contexts in which they work. They identify three active identity narratives: diplomatic (negotiating-deceptive), competitive (openly resistant-struggle) and idealistic (a deliberately chosen path between resistance and compliance). Through these ECAs manage:

to subvert the dominant managerial ideologies through mundane, covert practices that often fly below the radar of formal control mechanisms.

ECAs develop these sophisticated strategies as they become aware of the way senior academics' lives have become fragmented and this can lead to cynical attitudes towards leadership opportunities in their future careers.

In this section I have exemplified how trajectory, level and multiple identities help explain leadership identities. It seems from this evidence that, from an empowered agentic viewpoint, academic negativity towards leading can be seen as a perfectly rational response to the socio-cultural conditions of contemporary academic life for both leaders (Parker, 2004) and followers (Bolden, 2010).

#### *Individual stances: Archer and reflexivity*

I have already described (sections 2.2 and 2.4) how individual academic stances can vary considerably from person to person. Even when they are co-located in time and space, and involved in similar activities, attitudinal diversity is evident (Maxwell, 2012). In section 2.2, I discussed Archer's (2007 p.4) view that the key to understanding diversity is *agentic reflexivity*<sup>77</sup>. She argues that reflexive mediation is essential for giving an account of 'precisely what we do rather than a statement about probable courses of action' (p.15) and that it is only through interpreting the inner dialogue of individuals that it becomes

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<sup>77</sup> Archer defines reflexivity as 'the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa' (p.15).

possible to determine whether their subjective responses have been moulded by 'social influences such as ideology or 'habitus'<sup>78</sup>.

In relation to how academics might respond to leadership work, O'Byrne (2015) draws heavily on Archer's conceptions of reflexivity arguing (p.225) that academics tend to 'seek out roles in society that allow them to pursue their ultimate concerns, and thus to become the kinds of people they wish to be'. This, she argues, effects the way that different academics personify their formal roles – '*elasticating*' them to their own projects. In her research she identifies some as relatively 'selfless' in their approach to taking on academic responsibilities while others, who see themselves as (research) specialists, are more selfish (my word) in their approach. An important concept that emerges through her research is the divide between 'what they actually do and wish to do, on the one hand, and what they are officially expected and supported to do, on the other' (p.236).

Importantly for my work, she suggests (O'Byrne, 2014) that reflexivity is evident early in academic careers and can be highly persistent in influencing how each individual ECA views the constraints and enablements they encounter. Reybold (2005 p.107) study of nine ECAs supports this, suggesting that where early career experiences undermine enthusiasm and idealism (p.108), dissatisfaction is heightened differentially in relation to the balance between two 'forces':

personal experiences of professional conflict correspond to an individual's motivating force (source of meaningfulness) and disrupting force (interruption to meaningfulness), thus the disillusioning process evolves along a continuum of expectation and disposition, resulting in differential thresholds of faculty dissatisfaction.

She argues that this internal conflict can contribute to later disillusionment and disengagement. However, some research (Gale, 2011) also suggests that internal dialogue associated with resolving personal conflict can be an essential and positive ingredient for professional growth.

Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that early experiences of identity

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<sup>78</sup> Archer refutes the idea that reflexive thinking is damaging and that routine thinking (Bourdieu's habitus) is desirable.

disruption *inevitably* influence ECAs to be reluctant to take to leadership responsibilities; the mediating influence of reflexivity will result in very different responses between individuals. In Inman's life history research with eighteen ALs (2014 p.238), her participants emphasise the importance of 'conscious reflection' in their personal development as education leaders. Her research suggests that, in learning to lead, 'understanding of self' (p.238), through reflecting on and responding to past experiences, is a critical process.

In section 4.2, the implications of existing research are somewhat contradictory. Firstly, while some contemporary narratives suggest that demoralisation and disempowerment have become persistent features of identity, others suggest that academic identity continues to be infused with the passion for work that has been a long standing feature of academic (disciplinary) culture (Watson, 2009). How this plays out in particular contexts and for individuals has been shown to inevitably influence their attitudes to leadership. Secondly, I have shown that while some suggest that identities are fluid and subject to variation (through time, at different levels and through multiple identities), others argue that the values, attitudes and beliefs held by individuals and groups are persistent and difficult to dislodge due largely to their 'investment in identity and the comfort in certainty' (Bolden et al., 2015, p.29).

In conclusion, in section 4 I have explored research which contributes to research questions two and three. This research has highlighted the wide range of complex and sometimes contradictory evidence about structural and agentic influences on how academics develop their attitudes to leadership. Approaches to this complexity are explored further in the next section.

## **5.0 Configuration and complexity**

As a real world study with a practical purpose, my initial hope was that a comprehensive review of relevant research literature would highlight one or two theoretical perspectives around which my study could be formed. However, the vast range of findings in this chapter about academic attitudes, stances and how these originate has made this difficult. A multitude of different low or middle range theories have emerged and many of these provide relevant insights. In particular, Archer's work is used later in my study to inform both my

methodology and my analysis. However, I have detected that in investigating complex organisations like HEIs, researchers increasingly use theoretical frameworks which capture the *interactions* they find through complex configurations (Alvesson, 2013).

As I have suggested throughout this chapter, HEIs are characterised by multiple cultural layers around which contradictory research narratives have emerged. In addressing this complexity, Alvesson (1993 p.118) argues that organisational cultures should be understood ‘...not as unitary wholes... but as mixtures of cultural manifestations of different levels and kinds’. To capture this idea he uses the term **multiple cultural configurations**. Baughan (2012 p.21) suggests this concept is central to understanding the ‘presence and dynamics of culture’ in HEIs. He describes this as a ‘loosely coupled system’ of cultural groups with their own beliefs and behaviours between which there is multi-direction flow of cultural traffic.

This has implications for academic attitudes to their work. Trowler (1998 p.30) suggests that ‘multiple conditioning structures’ (p.66) operating at different levels lead to *cultural discontinuities* that are implicated in academic negativity. Parker and Jory (1995) also identify level or layers (the national-structural, organisational and professional-subjective) but they argue these do *not* imply separation; they are ‘mutually constituted and interconnected’ (p. 320). However, they suggest that interconnection in HEIs, where the ‘means have become the end’, can lead to dissatisfaction as academics conceive of themselves as Weberian ‘cogs in the machine’ (p.329). Taylor (1999), on the other hand, argues that cultural configurations in HE are typified by incremental change; he likens this to a process of *sedimentation* as new cultures are superimposed on the old, but all continue to visibly exist. He concludes that new corporate ideologies (such as neoliberalism) are likely to inhibit, but not displace, academic collegial cultures - an uneasy co-existence becomes the norm. Deem et al (2007) take a similar view, arguing that HEI cultures are more resistant to externally derived cultural reform than other organisations. The intermittent and partial nature of the impact of external reforms contributes to the emergence of more benign ‘hybrid cultures’ (p.31).

The concept of hybridity has also been developed in relation to leadership. Gronn (2009; 2011) uses the term **hybrid leadership configurations** to describe how leadership can be differently constructed at different levels of an organisation and, while these differences can co-exist on a hierarchical continuum, influences which apply at one level do not necessarily apply at the next<sup>79</sup>. He provides a nuanced analysis of contexts in which followers might feel positive or negative about the leadership styles they experience, and hence their motivations in relation to these. The term 'hybrid' has been adopted by HE leadership researchers. For example, Bolden and Petrov (2014) and Winter and Bolden (2017) adopt the term in their attempts to address the overly simplified assumption that through time one style of leadership (e.g. distributed leadership) might replace another (e.g. heroic leadership). It has been suggested that more leadership studies that investigate the complex hybrid interplay of mechanisms are badly needed (Gronn, 2011).

Flinn and Mowles (2014) go some way towards addressing the complex interplay of MCPs at different levels by adopting a **complexity approach** to understanding leadership. They draw on theories of complexity to suggest that the (sometimes) assumed dominant role of powerful senior leaders and managers in taking forward change in a 'managed transition' within institutions is hardly borne out by reality; but neither does localised agency dominate.

Rather, as complexity science suggests (p.5):

no one agent, or group of agents, is in control of how things evolve... what agents can do is both constrained and enabled by what all the other agents are doing: individual agents and groups of agents shape the global while at the same time being shaped by what every other agent is doing.

The agents (both leaders and followers) are constantly adapting to and learning from each other's behaviour and workplaces are never in an optimum state of equilibrium; rather they are described as being in a state of 'stable instability' (p.4) and are evolving towards an uncertain future.

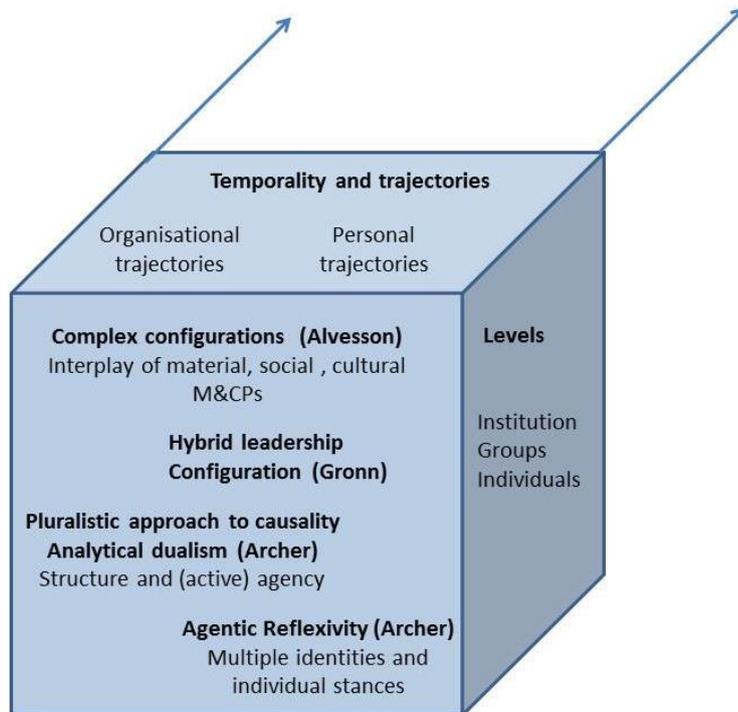
Bringing the ideas which I discuss in section 5 together has enabled me to construct a three dimensional pluralistic theoretical framework that I introduce in figure 3.6. This is one of three similar three dimensional frameworks (Figures

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<sup>79</sup> This view aligns with the CR concept of lamination( Chapter two section 4.0)

2.3, 3.6 and 6.2), which focus on three constructs: configurations, levels and trajectories.

**Figure 3.6 Pluralistic approach to theory: A three dimensional framework**



In figure 3.6 each of the faces of the cube summarises different research findings from this chapter. These relates to how at different levels and through time, configurations of different M&CPs influences attitudes and stances adopted by academics towards AEL and ELD.

## 6.0 Clarifying the focus of my empirical research

In the introduction to this chapter I suggested I would set the scene for addressing my case study research looking in particular for gaps in existing research. I have identified four *under-researched* areas in relation to my three research questions:

- Firstly, as I anticipated in chapter one, despite some research (section 3.2.3), there is rather little detailed evidence about the attitudes ECAs adopt towards AEL and ELD, particularly in RIUs.
- Secondly, while structural and agentic influences on negative attitudes are well researched (section 4), there is detailed work to be done to understand the *configurational complexities* associated with how these

operate separately, or combine in different contexts.

- Thirdly, personal and group (agentic) identities as influences on academic negativity are fairly well researched (section 4.5); however, the configurations relating to these at different *levels* are only partially addressed, leaving some ambiguities to be resolved (section 4.3).
- Finally, although the *practical* application of research in support of ELD is examined fairly thoroughly (section 4.1.3), it is under-represented in relation to ECA career *trajectories* and early career leadership development opportunities.

In my introduction I also suggested I could report on evidence including contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies in the literature, which might focus my empirical investigation. I have identified two themes around which the reported research is *contradictory* and consequently of interest for my study.

Firstly, some recent research suggests that attitudes and stances towards leadership roles are more nuanced and less predictable than the negative orthodoxy tends to suggest (section 2.4 p.05). Potentially, the emphasis on negativity can be seen as a 'myth' to be 'debunked' (Bolden et al., 2015), at least in certain contexts.

Secondly, while many researchers conclude that the emergence of neoliberal managerial cultures is widely seen as *the* primary influence on academic attitudes and stances, many alternative theories are also identified (section 4). This suggests that there is a need for research which explores these somewhat contradictory ideas in relation to AEL in my case study context.

These under-researched and contradictory themes suggest that my study should focus on confirming, rejecting or elaborating on *existing* research in addition to providing original observations relating to my three research questions.

## 7.0 Conclusion

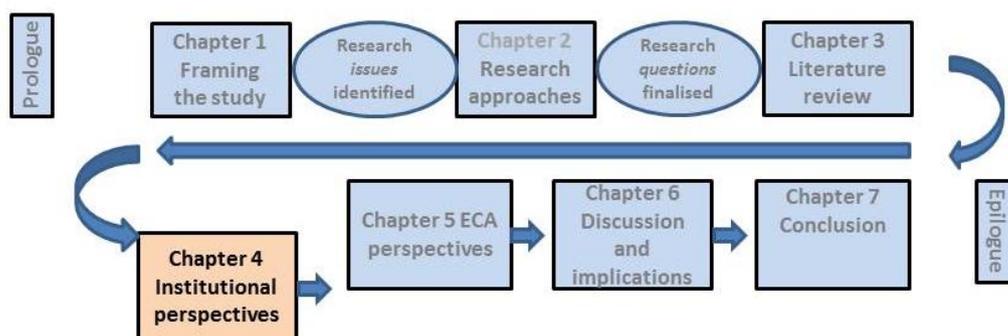
In summary, sections 2 & 3 suggest that there is some evidence of positive attitudes toward leadership, but there is considerably more evidence of

negativity. When academics adopt ambivalent stances towards their work, their institutions and their leaders, they also tend to be disinterested in taking on leadership responsibilities. This is recognised as having important consequences for organisations.

In section 4 I have revealed a wide range of M&CPs which potentially influence attitudes to AEL (section 3.2.4). In disaggregating these, I do not mean to imply that they exist independently of one another; neither do I take the view that they coalesce to create unitary cultures (section 5). Instead, in relation to my research, I suggest that firstly, Alvesson's complex model of multiple cultural configuration theories provides a powerful pluralistic theoretical foundation (Figure 3.6) for my study. Secondly, I draw on Archer's socio-cultural theories, relating to analytical dualism and, in particular, agentic reflexivity. These two theoretical underpinnings have informed my empirical work reported in chapters four and five.



## Chapter Four Institutional perspectives



### 1.0 Introduction

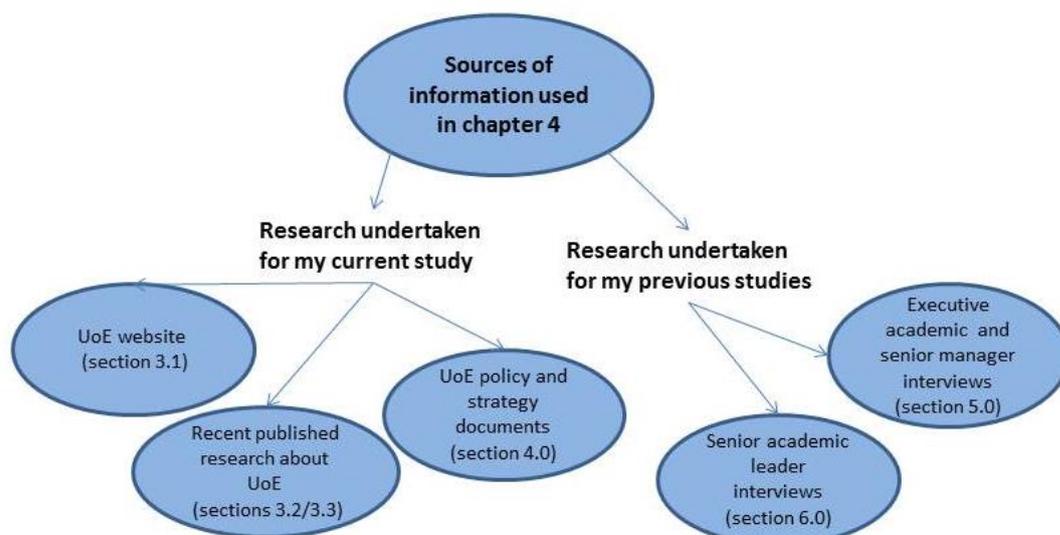
In this chapter I address my research questions from an institutional perspective. I introduce the research approach (section 2) before I build on chapter one (section 4.4) to provide a rich narrative about UoE based on existing research (section 3). I report on my empirical analysis of institutional perspectives on AEL/ELD from three different viewpoints. Firstly, I evaluate institutional strategic documentary evidence (section 4); secondly, I report on interviews held with several ‘elite’ executive leaders and senior managers [ELs] who occupy ‘powerful institutional social positions’ (Elder-Vass, 2012a p.159) (section 5) and thirdly, I report on interviews held with academic leaders [SALs] who hold senior college leadership positions (section 6). My findings are synthesised into three conceptual frameworks (section 7).

### 2.0 Aims and research approach

In undertaking the research for this chapter my aim has been to establish the extent to which UoE, as a complex organisation, prioritises AEL/ELD, to establish senior leaders attitudes to AEL and ELD and to identify influential mechanisms and causal powers (M&CPs)<sup>80</sup>. My research approach has been to draw on both documentary evidence and my own past and recent research at UoE as empirical sources. Some of the data used were collected in 2013/14 at a time when several UoE strategies had just been revised; the rest has been collected in 2016/17 to capture more recent strategic developments at UoE relating to AEL/ELD. These are described in chronological order in Appendix 3 and summarised in figure 4.1.

<sup>80</sup> These are highlighted in bold in the text and are summarised in Appendix 9.

**Figure 4.1 Summary: Sources of information for chapter four**



In Appendix 3 I make it clear that some of the information used in this chapter was not collected specifically for this study. I also make this clear in figure 4.1 and sections 5 and 6.

## 2.1 A case study approach

In chapter two I discussed the rationale for adopting an ACR case study approach. As Gray (2014 p.124) suggests, much real world research focuses on a particular institution in which the investigator is trying to 'uncover a relationship between a *phenomenon* and the *context* within which it is occurring'. In chapters four (and five) I 'follow clues' about attitudes, stances and M&CPs associated with AEL and ELD (the phenomena) at UoE (the context).

Alvesson, (2003) suggests that very few academics chose to investigate their own institutions and, where they do, their research is often somewhat abstract and impersonal. However, he also describes this self-ethnographic approach as powerful, arguing (p.167) that 'utilizing ones closeness to empirically rich situations' can be an advantage.

Focussing on my own institution in some depth allows me to investigate AEL in context and, thereafter, to introduce contextually viable ELD opportunities. I have capitalised on the advantages of being close to my case study but am also aware of the challenges and limitations. I discuss these in sections 4.3, 5.3 and 6.3 in this chapter.

### 3.0 Setting the scene: The University of Exeter

Underpinning my interpretation of UoE is its national reputation as a successful and relentlessly ambitious institution (van der Velden, 2012), achieved through a dramatic **cultural shift** in recent years. This is described by Black (2015 p.267) as ‘an astonishing efflorescence of energy and quality, one that acquired a cumulative dynamic that transformed the university, its culture and its reputation’.

In this section I allow the university to speak for itself through extracts taken from its official public website<sup>81</sup>, before introducing contrasting contemporary viewpoints about UoE and its history, especially where they may help explain the emergence of M&CPs relating to attitudes to AEL.

#### 3.1 The view from the official website<sup>82</sup>

Historically<sup>83</sup>, UoE emerged from early origins in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to become a university college set in its own campus in 1922; it was granted full university status in 1955. Mergers with St Lukes College of Education (1978), and Camborne School of Mines(1993) followed by the creation of the Peninsula Medical School (2000) and the opening of the Cornwall (Penryn) campus (2004) mean that the UoE occupies three discrete locations with an expanded range of subjects. Since 2012, the University has been a member of the Russell Group of leading UK research-intensive universities (Coughlan, 2012). The University has over 21 thousand students from more than 130 different countries and over 900 academic staff from 80 countries.

The University widely publicises its success in research and in providing a high quality and broad education for its students. In support of this it was voted the *Sunday Times University of the Year 2012/13* and the *Times and Sunday Times Sports University of the Year 2015/16*. It is ranked amongst the UK’s top 10 universities in four national HE league tables and amongst the world’s top 200 universities in the QS and *Times Higher Education* rankings. Significantly, for my research, it is amongst the UK leaders for student satisfaction, never having

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<sup>81</sup> Some of this is used verbatim and the rest is paraphrased.

<sup>82</sup> Much of this section was extracted from the UOE website on 10/03/2017. For more detail see <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/facts/profile/>

<sup>83</sup> Details obtained from <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/facts/history/>

been outside the top 10 in the National Student Survey [NSS] between 2005 and 2016. It has been awarded 'gold' in the 2017 TEF results and has been short listed as one of twenty seven HEIs for the Global Teaching Excellence award in its inaugural year (2017)<sup>84</sup>.

UoE's success has been built upon strong foundations of leadership, management and governance<sup>85</sup>, a relentless focus on performance and a sector leading partnership with its students. Looking ahead, the University's vision and strategy for the next five years (2016-2021) is bold and ambitious<sup>86</sup>. The website states

We want to use our new values - Ambition, Collaboration, Challenge, Community, Impact and Rigour - to define who we are and to drive us to become firmly established as a global top 100 research leader who creates graduates of distinction within a community of the most talented and creative minds.

In the 2016 annual review<sup>87</sup>, UoE showcases its success in academic and other areas in the recent past. As is the case with most Universities, the report is an opportunity to highlight the positive aspects of its recent activities including buoyant recruitment, strong international partnerships, success in research activity and the REF, and its high rankings in several national and international league tables.

The information on the UoE website is reliable in that it is up to date and verifiably accurate in its statistical data. However, not surprisingly it focuses on portraying those aspects that relate to its success as a national leader. Like most HEIs (Baty, 2017), UoE achieves this through adopting a highly professional approach to institutional branding in order to 'establish the legitimacy of (its) claims' but only where this matches its interests (Ashwin, 2015 p.620)<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/awards/gtea>

<sup>85</sup> The governance of the university since 2007/08 has involved a process known as dual assurance. Elite leaders work with members of the governing council to 'assure' the quality of the activity. e.g. the dual assurance leads for education assure all aspects of the student academic experience. This process was implemented to reduce the time spent in committees and to allow for agile decision making. In general the process has been recognised as successful in external quality reviews. Some staff have concerns (see section 3.2 and 3.3).

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/ourstrategy/>

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/facts/annualreport/>

<sup>88</sup> Baty (2017) argues, whether academics like it or not, a growing amount of senior leadership time, attention and resources are being devoted to creating, nurturing, reviving and protecting brands in higher education.

Becoming part of the Russell Group has exacerbated this tendency as UoE has aligned itself with the ‘increasing factionalism’ and ‘gamesmanship’ which Pirrie et al. (2010 p.103) suggest are a particular characteristic of this mission group. It reflects an increasingly competitive, market-led, external environment, tending to prioritise entrepreneurial activity over, for example, more academic activity such as promoting autonomy and defending criticality (Ashwin, 2015)<sup>89</sup>. The structure and language which characterise the UoE website provide a good example of how universities generally (Macdonald, 2016) and UoE, as an ambitious HEI, have strategically invested in branding over recent years (Forbes, 2012). Therefore, getting behind this somewhat **rhetorical gloss**, and beyond the publically presented face of UoE is important.

### 3.2 Other viewpoints from within the University

Alternative accounts of the UoE are hard to find. However, in an insightful interpretation of its history and recent development, Black's major publication (2015)<sup>90</sup> provides a comprehensive insider analysis on which I have been able to draw. He uses a chronological historical reflective analysis based on archives and interviews to highlight ‘competing narratives and contested interpretations’ (p.3) at UoE in relation to ‘national and international social, economic and moral contexts’.

Having been incorporated in 1955, Black suggests there was a general sense of complacency related to the fact that UoE had ‘made it’. However, this sense of complacency was not always borne out in reality. Over the next thirty years the UoE was seen as, a somewhat **low ranking backwater** (p.141). This was confirmed by the report of a visit from the University Grants Committee in 1988 which criticised the academic community for its complacency and somewhat backward looking mentality. Moving forward, and compounded by what he describes as the ‘poor Research Assessment Exercise [RAE] results of 1992’, the ‘dreadful results of 1996’, and the ‘not much improved results of 2001’, Black argues (p.175) that:

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<sup>89</sup> <http://www.webusability.co.uk/blog/usability-expert-advice/why-are-university-web-sites-so-bad/>.

<sup>90</sup> Jeremy Black, has been an Exeter professor for over 20 years who has, at times, been openly critical of the cultural changes he has experienced. However, he had minimum interference and some financial support from the University. His analysis is somewhat Streatham-centric, although he does refer to the other two campuses.

(the) problems within the university were widely understood, (but that) structures and attitudes obstructed attempts to change the situation and notably the extent necessary to transform it.

Ultimately, however, this growing understanding, and the associated pressures from external influences (Appendix 1), led to a series of policy and strategy reforms which impacted strongly on staff roles and on recruitment. In relation to my interest in AEL, Black suggests that decisions were taken which **prioritised research over teaching** and that this inevitably had an impact on the status of teaching and teaching appointments<sup>91</sup>. In addition, a general decline in collegiality and a **rise of instrumentalism** amongst academic staff meant that reluctance to engage in activities ‘unless they counted’ can be seen to have its origin in this phase of UoE’s development.

Throughout the period since the mid-2000s, Black suggests that UoE has consistently ‘**outperformed**’ other HEIs given its size and often ‘dire finances’ (p.xxii). The emergence of ‘Exeter plc’, based around a determination to restructure and invest for success and with an **intolerance of underperformance** of individuals and teams, was central to this turnaround. The restructured management approach was (p.247) based around the view that UoE should ‘measure itself against the best ... deploy statistics to demonstrate that it was one of the best (and) ..it should be careful about the company it kept’. He sees the rapid rise in league table positions, the excellent RAE (2012) results, even better REF (2014) results, and acceptance as a member of the Russell Group<sup>92</sup> as key evidence of the success of this strategy and its relationship to UoE’s ‘outperformance’.

I now draw on aspects of Black’s analysis of the emergence of key M&CPs which are relevant to my study. These focus firstly, on insights into leadership and secondly, on his views on the changing working lives of academics.

He argues that central to the emergence of UoE has been **adroit leadership**. The ability to move beyond ‘reacting and responding’ to emerging external situations (Hilli, 2017), and towards ‘shaping’ them before change was forced

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<sup>91</sup> Teachers without research CVs were not any longer felt to be acceptable by UoE leaders although pragmatic departments continued to appoint teachers where they could be found

<sup>92</sup> He reminds readers that the UoE paid a significant amount for this privilege.

on the university, has been critical (p.107). Decisions have increasingly been taken very rapidly at the centre<sup>93</sup>, something seen by some as an autocratic attempt to undermine the culture of devolved leadership. The move to **more centralised and formal nested hierarchical leadership structures**<sup>94</sup> addressed the perceived 'lack of accountability and arbitrary decision making' which permeated the 'loose confederation of departments' (p.19). Academic leaders were no longer selected locally by 'appreciative' colleagues, or seconded with an expectation of returning to their academic roles; rather they were appointed centrally and with this **departmental autonomy declined** (p.241). Many 'became fed up with running departments' (p.71) as their **responsibility increased and powers were reduced**. The modernisation and centralisation of structures and processes has been managed by a cadre of professional university administrators who have implemented new leadership structures (see Floyd & Fung, 2012 below for reactions to this amongst academics). While all this is seen by some as overly bureaucratic, Black describes it as the driver behind the emergence of a more nimble 'entrepreneurial' university (see also van der Velden on McNay below). Reactions by staff and students to the speed of change, the growth of administrative functions and the centralised micro-management of processes have varied.

Amongst academic staff there has been **resistance**, but also some evidence of **compliance**, which Black addresses in his analysis. Black argues that perceptions that **quality of academic working life had been deteriorating** have their origins in the UoE of the 1970s. Prior to this staff generally described working in friendly collegiate communities<sup>95</sup>, but by the 1970s, reflecting a national mood, staff were developing an 'almost instinctual reaction against authority' (p.68). In particular Black suggests that at UoE this was a reaction against the 'anachronistic, paternalistic and autocratic' rigid control by tightknit '**professorial fiefdoms**' (p.70) and arose from a push for more democratic governance by academic staff who were becoming 'more troublesome' and less

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<sup>93</sup> Black's analysis indicates that the six vice chancellors [VCs] since 1955 have adopted different leadership styles with resulting fluctuations of levels of power at the centre.

<sup>94</sup> This can be linked to the impact of the Jarratt report (see Appendix 1).

<sup>95</sup> This has similarities with Halsey's (1992) study discussed in chapter three.

reverential<sup>96</sup>. As structural changes, driven from the centre in the late 1990s, started to have an impact, he argues staff were 'not overjoyed' by this enhanced bureaucracy. 'These were very radical (times) for Exeter and very unsettling for traditionalists'(p.165). However, older staff were leaving (early retirement packages were introduced) and newer academic staff seemed to be becoming more **compliant**<sup>97</sup>. He suggest this reflects the more complicated lives they were leading (with increases in the numbers of female and international academics, for example) and the huge pressures they were under to meet stringent probation criteria and to respond to the micro-management of research profiling, which became a feature of the UoE appraisal system in the late 2000s.

By the late 2000s **academic morale** had become an institutional issue. In the 2006 staff satisfaction survey 82% of academics felt Exeter was a good place to work despite 79% stating that their workloads had increased in the last year (p.256). The 2009 and 2012 surveys reported a huge drop in morale and 'pressure to succeed on all fronts was generating high levels of stress' (p.256)<sup>98</sup>. UoE had dropped from being a sector leader for staff satisfaction in 2006 to coming bottom of the table in 2012. Black describes what he sees as a '**stress inducing culture**'.

In support of this, a somewhat embarrassing report in *Times Higher Education* (Gibney, 2013) refers to a series of sector benchmarks against which the UoE measures its performance. As the VC points out, in an interview with the author, 'we did better [than] or the same [as the benchmark] in 17 out of 25 [areas]'.

However, as this article reports:

36 per cent reported feeling unduly stressed, compared with a benchmark figure at universities conducting the same survey of 28 per cent. The survey also found that only 60 per cent said they felt able to voice opinions, compared with a sector benchmark of 76 per cent.

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<sup>96</sup> Here Black describes a cohort of academics who have now become senior leaders themselves. Many still hold the radical values and beliefs they formed at this time as I found in my interviews (see chapter four section 6).

<sup>97</sup> Compliance is widely reported as a stance adopted by academics in recent years as their autonomy is threatened by managerialist tendencies in HEIs (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016).

<sup>98</sup> Black relates this to the introduction of 'a traffic light system' for monitoring individual research.

The article refers to an internal report<sup>99</sup> which suggests that league table success may have been gained at the expense of staff wellbeing and a decline in staff engagement. This is something which the VC refers to in his interview, where he describes how expanding student numbers and raising Exeter from an average ranking position of 34th in the UK during the 1990s to the 'top 10' had meant being 'very centralist':

the truth is I know that there are tensions...We're trying to be as open as possible. The problem would now be working out how widespread the concerns were and whether or not they were historical.

However, efforts have been made to try to reverse this. In the intervening years policy, new initiatives and improved both top down and bottom up communication, all of which address staff well-being, have been prioritised. I was informed (during EL interviews; section 5) that staff are now encouraged to report their concerns and signs of stress to their managers at an early stage, and managers have bespoke training<sup>100</sup> for dealing appropriately with staff concerns. Investment in additional staffing resources has facilitated these initiatives. The quality of these interventions has been recognised nationally by the Health and Safety Executive, and UoE's approach has been widely shared with other organisations<sup>101</sup>.

Despite these interventions, there is little evidence that attitudes have changed since Black's book was published; the employee engagement surveys for 2014 and 2016<sup>102</sup> reveal that levels of stress have remained much the same and (in 2014) 29% of staff viewed this as unacceptable. However, interestingly, this conflicts with evidence (from a question introduced in 2016) that 81% of staff feel that the demands of their roles *are* manageable. This apparent contradiction may reflect a sense that employees are increasingly becoming **acculturated** to the idea that stress is an inevitable part of working in a fast

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<sup>99</sup> The Britten report (2016) was based on a survey which attracted 288 responses from the UoE's 3,900 staff.

<sup>100</sup> Over 350 managers have attended a short course and the usage rates on the externally commissioned UoE online training tool have surpassed the predicted targets.

<sup>101</sup> Personal communication with EL6 (05/05/2017).

<sup>102</sup> There are dangers in making comparisons with past surveys as the survey has been renamed (since 2014 it has been called the employee engagement survey), redesigned ( the range of options in the likert scale increased from three to five) and some of the questions have changed.

changing and ambitious university<sup>103</sup>. It also perhaps echoes wider contemporary thinking that compliance and passive acceptance of a challenging work-life balance is prevalent in HEIs (Martin, 2016).

These persistent institutional cultural issues give a vital context to my research. Black makes the case that UoE's past distinctiveness owes much to the 'commitment and energy devoted to *teaching*' (p.xxii; my italics) and suggests that this distinctiveness came under pressure after the late 1990s. For young academics at UoE, who never experienced this distinctiveness, a **research driven culture** is all they have known. Black argues that, for these academics, stress is not just related to research pressures. It also reflects the introduction of practices to address teaching metrics and the demands of the student Guild<sup>104</sup> for more access to staff, reduced sizes and increased numbers of seminar groups and rapid assignment turnaround times; all in the context of worsening staff-student ratios<sup>105</sup>. Black argues that these exacerbate the general feeling of 'responsibility without power', a lack of 'sense of purpose' and 'low morale' (p.257), leading to '**institutional disengagement**' (p.258).

Between 2010 and the present, the senior team at the university has introduced internal structural interventions, which, in part, aim to arrest the decline in academic staff morale. This has included restructuring subject-based Schools into larger Colleges with enhanced devolved powers. At the same time a generic framework of 'cascading' AEL roles has been introduced across Colleges<sup>106</sup> which is understood by senior UoE leaders in my interviews (section 5) to be a form of **devolved or distributed leadership** (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009). The extent to which these changes have successfully led to **clarifying academic leadership** responsibilities is uncertain and the associated cultural upheaval and tension has been unsettling for many. However, for some academics the opportunities to receive enhanced support through an annual performance development review [PDR]<sup>107</sup>, has been a

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<sup>103</sup> This suggestion was made by two ELs in recent interviews (see section 5.2.2).

<sup>104</sup> The Guild is the UoE Student Union.

<sup>105</sup> SSRs have now stabilised.

<sup>106</sup> Associate dean, departmental director of research and education and academic lead roles and responsibilities have been introduced.

<sup>107</sup> The PDR is the annual review process through which roles are clarified and personal development needs are addressed.

positive experience. For example, Floyd and Fung (2012 p.12) observed that some academics feel that the PDR leads to enhanced '**alignment**' between individual aspirations and UoE goals.

Evidence from the 2014 and 2016 employee engagement surveys suggests that there is some evidence that revised college structures have resulted in better communication, better support, a sense of empowerment, and academic voices being heard<sup>108</sup>. When asked whether they are able to influence decisions which affect their own roles, academics are generally very positive in 2016<sup>109</sup>. This enhanced empowered may relate to responses to a further question<sup>110</sup>, which suggest that in general academics feel they have supportive academic leaders.

These results have been interpreted by the university as evidence that the college leaders and managers have been particularly proactive in addressing the concerns raised by academic staff in the past, and that efforts to reverse these trends are proving successful. An alternative interpretation would be that there is a kind of **attitudinal dissonance** in operation here; in the same survey, academics may report their dissatisfaction in relation to institutional and college level activity, while, at the same time, being generally satisfied with departmental experiences. In support of this idea, as Floyd and Fung (2012) show, many ECAs feel that the PDR process dominantly exists to ensure that they address UoE goals and is focused on 'implementing policy from above' (p.10). Their research reveals that neither the ECAs nor their academic leaders are particularly empowered by this devolved leadership strategy. Interviews held with academic leads tend to reinforce the perceptions of the ECAs. They generally view their roles as a complex interaction between supportive mentoring and 'hard-nosed expectation' (p.25) Interestingly, it is suggested by some, that while the mentoring role is advocated in *institutional* policy, performance management drivers (relating to rewards and poor performance) seem to emerge most strongly in *college* structures and processes, which are perceived as dominant by academics. Again, this supports Black argument that unsettling attitudinal dissonance continues to exist in the contemporary UoE.

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<sup>108</sup> The question about whether staff can voice opinions or raise concerns was answered positively by only 60% of staff in 2012 and this has increased to 72% in 2016.

<sup>109</sup> The positive academic responses vary between 80% and 89% in the six colleges.

<sup>110</sup> The positive academic response to the question about how supported they felt by their immediate academic managers varied between 73%-87% in the six colleges.

### 3.3 Views from outside the university

While there is very little external research published about UoE, what exists tends to reinforce Black's view that the contemporary organisational culture at 'Exeter plc' is highly corporate. Van der Velden, (2012) uses documentary and interview data to investigate the extent to which UoE culture aligns with a widely used typology (McNay, 1995). Mapping the outcomes of her analysis against McNay's four cultural types<sup>111</sup> she concludes that the UoE has a mixed **corporate-enterprise culture**. The key characteristics which lead to her conclusions are the documentary evidence of (a) a *corporate* culture, with an emphasis on overall directive control by senior managers at the centre and the chief executive's oversight of the administrative functions of UoE; and, (b) an *entrepreneurial* emphasis on evaluating and responding to the needs of students as consumers, and the delegation of rapid decision making and change management projects to small managerial groups. The articulation of institutional policy with national policy (see Appendix 1) also indicates both corporate and enterprise tendencies; something which is highlighted in external (QAA) audit reports<sup>112</sup>. Van der Velden's interviews reinforce the impression (p.238) that 'the institution is in its strategic planning moving towards an enterprise culture but this may be strongly led through a corporate senior management approach'.

Floyd and Fung (2012 p.19) also found evidence that the staff more generally perceive UoE as entrepreneurial, working to demanding business targets and somewhat 'overheated'; this for some conflicts with the desire for a more collegial culture:

It's really difficult to manage a University like this ... The University is not private, it's public, but it runs like a private company. ... A culture of research, of academia, should be developed more, but people are so overwhelmed.

Interestingly, in van der Velden's analysis of how the UoE engages with its students she notes that there is also a marked *collegial* tendency. However, it is possible that this may simply reflect the **rhetoric** employed by the senior

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<sup>111</sup> These are the 'collegium', 'bureaucracy', 'enterprise' and 'corporation' and are profiled with reference to several criteria including the locus of decision making, management styles, how change is implemented and how the work of the institution is evaluated.

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Exeter/University-of-Exeter-IRENI-12.pdf>

leaders she interviewed<sup>113</sup>; and it is not apparent in the responses of academics in Floyd and Fung's sample.

Some externally derived surveys such as the NSS and the *Times Higher Education* Student Experience Survey<sup>114</sup> also provide an indication of the positive way in which UoE's students see the quality of their education. These suggest that, even if academics are increasingly dissatisfied with how they are managed, as one national survey<sup>115</sup> suggests, this has not impacted on students' impressions of their education. Other external reference points such as whatuni.com<sup>116</sup> and the Which? Guide to Universities<sup>117</sup> present the UoE in a very favourable light as a place to study. Unfortunately, what is missing from these external surveys is robust comparative evidence of the experiences and attitudes of staff which would be of use in profiling the UoE for my research.

This section provides some deep contextual insights into the M&CPs which underpin the working lives of academics at UoE and their attitudes towards AEL. Most significantly, there is evidence of a trajectory of structural and socio-cultural elaboration and associated academic dissatisfaction which resonates with the idea of rapid morphogenesis of the type Archer suggests can be destabilising for both institutions and individuals. In addition there is evidence of **dissonance** – represented by attitudinal disparities at different levels of the organisation. These are brought together in Appendix 9 with others M&CPs that emerge through sections 4-6. They are captured in figures 4.2 - 4.4 and discussed in more detail in section 7.

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<sup>113</sup>I should reveal here that I was one of these senior interviewees and in discussion with her I suspect all four of us may have been somewhat rhetorical in how we described our student-facing culture.

<sup>114</sup>UoE's position in the NSS remained consistently in the top ten (amongst the incorporated universities) from 2005 - 2014. It has recently dropped out of the top ten. The THE survey based on a small sample (204 students in 2016) places Exeter at 14<sup>th</sup> in 2015 dropping to 27<sup>th</sup> in 2016.

<sup>115</sup>The National Senior Management Survey (2017) suggests that 76.5% of academics (Reisz, 2017) as at 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017 are dissatisfied with the way their HEI is managed. It should be noted that this survey has subsequently been criticised for its methodology and consequently its reliability.

<sup>116</sup><https://www.whatuni.com/university-course-reviews/university-of-exeter/3740/>

<sup>117</sup><http://university.which.co.uk/university-of-exeter-e84>

## 4.0 Policy and strategy: Documentary evidence

I now move on to a study of UoE policies and strategies as the primary source of information on how the institution articulates its current intentions relating to AEL and ELD.

### 4.1 Aims and approach

In this section I analyse UoE policy and strategy documents; firstly to highlight any institutional priorities relating to AEL/ELD, and secondly, to identify M&CPs embedded in these which may help with my research. I have reviewed UoE strategic documents on several occasions (October 2013, February 2016 and March 2017). This has been necessary because my research has coincided with revisions of the institutional corporate strategy, the education strategy and several HR strategies which contribute to my analysis.

Detailed extracts taken from strategies are found in Appendix 4 where highlighting is used<sup>118</sup>, as a form of open coding (Gray, 2004), to indicate the extent to which leadership, AEL and ELD are visibly prioritised and where ECAs are mentioned. M&CPs associated with these extracts are identified and discussed in section 4.2.

I have also looked for evidence of what Holmer-Nadesan, (1996 p.64) calls 'highly contrived managerial discourse' in the high level aspirations of institutional policies and strategies. She argues that rhetorical policy discourse often promotes the importance of 'shared aspirations' and inclusive decision making, and that this contrasts with the more bureaucratic and imposed regimes which characterise processes which underpin these policies<sup>119</sup>. In my analysis of UoE texts I am conscious that it is important to avoid taking the universities representation of its policies and strategies at face value and I have indicated where strategies seem to move between rhetoric and operational clarity.

### 4.2 High level policies and strategies

UoE's overall corporate strategy (Appendix 4 Document 1; Boxes 1-3)<sup>120</sup> sets

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<sup>118</sup> The highlighting used is colour coded but I am aware this will only be accessible to those reading this thesis online or if it is colour printed.

<sup>119</sup> I refer to these as the rhetoric and the reality although clearly rhetoric can be found in all levels of policy and strategy.

<sup>120</sup> All references to documents and boxes in this section relate to Appendix 4.

the tone for the underlying strategies, moving between an upbeat external facing competitive institutional stance (highlighted in yellow in boxes 1-3), and (as Holmer- Nadesan anticipates) internally facing values which prioritise shared aspirations (highlighted in green). The student experience (incorporating, but not limited to, education) is a high priority in the UoE corporate strategy (Document 1). Students are seen as both consumers and as co-producers (this aligns with concept of an entrepreneurial culture described in sections 3.1-3.3). This sits alongside the emphasis on research which is described as being of equal importance to education. However, a closer investigation of contributory strategies (below) indicates that research becomes a 'first amongst equals' in the people strategy, where it is prioritised (Box 10) in relation to career progression in the Exeter Academic strategy (Box 11).

Only one mention is made of leadership in the corporate strategy<sup>121</sup>. In order to investigate what I consider to be a puzzling lack of references to academic leadership, I first consider whether this might be the result of a lack of downward causation from external policy (Elder-Vass, 2012b). To this end, as part of my research, I have undertaken a desktop study of UK HE government policies to determine whether academic leadership is mentioned or given priority. My report can be found in Appendix 1, where I conclude that almost no explicit priority is given to academic leadership in HE government policy. Only in 'The Future of Higher Education' (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) was some concern expressed about succession planning for leadership to which the HEFCE and the LFHE have since responded. However, although both have prioritised and supported AL, there is little evidence that AEL is the focus of this activity. I have concluded that this potentially contributes to the invisibility of AEL in the corporate strategy<sup>122</sup>.

However, as a second potential mechanism, I have considered whether references to leadership (particularly AEL and ELD) have simply been left out of the corporate strategy because they are purposefully **delegated down** to the education and people strategies which I go on to investigate in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

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<sup>121</sup> This relates to external, global leadership by the UoE's most senior leaders.

<sup>122</sup> This suggestion is supported by my EL interviews in 2013 (section 5) where AEL was not prioritised.

#### 4.2.1 Education strategies (Documents 2, 3 and 4)

Revisiting early versions of the education strategy (Document 2) has allowed me to compare the priority given to AEL in this and the current strategy. In the 2009/10 education strategy<sup>123</sup> explicit reference is made to AEL (Box 4), although actions to be taken to support AELs are somewhat implicit. However, the most recent (2015-2020) education strategy (Document 3) seems to have a *reduced* emphasis on AEL; it is not mentioned in the strategic aims (Box 5) although there are two references in the strategic targets. One of these suggest a review of AEL targets was to take place (but subsequently my interviews with ELs revealed that this has not happened and is not currently planned). The underlying reasons for this priority reversal are not clear. Have previous strategies met their targets so successfully that no further action is needed? Is leadership no longer a priority? Who made this decision and why? I have followed up on these questions in interviews with ELs (see section 5). One possibility is that a strategic decision has been taken that leadership priorities are best dealt with in the Human Resources [HR] Strategies. I explore this suggestion in section 4.2.2.

#### 4.2.2 People strategies (Documents 5 and 6)

When the revised education strategy was first published (2014/15) there was little evidence that HR strategies (which support staff and leadership development) had addressed the structures and developmental processes required to support the 2010 strategic vision for AEL. The strategies seem to have been written without reference to each other; a characteristic I refer to as **strategic dissonance**. To some extent this is now being addressed in the 2017 People Strategy, which envisions a more **holistic approach** to developing and supporting all academic leaders (Document 4).

Development opportunities in the past were envisaged as **generic** programmes led by a staff development unit which supported both professional and academic staff; these have included, for example, the 'Exeter Entrepreneur' and 'Management Know-How' programmes<sup>124</sup> and the externally accredited Institute of Leadership and Management suite of courses.<sup>125</sup> That the emphasis was on

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<sup>123</sup> Throughout this section quotations from strategies are not referenced if they are not publically available.

<sup>124</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/development/academic/leadership/>

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/development/leadership/qualification/>

academics being 'trained' as 'managers' is apparent in the targets for the strategy which include 'defining the role of the "Academic Manager" and providing training in career coaching for managers'. As I highlighted in Chapter three (Figure 3.5), the use of the term 'manager' sits uncomfortably with many academics, and this is an example of how **professional language** can be a barrier to academic engagement in LD. These concerns were only partially addressed in two past UoE staff development initiatives: The 'Leading Academics' programme (2013) and the 'Academic Leadership Development Programme' (2014).

Leadership development in the 2017 People Strategy is **strategically aligned** with commitments made in the education (and other) 2015 strategies. **This asynchronous approach** to planning (a two year lag) was not purposeful, but it has facilitated a serendipitous change in approach to leadership development. This is most notable in the frequent specific reference to academic leadership and the introduction of targeted academic leadership support and development programmes as a priority (Boxes 8 and 10). For example, there is recognition that ALs including those in 'Academic Lead' roles<sup>126</sup> needs **formally targeted support and development** (Box 9) and a targeted developmental opportunity for Heads of Discipline (Box 9) has also been launched<sup>127</sup> which involves **centralised support and development**. However, both Academic Leads and Heads of Discipline have academic responsibilities across *all* aspects of academic work and, referring back to the idea of 'a first amongst equals', it is noticeable that research leadership is prioritised in the suite of programmes being designed for ALs. Critically, there is no evidence that *AEL* is prioritised in the People Strategy, nor is it recognised that it presents particular challenges<sup>128</sup>. The processes by which AELs might be supported and nurtured (for example, to become 'national leaders' – a target for the current education strategy) are not identified in the current People Strategy.

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<sup>126</sup> This role has been introduced to support academics through the annual PDR. Floyd and Fung's (2012) research (see section 2.2) suggests that the role is not fully understood; only 21% of the 42 responding Academic Leads felt that the purpose and boundaries of the role had been well communicated.

<sup>127</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/development/leadership/hod/>

<sup>128</sup> I return to this in section 6 where senior university leaders reflect on the need for particular kinds of leadership development for AELs.

In order to find evidence that AEL is being seriously prioritised it is necessary to refer to *The Exeter Academic*,<sup>129</sup> an operational strategy which brings together aspects of the Education Strategy and the People Strategy in an innovative structural approach to **academic career progression and pathways**. UoE, like many other HEIs<sup>130</sup>, has introduced this initiative to make explicit **role descriptions and promotion criteria**. It is important to clarify that the UoE has three academic 'job families': 'Research', 'Education and Research' [E&R] and 'Education and Scholarship' [E&S]. There is provision in the Exeter Academic promotion criteria for all categories of academic to progress from lecturer (through senior lecturer, and associate professor) to professor. However, the criteria used for promotion are differentiated to allow for a research focus, or an education and administration focus.

Considerable time and energy has been expended by cross-university working groups in recent years in designing these criteria.<sup>131</sup> From an early stage it was clear that the E&R route would include considerable emphasis on education. An early draft **linked promotion to 'achievement of' or 'working towards' HEA fellowships** at progressively higher levels<sup>132</sup>. This was something no other RIU had formalised at the time and it was a cause of considerable concern amongst some UoE academic staff. On one hand, the UoE was sending a clear message to the academic community through **promotional drivers** that it was serious about claims in the corporate strategy that the university valued the student experience equally with research, and intended to act on it. On the other hand, given the pressures on academics identified earlier in this chapter, this was always likely to create resentment and lead to resistance, or, at best, some kind of defensive behaviour amongst research-focused academics<sup>133</sup>.

Subsequently, and following consultation, the Exeter Academic has been revised initially focusing on the E&R route (Box 11). The emphasis on education targets, particularly at the highest levels, has been softened, while still sending

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<sup>129</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/exeteracademic/>. I introduced this in chapter one. It has recently won a national award.

<sup>130</sup> Fung and Gordon (2016 p.6) suggest this is part of a national trend.

<sup>131</sup> I had a role to play in this process during the early stages and this involved visits to RIUs in Australia and New Zealand with international reputations for their academic career structures.

<sup>132</sup> The introduction of HEA fellowships nationally is described in Appendix 1.

<sup>133</sup> For those of us involved in trying to address issues around the credibility of AEL this was a mixed blessing: we saw it as a combination of naivety and bravery!

the message across UoE that education targets are an integral part of promotion for all academics. For example, where application for HEA Principal Fellowship was a required criteria for professorial progression in early drafts, this is now not the case and alternatives are offered (Box13). This seems to me to be **professionally pragmatic** and likely to lead to greater acceptance and compliance with the criteria amongst both promotion candidates and academic leaders on their promotion boards.

The section of the Exeter Academic which focuses on probation and progression to senior leadership is particularly relevant to ECAs (Box 12). For E&R academics the emphasis on requiring early evidence of AEL is clear; this ranges from early module leadership, through to more comprehensive leadership of 'innovative, research-led and (when appropriate) inter-disciplinary teaching' and 'educational leadership beyond the module level, for example, programme leadership, admissions officer, senior tutor role'. The associate professor career step involves providing evidence of a wide range of educational leadership activities (highlighted in Box 13) and ambitious ECAs would already potentially be working towards these. For E&S ECAs, evidence of leadership (although this is sometimes described as co-ordination<sup>134</sup>) in a wide range of education contexts (student support, curriculum; module leadership; QA and project work), from the earliest stages of their careers, is also expected and the breadth and quality of leadership becomes progressively more comprehensive (Box 14). The extent to which these requirements are evident to ECAs and to their academic mentors is an issue. Personal experience suggests that these AEL criteria are often treated cynically by academics and promotion boards and that these attitudes are contagious: they are learnt early in their careers by ECAs<sup>135</sup>.

In conclusion, this section has identified a lack of priorities around leadership in high level strategies and strategic dissonance and poor alignment in middle level strategies as potential contributory M&CPs to how academics respond to AEL opportunities. It is only in the Exeter Academic criteria that I have found

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<sup>134</sup> Whether the language used in the E&S and E&R descriptors has deliberately chosen to prioritise leadership for E&R and less so for E&S is not clear, but the message cannot help but be seen by academics.

<sup>135</sup> I return to this with some supporting evidence in chapter five section 6.

clear evidence that there is a strategic imperative for ECAs at UoE to engage in **AEL at all stages of their academic careers** As a top-down institutional M&CP the potential impact of this is important for my research.

### **4.3 Some challenges in interpreting strategic documents**

Having discussed the limited extent to which UoE's key strategies explicitly relate to AEL and ELD, I shall now consider some of the challenges in using these as a reliable source in this study. Strategic documents are widely used by researchers as a source for establishing the intentions and priorities of institutions (HEA, 2013; Middlehurst et al., 2009) and Ashwin (2015 p.613) suggest this is because they give an 'official account of that actor's views'. In addition, CR researchers often use documents as a source of institutional discourse to reveal potential M&CPs. However, Archer & Elder-Vass, (2012) suggest that this research is challenging because, while documents embody cultural norms, they are subjectively interpreted by readers. Therefore, in undertaking documentary analysis I have been particularly aware that, while documents can be useful as sources, the process of interpretation is fraught with difficulties; analysis itself can create 'versions of policies that are equally as contestable as the policies themselves' (Ashwin & Smith, 2015 p.1008). This means that, while I have identified some potential strategic influences on AEL and ELD, it is difficult to confidently suggest which M&CPs might contribute to academic attitudes to AEL/ELD based on documents alone. Ashwin and Smith (2015) suggest that researchers need to ask questions about the process of policy formation and the struggles involved in order to better understand the way they are understood by others. As they argue (p.1017), uncritically accepting policy texts as an 'accurate depiction of reality' is unconvincing. Consequently, I have taken the view that, as strategies are written and owned by people and groups it is important to understand the positions they adopt. I now turn to interviews with executive leaders and senior managers (ELs) where there are opportunities to undertake this deeper analysis in relation to AEL/ELD.

### **5.0 Policy and strategy: Elite leader interviews**

This section focuses on the views gleaned from interviews with seven elite academic leaders and senior managers [ELs]. These represent senior informants who have 'distinctive perspectives and priorities' (Smith & Elger,

2012 p.120) and hold executive positions 'horizontally and vertically across the (organization)'.

### **5.1 Aims and research approach**

The interviews were conducted with the aim of investigating institutional level AEL and ELD strategies and processes from the viewpoint of these high level strategists<sup>136</sup>. I held one hour semi-structured interviews in their own offices with a purposeful sample of people who hold major responsibilities within UoE for aspects of AEL/ELD. The initial three interviews took place in 2012-3 (see Appendix 5 for the interview schedule). These data contributed to a Doctorate of Education [EdD] essay completed that year. These were the first set of interviews I held for my study (Appendix 3). The second round of five interviews was held in 2016-17, as my thesis was nearing completion. I supplemented my original interview schedule with additional probing questions reflecting areas of strategic uncertainty which had emerged in my research for chapters four and five<sup>137</sup>.

I recorded the interviews and concurrently made notes. To ensure a degree of rigour I have used repeated careful listening alongside my notes as the basis for analysis (Gibbs, 2007). Although I have not fully transcribed the interviews, I have used partial transcription as a source for direct quotations. Gray (2004 p.228), advocates this approach, suggesting that researchers should 'locate key quotations or passages' (p.228). I have tried to avoid applying a pre-defined conceptual schema to the data and have attempted to follow Gibbs's (2007 p.44) advice to, 'try to pull out from the data what is happening, and not impose an interpretation based on pre-existing theory'. However, like other researchers (Silverman, 2001; Gilgun, 2011), I find this challenging; in some of what follows I deliberately focus on investigating particular themes which emerge earlier in this chapter.

### **5.2 Outcomes of the elite interviews**

In reporting the results I have organised the respondents' views around the four

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<sup>136</sup> Elder-Vass (2012a p.159) calls these institutional elites 'mega-actors'; a term I shall refer to at times.

<sup>137</sup> Smith & Elger (2014 p.120) suggest that undertaking elite interviews is challenging and it may be sensible to interview these people more than once. However, due to staff changes in the interim period all but one of the people in these elite roles had changed between 2013 (EL1-3) and 2016-17 (EL3-7), resulting in my eight interviews involving seven different people.

sets of questions in the interview schedule (Appendix 5):

- conceptions of AEL: Roles and responsibilities (5.2.1);
- views on prioritising AEL in university strategies (5.2.2);
- ELD: Meeting goals and nurturing AEL capabilities(5.2.3);
- respondents' views on AEL/ELD in relation to ECAs (5.2.4).

### 5.2.1 Conceptions of AEL: Ownership, roles and responsibilities

I wanted to find out how ELs conceived of AEL as contextual background for the other three questions, and to confirm some impressions formed in section 2 and 3. I found that there are some commonly held views and assumptions about the nature of AEL which permeate the responses<sup>138</sup>. For example, most provide clear definitions for **formal AEL roles**<sup>139</sup>. In the most recent interviews (EL3-7) the roles and responsibilities of AELs are consistently described with reference to the criteria defined in the Exeter Academic (Document 6), reinforcing the evidence I have presented in section 4 that this has become a significant institutional strategy relating to AEL.

Views on **ownership of strategies and delegated responsibility** also generally reflect a joint understanding of the documents I have discussed in section 4. All the ELs take it for granted that AEL is structured through a **formal nested hierarchy of roles and responsibilities**. While acknowledging that strategy development has been a **top-down process**, they all show personal commitment to **downward delegation** of responsibilities for AEL/ELD, and towards lighter-touch **less centralized approaches**. A '**mixed model**' is described where overall strategic plans are centrally devised, but these then act as frameworks which encourage flexibility:

(EL3) leadership could be any level in the organization focused on inputs and outputs of education and associated processes and structures ... I don't think you can have a system which is purely bottom up or purely delegated down ... you can have *distributed leadership* which has to be working towards a set of common goals ... or a common purpose.

In this context, they all suggest that AEL responsibilities are increasingly widely

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<sup>138</sup>This is in contradiction to the views mentioned in chapter one section 4.1 about diverse conceptions of AEL.

<sup>139</sup> Only EL2 and EL6 found the differentiation between education and research leadership roles less obvious. As senior managers this may relate to their taking a professional, rather than academic, perspective.

spread amongst groups and individual leaders. It seems therefore, that despite the evidence (in section 4) of centrally-conceived strategies, these ELs believe much ownership and responsibility at UoE is devolved to academics. These observations suggest a strong convergence of opinions amongst ELs. The leadership of education is conceived of as a formally defined university role<sup>140</sup> and they recognize a clear, well-articulated university-wide AEL hierarchical structure based on devolved leadership. However, whether ELs believe this is how others in the university conceive of AEL is unclear. For example, EL1 acknowledges that academics experience this as a kind of **empty rhetoric**:

the lived experience of getting leadership from all sorts of directions or from none in some cases...on the one hand has some appeal to some people... but for an increasing number of people, even research academics, there are a lot of intrinsic difficulties with a highly distributed and unclear sets of leadership structures ...where people have expressed a huge amount of concern is where (they) can't see where accountability lines lie...if they need to bring changes about do they have power and authority?

### 5.2.2 Views on prioritising AEL/ELD in UoE strategies

Following on from the previous section, I wanted to find out whether ELs feel AEL is definitively prioritised in institutional strategies. Some clearly identify AEL as central to the education strategy 'it always... from the first strategy had a focus on educational leadership' (EL3 2013) while others seems to **lack strategic awareness** of whether or where AEL is formally addressed in UoE strategies: 'I don't know whether we have any published (AEL) strategies ... or where they would be'(EL1 2013); another, with responsibility for wider staff development, suggests that this was simply an 'emerging agenda which had been neglected in the past'(EL2 2013).

Four years later most ELs (EL3&7 2017) initially demonstrated confidence that AEL was addressed in institutional processes; EL5 suggests there has been a strategic trajectory in which AEL has been increasingly prioritised in the period after 2013, reflecting increasingly strong central leadership; EL8 identified the significant role played by an influential group of pro VCs (College Deans) in this. In 2016-17 I introduced my evidence that AEL is *less* visible in the contemporary Education Strategy than it had been in the past. All five ELs

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<sup>140</sup> The term used by ELs to describe this leadership varies and AEL is simply the shorthand term I adopt for convenience.

seemed surprised (see section 4.2.1); EL 3&7 suggest this was unintended, acknowledging that the de-prioritisation of AEL appears somewhat paradoxical.

A possible explanation (EL4) lies in the bottom-up process by which the new strategy was arrived at<sup>141</sup>. It is clear that AEL did not emerge as a priority in this 'bottom-up' process. However, it is not clear whether this was the reason it was not addressed in the final strategy document. Rationally, it might be argued that successful AEL is hard to measure and is purposefully left out of the targets, although EL6&7 both feel it was simply 'cock up rather than conspiracy'. However, at a deeper level, EL4 thought this could reflect a managed cultural shift, as Exeter's senior executive group comes to terms with the related issues of a 'stress induced culture' and over-centralization (section 3.2). As I suggest above (5.2.1) devolution of strategic responsibility is promoted by ELs, suggesting that while the education strategy is ostensibly owned and driven by the university executive; in reality colleges, disciplines and individuals lead, not only on its implementation, but also, in the recent past, in setting high level strategic priorities<sup>142</sup>. It appears that AEL was not one of these. Three ELs express general concern about the current education strategy, and the process by which it emerged; EL3 (2017) suggests 'it never really looked into the minds of current leaders'. However, without further evaluation it is difficult to establish just how influential this process was in creating the final strategy and whether, in reality, many academics engaged in the process, and are aware of (or care about) the outcomes relating to AEL.

I also wanted to know whether ELD is explicitly prioritised in university strategies. All seven recognise that there are both **formal strategic institutional and more informal initiatives** which can support *ALD*; however, when asked for specific examples these all relate to either research leadership or to mandatory teaching development programmes (PCAP and LTHE) available early in an academic's career; neither of which focus strongly on AEL.

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<sup>141</sup> During 2013/14 senior staff were asked to identify key dimensions of UoE education activity which were then used to generate education scenarios. These scenarios were used in a staff and student consultation to identify priorities and the results were translated into strategic actions. This process has similarities with Ramsden's, (2013 p.15) '**assertive-participative governance**'.

<sup>142</sup> There is some evidence of a reversion to a more centralised process as the TEF becomes a significant driver for education processes in 2017 (Box 6).

It appears that the ELs who were involved in writing the 2010 education strategy objectives (section 4.2.1), in which AEL is explicitly mentioned, were not aware of any practical developmental initiatives linked to these during their interviews in 2012/13. However, in 2016/17 this has changed. ELs all have knowledge of, and support, the strategies currently being developed (see section 4.2.2).

I then wanted to find out whether the respondents feel that AEL and ELD *should* be more explicitly identified in UoE strategies. Some suggest that AEL has unique characteristics which differentiate it from other types of leadership and that these need to be linked to explicit targets (EL1/EL3/EL4/EL7). Others feel, while it is necessary to have strategic aims relating to AEL, it is sensible to integrate any related development opportunities into broader processes of leadership development (EL2/EL6). Further discussion suggests that these differences of opinion do not result from different conceptions of the importance of AEL; but rather, that adopting a **holistic approach** to academic development is a device, favoured by some in the belief that it gives greater leverage to their institutional objectives for AEL. Some ELs were particularly aware that low esteem is often attached to AEL activity in UoE, and by nurturing ELD in a wider context it is more likely that academics will engage. Their hope is that institutional educational objectives will raise the profile of AEL (but see section 5.2.3 for a counteracting perspective). EL 3&7 both suggest that the influence of TEF will become significant in relation to the prioritisation of AEL and ELD in the immediate future at UoE.

Finally I wanted to find out whether ELs feel that the 'Exeter Academic' has become a significant influence in the last few years. The 2016/17 respondents all believe this is the case; all see the Exeter Academic as a valuable and transparent strategic approach to **clarifying promotion criteria** relating to AEL for academic colleagues. However, EL6 suggests that the criteria relating to AEL need to be redesigned if they are to act as an adequate and attractive incentive and to encourage (particularly E&R) academics to take an interest in AEL. In support of this, EL5 sees accepting AEL roles as a 'personal sacrifice'<sup>143</sup> made by academics at a 'potential cost to their career progress' and that this

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<sup>143</sup> EL5 also suggests that there is a strong gender bias; female staff are more likely to make this sacrifice.

has to be made even more worthwhile through stronger recognition and rewards than currently offered by the Exeter Academic.

In conclusion, my EL interviewees recognise that there has been a problem with the alignment of strategies in recent years which has potentially influenced institution-wide attitudes to AEL. However, there is also evidence of attitudinal diversity amongst ELs. This is rather surprising given that they all belong to tight-knit group (a norm circle) of managers and leaders with institutional responsibility for taking this agenda forward strategically. I reflect further on this in the next section.

### 5.2.3 ELD: Meeting goals and nurturing AEL capabilities

I wanted to find out whether ELs believe there are issues associated with nurturing AEL at UoE. They describe many contingencies (Middlehurst, 1993) they consider are obstacles to realising the University's (and their personal) ambitions to nurture enthusiastic and effective AELs and to more generally 'professionalise educational leadership' (EL3).

EL 5&6 both relate the difficulties in meeting AEL goals to the general sense of disengagement and poor morale Black refers to as caused by a 'stress induced culture'. In section 3.2 I refer to the detailed evidence (provided by EL6) that this is being actively addressed by UoE, but also to evidence that the process is slow. In my 2016/17 interviews, some suggest that focusing on reducing stress may not succeed, arguing that stress has become normalised in all HEIs (EL3&7). They believe that academics generally accept that stress is an inevitable condition of modern academia; one which they are tolerant of when balanced with the advantages of 'professional autonomy' (EL7) and the opportunity to reap 'glorious rewards' (EL3).

The second group of issues relates to institutional HR structures and processes.

**Imbalanced promotion criteria, divisive job families and lack of 'sponsored' opportunities** are all described as constraints. EL3 refers to promotion strategies as 'wobbly' although they do express support and admiration for HR colleagues working to improve the situation. Most are cynical

about the career enhancing possibilities of the Exeter ASPIRE programme<sup>144</sup>.

For example, in reflecting on how AELs in academic departments perceive their roles it is suggested:

(EL3) it is not seen as a professional contractual post -some people think they get little for doing it ...there is a sliver of resentment among them that they might not really get reward for it.

Thirdly, it is recognised by most ELs in both 2012/13 and 2016/17 that academics feel that there are professional and personal **credibility** issues around accepting AEL roles and this impedes attempts to nurture future AELs. For example, EL1 talks about 'in crowds' and 'out crowds' and suggests that a lack of **parity of esteem** is felt by AELs. This is a persistent cultural issue which EL2 (2013) and EL6 (2017) both argue it is difficult to address directly. Views on whether removing the divide between E&R and E&S academics would help vary, and some evidence that this was a strategic priority in 2013 seems to have diminished by 2017 (EL3).

In 2013 EL1-3 demonstrate personal convictions that ELD is best dealt with informally, showing awareness of academic views about leadership development which favours collaborative and collegial approaches<sup>145</sup>. EL2 describes successful examples of '**spontaneous emergent approaches**' to nurturing educational leaders suggesting that these might be systematically cultivated in disciplinary contexts. However, in exemplifying this, it is interesting to note that, the only *specific* examples given were where research leadership was the focus of activity.

By 2016/17 there is more emphasis on formal and centralised approaches (EL6); reflecting the formal objectives found in the people strategy (Box 9) and the concern expressed more widely around an emerging potential crisis in planning for academic succession (EL5&7).

In conclusion, it seems that ELs are generally aware of the constraints relating to nurturing AEL in UoE. Interestingly, however, there is some evidence of

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<sup>144</sup> Accrediting Staff Professionalism in Research-led Education [ASPIRE] is a UoE accreditation approach to supporting and rewarding staff, aligned with the HEA fellowship programme.

<sup>145</sup> The 2016 staff engagement survey revealed that academics have very positive relationships with their academic colleagues (mean: 93% positive; college range: 87%-94% positive) which is recognised as important in relation to the success of ELD.

tension between the rhetoric relating to formal nurturing strategies, described as important by ELs, and their personal convictions. I discuss this finding in more detail in section 7.4.

#### 5.2.4 ECAs and AEL

I did not specifically raise the issue of *ECAs* as educational leaders in any of my interviews, but we did discuss issues around bringing on a new generation of educational leaders (Appendix 5), and this tended to focus on junior academics. The general feeling emerges that ELs accept that at UoE there is no overt strategic focus on ECAs as leaders and how they might be nurtured<sup>146</sup>; however, some take the view that future strategy should focus on ECAs particularly at the local level and on:

(EL3) what can be done in the future to bring on a new generation of education leaders ... they have to see that there is a reward for it and that it is not just research, research, research. Processes need to be clearly articulated.

EL1 also suggests that **early career initiatives** might help in addressing AEL **recruitment challenges** through offering embedded localised leadership opportunities. However, it is also suggested (EL5) that, in the context of an RIU, encouraging people to take AEL roles early in their careers is not always desirable; the argument being that requiring people to divert attention from research into AEL can 'hold people back' and might reduce potential future motivation to take on AEL roles<sup>147</sup>.

In conclusion, ELs believe that there is need for effective and highly regarded AEL at all levels in UoE and express commitment to strategic action that might be taken to ensure this happens. However, the extent to which they are completely aware of the cultural issues manifest in this challenging agenda and their knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the appropriateness of different structures and processes for addressing these issues vary considerably (see section 7). In addition, ELs all acknowledge that they hold personal views. On one hand, there is a sense of optimism about AEL going forward. On the whole their attitudes are positive; as leaders they show confidence in the progress

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<sup>146</sup> In contrast, in the two other universities visited as part of the 2013 study undertaken for UoE, there was evidence of a more overt strategic focus on ECAs and on their development as AELs.

<sup>147</sup> This also emerged as an important concept in my interviews with SALs (section 6) and ECAs (Chapter 5).

they are making in relation to AEL and to nurturing leaders. They believe professional (HR) teams are in place with responsibility for implementing institutional strategy, and HR team members are described as knowledgeable and practically experienced. In this context, ELs suggest targets seem to be achievable. On the other hand, this optimism is tempered by a realistic understanding that AEL strategies and ELD processes need to be responsive to deeply held academic beliefs and, without this, there is likely to be morphostasis (Archer, 1982) or slow attitudinal change. It appears from my research, that ELs understand that it is unrealistic to expect that the language of strategic visions will 'somehow untangle the contradictoriness of academic ... identities'. (Smith, 2010 p.723). Therefore, inherent in this analysis is a sense of contradictory perceptions and values; optimism is tempered by realism.

### **5.3 Some challenges in interpreting EL interviews**

Interviewing ELs presents challenges (Smith & Elger, 2014). Firstly, they are polished at giving responses which are 'strongly edited accounts of their view and activities' (p 120) and they are often researchers themselves –with expertise in evaluating M&CPs. I have been aware that this is the case during my EL interviews, and that it is not easy to separate their 'front facing' institutional accounts from their personal perspectives. As Elder-Vass (2012a p.162) suggests these are people who act on behalf of the institution as 'mega-actors' and as such possess authoritarian causal powers. How they articulate these is influential. While I believe they typically make decisions which uphold and reinforce routine (normative) structures, there is also evidence of reflexivity in their thinking leading to a range of idiosyncratic views. Individual agency and sometimes 'excessive individualism' (p.188) amongst ELs is difficult to identify when interpreting interview material, but I have tried to show where this is evident in these interviews.

Secondly, reliance on a small number of EL interviewees only allows partial insights into the actions of a wider network of mega-actors, who contribute to high level strategic activity through belonging to calls 'norm circles'(Elder-Vass 2012a p.122). While the selected ELs are all operating at a high level in UoE, the extent to which they occupy the *most* 'powerful institutional social positions' (p.182) is sometimes difficult to ascertain from the interviews. In addition, I have had to withhold this information to preserve anonymity.

Thirdly, I am aware of the possibility that my respondents might have been cautious about revealing just how challenging the issues that they face in their roles can be; particularly given that I worked professionally with most of them until 2012. However, given assurances about ethical research procedures (Appendix 10) and anonymity,<sup>148</sup> I feel that there is a great deal of openness about their responses.

In conclusion, these interviews have reinforced some of the thinking that emerged in my interpretation of institutional strategies, providing additional insights into the underlying M&CPs which might influence the attitudes of academics to AEL/ELD. ELs recognise the tensions involved in making AEL an attractive and supported career opportunity and of encouraging greater motivation amongst ECAs in relation to AEL. The view emerges that, for AEL in UoE, 'there is intrinsically some tension between that whole way of thinking about ... leadership in the academic sphere' (EL1). In order to get a clearer sense of how those in the 'academic sphere' view this tension, I now turn to a study of senior academic leaders (SALs).

## **6.0 Policy and strategy: Senior academic leader (SAL) interviews**

This section focuses on the views gleaned from interviews with a small number of SALs who currently hold formal leadership positions, either in colleges or departments<sup>149</sup>. They exemplify, but do not represent, the perspectives of academic leader-managers from across UoE. Although not all have formal AEL roles, they are well placed to comment on institutional strategies and issues relating to AEL and ELD as a consequence of their formal roles, and/or the length of time they have worked as academics in UoE.

### **6.1 Aims and approach**

In 2014, I was commissioned by UoE to undertake an empirical qualitative study into the attitudes of SALs. This was an evaluative study in support of revisions

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<sup>148</sup> The seven participants are referred to by a letter and number: EL1- EL3 (2012/13) and EL3-EL7 (2016/7) to retain anonymity.

<sup>149</sup> These were Deans, Associate Deans for Research and Education, Departmental Heads and Deputy Heads at the time of the interviews.

to UoE's HR and staff development strategies (see Appendix 7 for the project proposal). The aims were: To determine SALs concerns and strategic priorities around AL; to establish the extent to which current leadership development initiatives address these; and to find out what how they believe AL might be nurtured in the future. In addition, they were asked to reflect on their 'personal development' as leaders; I thought their academic career trajectories might provide insights into planning for future ALD. Fifteen senior academic leaders (SALs) were interviewed, using semi structured interviews (see Appendix 6), between July and September 2014. The sample was purposefully constructed by the project sponsors (HR); formal leaders in a range of senior departmental and college roles were selected. It included people from each of the six UoE Colleges. The length of time in role varied from two months to over ten years. Eleven men and four women were interviewed. Interviews took one hour and were held in SAL's offices. I had worked in the past with nine of the selected interviewees. The research design and interview schedule was approved by the Graduate School of Education research committee (Appendix10). Anonymity has been assured in line with this ethical consent. I have included the report summary (Appendix 8) in the belief that it supplements the observations made in section 6.2.

It is important to emphasise that my evaluation project focused broadly on AL/ALD rather than specifically on AEL/ELD. Nevertheless, sections of the report contain interview material which relates specifically to AEL and ELD. Woven through these interviews are examples of 'personal journeys' which contribute to interpreting how contemporary ECAs might respond to leadership opportunities. This is the data I have drawn on for my analysis below.

## **6.2 Outcomes of senior academic leaders (SALs) interviews**

In section 6.2 I use the original data from interview responses to consider:

- how SALs perceive the significance of institutional strategies, structures and processes relating to AEL (6.2.1);
- the challenges, constraints and enablements (6.2.2);
- SALs views on developing and motivating AELs (6.2.3).

### 6.2.1 The perceived significance of UoE strategies and programmes relating to AEL

In my research most SALs display **limited strategic awareness** of institutional academic (and particularly educational) leadership strategy and policy (the only exceptions to this in my interviews relate to research leadership). There is a feeling that the university (perhaps) has some kind of strategy but it lacks clarity and is not widely disseminated:

(SAL15) It is not clear how visible these things are ... a lot of this stuff doesn't seem planned necessarily ... it often feels a little bit last minute ... I don't think there is much strategy related to succession planning.

There is little evidence that SALs believe that this constitutes a comprehensive approach to succession planning or leadership development, and none show knowledge of any specific institutional strategic thinking related to AEL. The impression that SALs give is that institutional strategies are **poorly communicated** and, where they are understood, they have little impact:

(SAL15) a lot of those initiatives sit with professional services but it is academics who sit on the boards and make the decisions ... you can have all the leadership strategy you want but it is done by HR and it is **not joined up** with the academics who make the decisions.

A further important insight to emerge is that in college and departmental plans SALs describe leadership strategies as either **understated** or, in the case of AEL, **absent**. Many suggest that there is no written policy or strategy relating to leadership, succession planning or leadership development in colleges or departments; or, if they do exist, SALs (with two exceptions) are not aware of this. Several justify this by arguing that **strategic planning is an institutional problem** and, therefore, the lead should come from the centre (in particular from HR). Others seemed rather ambivalent about this, or suggest **strategic local leadership planning** should be a priority:

(SAL12) It feels like we ought to have this grand plan ... in a sense maybe we should have things tied up ... rather than (just) simply practices which generally seen to provide a healthy environment for this sort of thing to emerge.

Despite the perception that AEL is not well articulated by the institution or locally, it is clear from my interviews that SALs believe that AEL *does* need to be addressed in their colleges/departments and most academics are

aware of this.

### 6.2.2 Challenges, constraints and enablements

SALs responses reveal that they are acutely conscious of the challenges involved in promoting and nurturing AEL. The general feeling<sup>150</sup> is that UoE **undervalues AEL** (even if departments do not) and tends to conflate AEL roles with management and administration in a way that devalues its attractions and leads to academic disinterest in taking on AEL roles:

(SAL5) 'the bottom line is we do not value education that much ...it's irrelevant to your career ...we should be more open with people about diversity of careers (and the) career irrelevance for promotion.

The overwhelming view is that, where people are appointed into formal AEL roles they are required to be both managers and leaders, and this involves unacceptable and excessive time commitments:

(SAL5) (AEL) roles are, in the academic context here, and in many UK institutions, poorly constructed and take up too much time... they are essentially an either/or choice for someone to make.

Other constraints which emerge are linked to institutional structures such as reward and recognition (including financial incentives) and **workload models** (the staff workload allocation model [SWARM]). Perceptions of **poor promotion prospects** relating to AEL are mentioned by eleven SALS:

(SAL2) it is still the case that promotion is an **asymmetrical business** –that excellence in research and adequacy in education will get promotion, but excellence in education and adequacy in research will not.

Most SALs are aware AEL is 'nominally' a criteria in promotion but suggest (SAL12) 'it has been used for one or two individuals ...but not commonly' and this is an UoE issue which needs to be 'constantly on the agenda'. In particular there is some concern about how criteria are **interpreted by promotion panels**.

Underlying this, is the challenge of how leadership career trajectories are perceived by SALs; like Bolden (Figure 3.4) they often see AEL as essentially management:

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<sup>150</sup> Although SALs sometimes reflect on their own views, more often they are keen to represent what they perceive to be the views of a wider group of colleagues.

(SAL6)...we have created a situation where you have academics who feel they have to make a career decision between 'is my career in research and teaching or is my career in management?' ...it creates a whole group of people who don't want to do the leadership/management side of it'.

In this context, several SALs contrast the 'linear and hierarchical' career route with the 'cyclical' model of leadership which was typical in the old departmental structure<sup>151</sup>; in this academics 'stepped up' to take on responsibilities with the support of their colleagues, and with the understanding that they would be able to 'step down' and resume their research/teaching roles in a defined period of time. Features of this model of leadership are seen to be more likely to successfully attract academics into leadership roles: (SAL1). 'I personally prefer the republican model of taking turns at the departmental level as a way of everyone putting into the pot'.

There is also a concern that AELs are often appointed in a somewhat ad-hoc way through processes which lack transparency. The speed with which roles become available and are filled may lead to a lack of 'due process' (or at least this is how it is perceived). While it is acknowledged that structures/processes are in place, there is a perception that they are not always followed.

While all these structural challenges are important, the M&CPs which figure most prominently in these interviews relate to **academic identity and credibility**; these are seen to be at the heart of the challenge relating to identifying and retaining AELs. Most SALs suggest that their academic colleagues avoid these (departmental/ college) roles where possible and resist attempts to encourage or coerce them to take them on; they are not attracted to these roles because they are not seen as enhancing their academic credibility.

(SAL12)...it seems a way of stymieing your own research career that is the biggest obstacle ... it is important that we develop roles where it is possible to carry on being what people would call 'a real academic.

The emphasis on credibility in comparison with research activity is highlighted by many SALs:

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<sup>151</sup> In section 3.2 Black also refers to this model as preferable to many academics.

(SAL8) When you go for Director of Education in a way it is an admission that your research isn't going well which is unfortunate ... but it is a perception ... it is kind of the kiss of death when you are given D of E.

This contrast between how SALs perceive the **reputational damage associated with educational leadership and the reputation-enhancing effects of research leadership** is one of the important M&CPs to emerge from these interviews.

These challenges, in combination, contribute to what many SALS suggest is a widespread disciplinary **culture of academic disinterest** in AEL roles. This is explained in many ways using terms such as 'a mismatch of values', 'an adversarial culture', 'lack of trust', an 'undermining of autonomy' and 'dragged along'. It is suggested that academics feel they are **micromanaged**, and that working within this culture **disempowers** them, reducing their appetite for taking on (any) leadership roles. However, this disinterest is amplified in relation to AEL where the structural and cultural challenges I have identified are most profound. Several SALs point out that *their* primary motive for taking on AEL roles relates to their disciplinary academic allegiances:

(SAL5) **Tribal loyalty** is ... an incredibly strong factor that in my experience is almost completely ignored by anyone who makes a decision and it is quite possibly the single most important factor which any individual will take into account.

In conclusion, SALs have presented a view of AEL which suggest that it is a priority but is not one that many will want to engage with. In their analysis of the reasons for this, there are suggestions of structural and cultural M&CPs which institutions could take note of as they address issues around AEL succession (see section 7.3).

### 6.2.3 ELD: SALs views on nurturing and motivating AELs

I wanted to find out what SALs think would motivate academics to become AELs. Most SALs suggest that, in order to address academic disinterest in AEL, we need to adopt purposeful strategies which enhance motivation. It seems to some that 'instead of enthusing people to want to work with students, we tell them that they have a duty to do things' (SAL5).

To counteract this, most suggest that UoE should recognize the strength of the department/ discipline as an appropriate context for developing motivation to lead. It is widely suggested by SALs that it is in the context of **informal collegial encounters** that nurturing AEL is likely to succeed. In relation to their own experiences of leadership development, many feel that the most appropriate and effective approach is through role modelling good leadership practices. Several SALs demonstrate a commitment to talking to ECAs about their experiences of how rewarding leadership work can be, and how 'taking control' can lead to a real sense of achievement.

In addition several SALs suggest more could be done to put local opportunities in place, giving future leaders a chance to experience AEL roles; ideas vary from role shadowing, through taking on short term project leadership, to role sharing (the trend towards appointing deputies for many departmental and college roles has already been mentioned in this context).

In contrast and paradoxically, however, my interviews reveal that many SALs are committed to a kind of **altruistic protectionism**, whereby they use their leverage to defend junior colleagues against having to take on formal AEL roles and other time-consuming institutional priorities, at crucial moments in their careers:

(SAL1) the kinds of ideas that come from the centre seem to come out of nowhere and seem a little bit crazy to colleagues ...a lot of the role is shielding colleagues from that stuff...in terms of a kind of filtering role.

My interviews create the impression that SALs are somewhat cynical about committing to institutional AEL priorities, something I refer to as a **fractured alignment** (Figure 4.3). Underlying this cynicism is general sense that UoE's prioritisation of devolved AEL is a kind of **empty rhetoric**:

(SAL10) Are we managers or leaders... does the university want *managers or leaders* ... or a select number of leaders. Who frames the style of leadership we want?...Most of the time there is no autonomy in the colleges... the big strategic decisions are being made by a very small group of people...there is a lack of autonomy.

However, SALs also recognize that they themselves are to some extent responsible for attitudes towards AEL:

(SAL15) There has been all this rhetoric about saying that it's just as valued and you can become a professor on this route...but ...there is not a lot of evidence that you can actually make professor on this track ...the message which goes out from HR and then how senior (academic) managers (like me) talk about it is very different.

SALs suggest that successful approaches to motivating future AELs may depend on recruiting people into these roles who are respected primarily for their *research*; a suggestion made by SAL7, that attitudes change more quickly if leaders are 'authoritative' rather than 'authoritarian'<sup>152</sup>, seems particularly pertinent. This view was also expressed by others:

(SAL11) ...they've got to respect you otherwise they won't follow... they must be a person who can attract the respect of academics ... and that comes back to research'.

In conclusion, there is overwhelming evidence from this research that while SALs acknowledge the importance of prioritising AEL, they believe there are serious challenges around motivating academics to take these roles. What is particularly striking is the **attitudinal convergence** in this thinking<sup>153</sup>. Given the range of roles, disciplines and career trajectories SALs have experienced, this was not entirely expected. The views and values expressed by SALs in my interviews, can be seen as presenting a unified conservative and somewhat inward-facing approach to defending their autonomy, in the face of changing institutional priorities. This aligns with the attitudes that Black suggested were typical of academics in the past, and reflect an institutional culture of the type Elder-Vass (2012a) would associate with tightly-knit norm circles. SALs perspectives could be described as a kind of shared socio-cultural **embodied rhetoric** (see section 7.4). Given the strength of their views one of the messages that emerges is that these shared attitudes are, in themselves, influential M&CPs, and that 'whatever institutions think they want (to change) cannot simply be wished into being' (Smith, 2010 p.724).

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<sup>152</sup> SAL7 sees authoritative role models as highly credible as a result of academic success; authoritarian role models carry institutional formal responsibilities but are not necessarily held in high esteem by their academic colleagues. This thinking is also found in leadership research beyond HE (Baker & Goodall, 2017).

<sup>153</sup> This contrasts with the more divergent thinking I identified amongst elite leaders (section 5.2.2) where I would have anticipated that there would be more convergence in attitudes.

### 6.3 Some challenges in interpreting SAL interviews

I have faced several challenges in relation to my research for section 6. Firstly, the research could be described as 'incidental' to my thesis (Mathieson, 2011; Wilson & Demetriou, 2007), in that the original aims of the report do not align directly with the questions my current thesis research addresses. I undertook this commissioned project in the early stages of my research for my thesis and my ideas were already well formed; but I did not anticipate that it would provide a significant data set on which I could draw so conclusively. However, because the study directly addresses academic attitudes to leadership and has a partial focus on AEL/ELD, it now seems to me highly appropriate to draw on this material in setting the institutional context. This is also a good example of the importance of abductive-retroductive emergent thinking in my study.

Secondly, I have faced two of same issues as I did with my EL interviews. I have drawn on a very small sample of SALs which was selected for me by the project sponsors, and there is inevitably a concern that their views are not representative. As I already suggested, some of them went out of their way to explain that they feel that they speak for the wider academic community; however, I remain cautious about making claims for the outcomes which go beyond the context in which these individuals work. In addition, I worked personally with many of them until 2012, and this potentially influenced their responses. However, I was somewhat surprised by the open and honest discussions I had with these academics once they had received assurances about ethical research procedures (Appendix 10).

The third challenge relates to this being an evaluation study rather than a research project<sup>154</sup>. I am aware of concerns about whether evaluation studies are acceptable as a basis for rigorous research (Glass and Worthen, 1972; Linet & Cox, 2014; Pawson & Tilley, 2001; Saunders, Trowler & Bamber, 2011). These concerns relate primarily to three aspects of the way an evaluation is conducted. Firstly, stakeholders may wield excessive control over evaluation processes and outcomes, creating concerns about the independence of the research (I have mentioned above that this *could* have been important in my

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<sup>154</sup> I define evaluation as 'the provision of information about specific issues upon which judgements are based and from which actions are taken' (Cohen et al. 2007) adapted from Morrison 1993 p.2).

study), and the neutrality of the researcher. Secondly, the overtly utilitarian or parochial focus of much evaluation can result in a lack of methodological rigour. Thirdly, as Cohen et al. (2007 p.41) suggest, very few evaluators ‘contribute something original to a substantive research field or extend the frontiers of knowledge and theory’.

However, I believe that the narrow view of the quality of evaluation work taken in the last paragraph is no longer sustainable. For some time, fourth generation evaluators, such as Guba and Lincoln (1981;1989), have argued that evaluation methodologies have moved on<sup>155</sup>, and most researchers (Cohen et al., 2007; Shadish, 1994) now argue that evaluative research is an accepted branch of educational research with similarities to real world research (Gray, 2004). Macdonald and Wisdom (2002) make the point that high quality research and evaluation have converged in their methods and this is also true of their ‘purpose, knowledge production, politics, objectivity, generalizability and confidentiality’ (Linnet & Cox 2014 p.137). On this basis, I feel confident that the methods used in my evaluation project and to inform my analysis, in this chapter are accepted widely enough by other researchers to provide robust evidence for my thesis.

## **7.0 Emerging conceptual frameworks: An institutional perspective**

In bringing the research in this chapter together I first cluster the M&CPs<sup>156</sup> thematically (in Appendix 9). I then draw on Appendix 9 to create three conceptual frameworks<sup>157</sup>:

- Framework A: Temporality and trajectories (Figure 4.2);
- Framework B: Levels, lamination and upward and downward causation (Figure 4.3)
- Framework C: Structure, agency and complex configurations (Figure 4.4)

### **7.1 Framework A: Temporality and trajectories**

UoE’s recent history suggests that it is distinctive for the rapidity with which it

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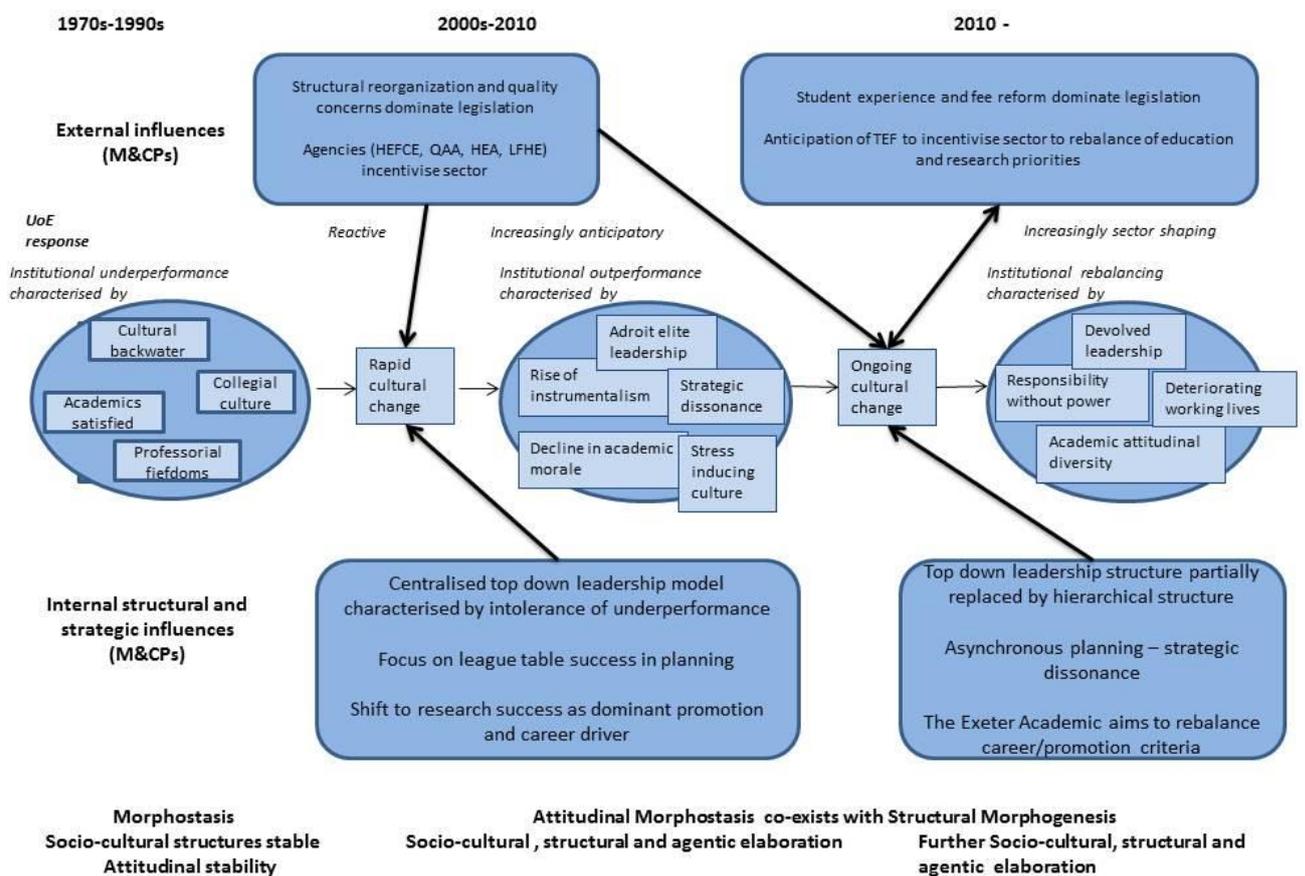
<sup>155</sup> Stake (1975) argues in favour of a shift from positivist methodologies to more ‘responsive’ (p.12) qualitative approaches which are similar to those I use in this study.

<sup>156</sup> As a reminder these have been highlighted in bold throughout this chapter.

<sup>157</sup> These build on the three dimensions I first introduced in figures 2.6 and 3.3.

has experienced a major transformation from an ‘underperforming’ to an ‘outperforming’ institution. Adroit leadership throughout this transformation has enabled UoE to successfully navigate external pressures and become less reactive and more anticipatory in its strategies. However, there are times when both external and high level internal structural and strategic influences (M&CPs) have been out of alignment with prevailing cultural norms (Figure 4.2). I have identified a potentially influential phenomenon which I call **strategic dissonance**. This is well illustrated for UoE by my analysis of the temporal lag between prioritising AEL (in education strategies) and supporting AEL (through HR processes) which I refer to as **asynchronous planning**.

**Figure 4.2 UoE: Temporality and trajectories (Framework A)**<sup>158</sup>



My research tends to support Black’s view that this has helped create a stress-inducing culture, a decline in academic morale and a rise in staff instrumentalism at UoE. In addition, the potential implications of low staff morale and a re-evaluation of the importance of AEL, at a time of external political

<sup>158</sup> This diagram develops the theoretical framework related to Archer’s morphogenetic cycle of structural elaboration (Figure 2.1) in the context of UoE. It will be developed further in the next two chapters.

pressure to enhance teaching quality, have led to a further round of transformations. These have included restructuring, with the intention of devolving academic leadership responsibilities, and the development of the Exeter Academic. Both these 'rebalancing' initiatives potentially signify the (re)prioritisation of AEL by the UoE, and are important M&CPs for my study.

The academic cynicism which is reflected in my SAL interviews is indicative of attitudinal dissonance. This seems to suggest that attitudinal morphostasis prevails at the same time as structural morphogenesis is taking place (see the lower part of figure 4.2).

Capturing the UoE trajectory of socio-cultural elaboration in this diagram illustrates the importance of rejecting 'single analytical moments' (Delbridge and Edwards, 2013 p.941) in how organisational change impacts on a phenomena such as AEL. It allows a more complex view of the emergence of the contemporary UoE, signifying how, through a process akin to sedimentation, the past remains relevant in the present<sup>159</sup>.

## **7.2 Framework B: Levels & lamination: Upward and downward causation**

I now suggest that M&CPs identified through my research for this chapter involve an interplay between structures and active agency at different levels<sup>160</sup>.

As a corporate organisation (Black, 2104), UoE is led and managed by a top layer of mega-actors, working closely together to define and make sure that institutional strategic imperatives, influenced by external contingencies, are implemented. In my research these are represented by ELs who form a 'norm circle' of mega-actors with shared strategic ambitions, and who exert downwards influence through powerful 'authority relations'. In this context, it might be expected that there would be evidence of well-co-ordinated strategies to ensure coherence between levels in relation to AEL. To this end, ELs might be expected to present a unified and consensual rhetoric relating to the prioritisation of AEL/ELD (anticipated downwards causation in figure 4.3).

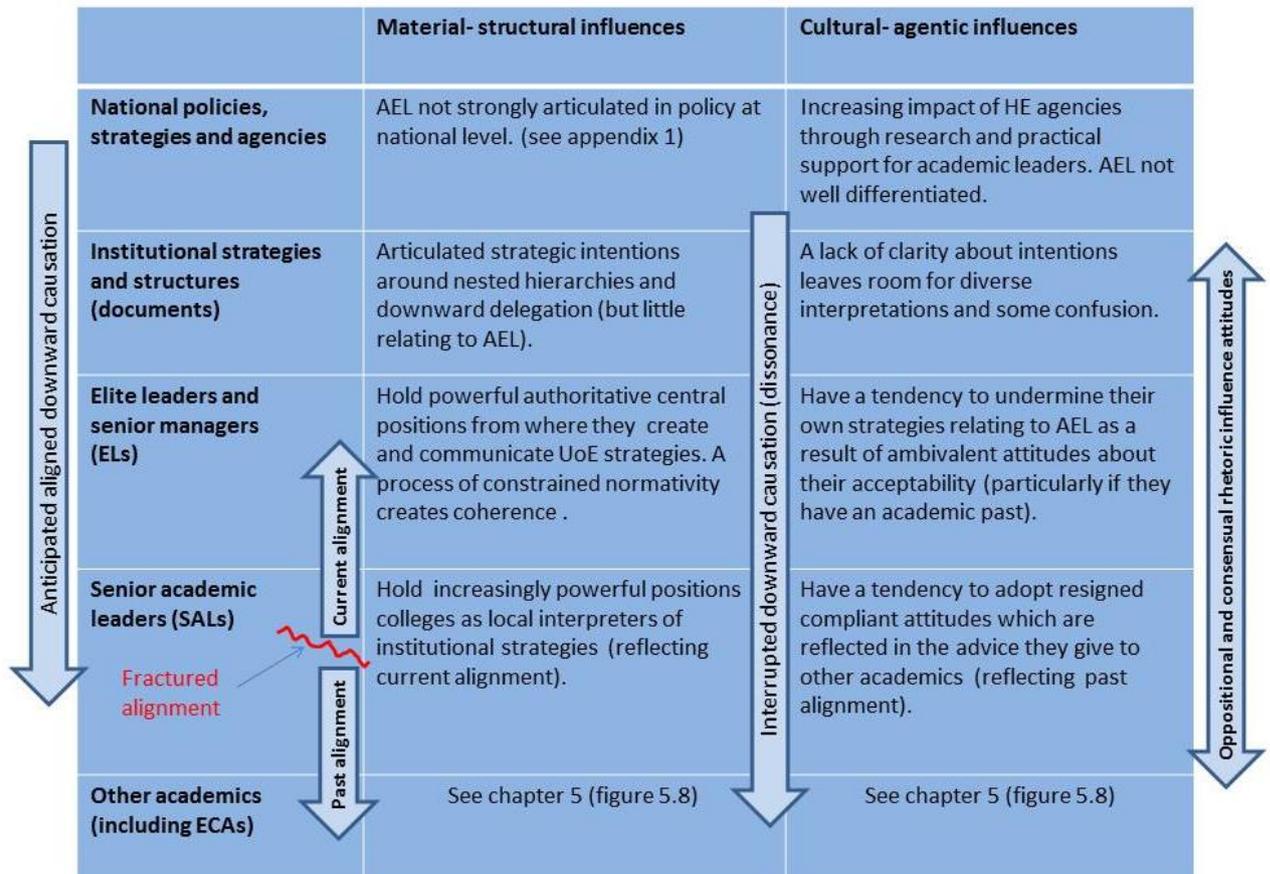
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<sup>159</sup> Taylor (1999) uses the term sedimentation— see chapter three section 5 for an explanation.

<sup>160</sup> I discuss this theoretically in relation to Archer's work (2013) in chapter three section 4.1.

However, my research suggests this is not always the case. Somewhat unexpectedly, it reveals that individuals, who make up these norm circles, also adopt active agentic positions and reflexive stances. Archer, (2000) would attribute these to importance of their internal conversations. This results in personal attitudes which diverge from institutional intentions (interrupted downward causation in figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3 UoE: Levels, lamination and upwards and downwards causation (Framework B)**



Normally, these views are not widely communicated; however, there are situations in which they are willing to discuss these, in confidence, or with small groups of trusted colleagues, where it serves a strategic or personal self-justifying purpose (oppositional rhetoric in figure 4.3). This is most apparent when under pressure from senior academic colleagues, who feel that UoE’s direction of travel is counterproductive. In these situations, ELs may share personal concerns about institutional strategies and processes, which reveal their ambivalence (Figure 3.3). This suggests that they see some of these as a ‘necessary evil’, driven by unavoidable rapidly evolving institutional targets.

Given that these are powerful and authoritative individuals, these, normally 'backstage', agentic M&CPs can be influential at lower levels<sup>161</sup>.

SALs, in my research, also reveal diverse agentic tendencies. In the past they would, most probably, have aligned themselves firmly downwards with their academic colleagues, and might well have led opposition to institutional change. My research shows that this can still be the case, but that restructuring of UoE places many SALs in AEL positions where they have contractual responsibilities for implementing institutional strategies around AEL/ELD. They may feel it is important to 'toe the line' and (at least 'frontstage') align with ELs. It seems, therefore, that the restructuring process at UoE has 'shifted the alignment boundary' between academics and 'management' (this is marked on figure 4.3 as a **fractured alignment**<sup>162</sup>). However, while acknowledging this is the case, most SALs reveal that they adopt these stances as a form of 'resigned compliance' (Knights & Willmott, 1999). As I have shown, many suggest that they feel these roles are to be avoided, or taken on with some reticence, and some believe that engaging with AEL can be seen as a career sacrifice. In this context, it is suggested that their allegiances have not substantially changed and that their attitudes may permeate downwards through a protectionist approach to junior academic colleagues. Therefore, it seems that my research suggests that, despite strong downward pressures, UoE is typified by hybrid leadership configurations (Gronn, 2009) in which understandings of AEL are constructed differently at different levels.

### 7.3 Framework C: Structure and agency: complex configurations

The contemporary influence of many M&CPs as constraints and enablements on academic attitudes to AEL has been increasingly apparent in this chapter and is summarised in Appendix 9 and figure 4.4.

This is not a simple picture; as figure 4.4 illustrates a complex configuration of structural and agentic influences interact. Empirical evidence has revealed a degree of stratification; both actual and real mechanisms<sup>163</sup> are implicated in a high level analysis of M&CPs identifiable in this chapter. I have shown, for

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<sup>161</sup> Elder Vass (2012) makes this point in his analysis of how cultural M&CPs operate in organisations (Chapter three section 4.3.1).

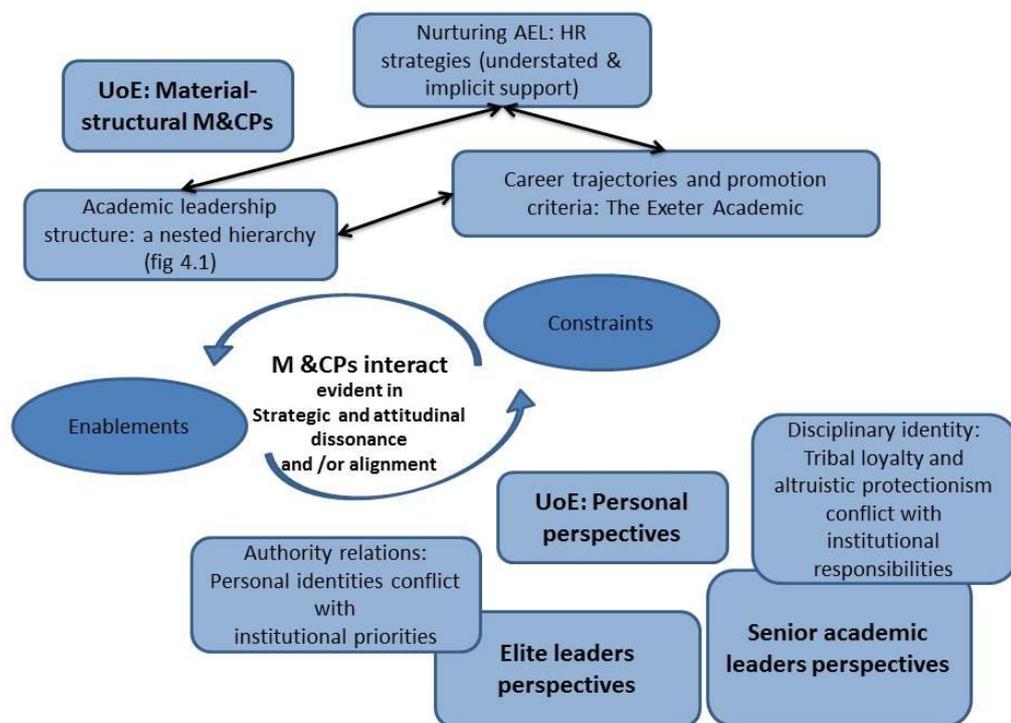
<sup>162</sup> The idea of fragmented identities is discussed in chapter three section 3.2.

<sup>163</sup> As a reminder of the importance of stratification in CR analysis see Appendix 2.

example, that the Exeter Academic, which I see as the primary *actual* M&CP identified in this chapter, acts as both an enabler and a constraint for academic attitudes to AEL. It has been designed to clarify academic career structures and as such is an enabler; the divisive job families and imbalanced promotion criteria it encapsulates are perceived as constraints.

Another example of how M&CPs can be complex in their impact lies in the *real* stances taken by both ELs and SALs. While both accept that they are jointly responsible for aspects of AEL strategies and structures, both, in different ways, adopt personal stances which negate these responsibilities leading to **attitudinal dissonance**. These stances are highlighted in the lower right corner of figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4 UoE: Complex configurations, structure and agency (Framework C)**



Complex interactions between these M&CPs create open and divergent outcomes. These are influential in the design of the research approach for chapter 5 and discussed in more detail in chapter 6. However, before moving on to chapter five, I illustrate how the difficulty in identifying the relative significance of individual M&CPS as constraints and/or enablers at UoE is exacerbated by poor communication and by the rhetoric employed in the language of documents and individuals. I discuss this in section 7.4.

#### 7.4 Rhetoric: Consensual, oppositional and understated M&CPs

The diversity of views identified in this chapter can partially be explained with reference to various conceptions of rhetoric, which I have referred to several times in this chapter (see figure 4.3). I had anticipated that UoE's centralised corporate structures might result in a strategically aligned '**consensual rhetoric**' between the strategic thinking adopted in documents and by ELs<sup>164</sup>. In theory, these should present a shared vision around which organizational and operational approaches are tightly focused<sup>165</sup>. The vision is one they hope (and often expect) others will 'buy into' and share, therefore, it is couched in persuasive rhetorical language.

However, there is less similarity between the documents, EL and SAL views than I anticipated – something I describe in figure 4.3 as '**oppositional rhetoric**'. I have suggested above that this can be strategic behaviour purposely employed by ELs<sup>166</sup> to minimize tensions with the wider UoE academic community. This has been further revealed in SAL interviews, where oppositional rhetoric emerges through their cynical attitudes to centrally produced AEL strategies. This is not an unusual finding in other research, where academics describe how 'corporate stories no longer reflect their views of work, institution or personal values' (Churchman & King, 2009 p.507), but it is less expected amongst those who hold EL positions.

A further challenge in this chapter has been the extent to which I have identified a kind of **rhetoric of understated priorities**. There is evidence of this in the documents, which lack clarity about definitions and the significance of AEL. The lack of explicit reference to AEL/ELD may reflect a genuine lack of concern for these agendas. However, it may also be a case of *purposeful* understatement, by which I mean that the strategy's authors and other ELs may feel that it is politically expedient to keep the emphasis on AEL 'disguised' or 'hidden'

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<sup>164</sup> I suggested this was the case in the language used on the UoE website (section 3.1).

<sup>165</sup> Elder Vass (2012) argues that constraining normativity is a powerful cultural mechanism which underpins this alignment.

<sup>166</sup> Elder Vass (2012) sees this behaviour as typical of the way in which leaders may adopt non-normative agentic stances even when they hold elite positions with responsibility for creating strategies.

(Kligyte & Barrie, 2014)<sup>167</sup>. One implication of this is that AEL becomes poorly differentiated from AL, and ELD becomes conflated with ALD in the minds of SALs and more junior academics. I shall return to this contention in chapter five.

In conclusion, I have captured some evidence of rhetoric which emerge in this chapter. This acts as a warning about interpreting written and/or verbalised institutional strategies. As Corrigan (2013 p.70) suggests, as researchers we work with powerful and visionary statements which, while they are often compelling, may (or may not) play well to public opinion. As a real world researcher, it is important to be careful that this does not lead to 'the acceptance of flawed ideas' over more 'thoughtful educational policy'. Therefore, I believe it has been important to introduce this note of caution before going forward to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of ECAs at UoE.

## 8.0 Conclusion

This chapter has helped to contextualise the diverse lived experiences within which all academics at UoE forge their identities and develop career trajectories. From the institutional point of view, I conclude that there is some evidence that AEL at UoE is seen as an educational and as a human resource priority; however, my research suggests this is understated in most documentary sources and is felt by many to take a secondary place to research. As a contribution to exploring my research questions, I have identified some evidence of cynical attitudes and stances amongst influential academic leaders and a plethora of high level M&CPs which potentially influence academic attitudes to AEL/ELD (Appendix 9).

Bringing the outcomes of the chapter together in three conceptual frameworks (section 7) contributes to a theoretically informed view of the implication of my results. The frameworks bring into focus the key strategic contexts and contingencies within which academic attitudes and stances are formed. Powerful individual constraints and enablements are shown to be interwoven in a complex configuration, as I anticipated in chapter three (section 5). The

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<sup>167</sup> This idea was suggested to me by several senior HR professionals in Australia and New Zealand. They argue that, given the credibility and identity issues surrounding AEL/ELD (for academics working in RIUs), it was best to incorporate them in broader strategic aims.

dominance of constraining influences, and their role in attitude formation, is something which I also anticipated, and this seems to be confirmed in the UoE context. However, some M&CPs are less predictable; strategic dissonance and temporal lags associated with the design and implementation of strategies are unexpected, as are the contradictory agentic forces demonstrated in EL and SAL interviews.

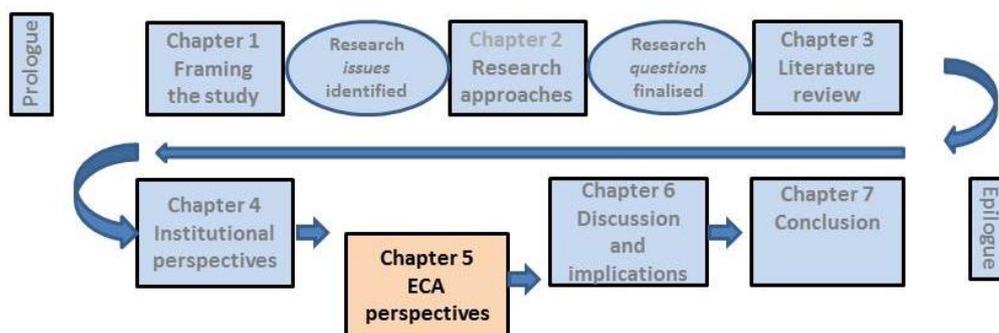
Thinking forward to the next chapter, I turn my research gaze onto ECAs. As I have shown, UoE strategies do not refer specifically to the role and development of ECAs as AELs. Only in the operational criteria of the Exeter Academic is any there any explicit evidence that ECAs might be expected to take on formal AEL roles (Boxes 12 and 14). Even in this operational strategy, *how* they acquire these roles, and the *support* available is not clear. Whether this is because in reality there is no strategic imperative to identify and support ECAs as AELs, or because there has been a purposeful decision to understate this as a priority (see above), this absence of clarity about AEL is an important underpinning mechanism for chapter five. This chapter has suggested that ELs and SALs *do* recognise the importance of incentivising ECAs to prepare for AEL roles, while at the same time being uncertain about the chances that this can be successful. I have shown that this uncertainty is exacerbated by one of the important emergent casual power identified in this chapter, **altruistic protectionism**. I have also started to find some evidence that others believe ECAs at UoE are likely to demonstrate stances associated with **reluctance to engage in AEL**<sup>168</sup>. I now move forward to investigate ECA attitudes to AEL/ELD, how these are formed and whether they influence ECAs' willingness to 'step up' and take on AEL roles. As I do so, the concept of reluctance to lead influences my methods and my approach to analysis.

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<sup>168</sup> In line with my retroductive approach to research the summary frameworks in section 7 also contribute to the focus of my empirical research in chapter five.



## Chapter Five Early career academic perspectives



### 1.0 Introduction

In undertaking research for this chapter, my aims have been: to explore ECA attitudes and stances towards AEL and ELD (research question 1); to identify M&CPs which may act as constraints or enablements in relation to these (research question 2); and to consider strategies that ECAs feel would motivate them to become AELs (research question 3). As the research I report on in chapter three suggests, this is an area where there is relatively little existing research<sup>169</sup>.

In this chapter I investigate ECA attitudes and stances towards AEL and ELD in the context of UoE. I describe and justify my research approach (section 2) and report on the outcomes (sections 3- 8). I present three frameworks which capture my research results (Figures 5.7; 5.8 and 5.13) and create a typology of reluctance (Figure 5.9).

### 2.0 Research approach

My study adopts an intensive research design which helps to uncover the processes and mechanisms inherent in ECAs attitudes to AEL at UoE.

### 2.1 Methodology

The methodology I adopt for my research into ECA perspectives draws on ACR and pragmatist principles (Figure 2.2). Although I have not followed any one of several methodologies associated with ACR in its entirety, I have been influenced by the grounded approach described and exemplified by Kempster and Parry (2014). Firstly, this requires an in-depth understanding of how ECAs, working in UoE, 'see' their working lives and the constraints and opportunities

<sup>169</sup> See chapter three sections 2.4.3 and 3.2.3.

they offer. Secondly, it requires interpretations that reveal the operation of 'deep' mechanisms<sup>170</sup>, and thirdly, this leads to exploration of the notion that these create 'causal configurations' (p.98). As Kempster & Parry suggest, this methodology does not result in theory, but helps to identify some general frameworks and principles, which are important in my real world research context.

## **2.2 Research design and methods**

In chapter three (sections 6 and 7) I discuss potential research designs and methods and introduced the primacy of interviewing in ACR research (section 7.1). I now introduce the approach I have adopted in this chapter using a four stage approach to describing my research design:

- 2.2.1 Selecting the data collection approach;
- 2.2.2 Identifying participants;
- 2.2.3 Transcribing and analysing interviews;
- 2.2.4 Undertaking interpretative evaluation.

Throughout my research for this chapter I have been careful to address the four procedural ethical principles (Gray, 2014 p.85) I referred to in chapter two (section 9.3) The participants all signed consent forms (Appendix 10 - consent form 2) and I have ensured anonymity by using pseudonyms throughout. Participants had access to their own transcribed data, although most did not take up this opportunity.

### **2.2.1 Selecting the data collection approach**

My data for this chapter were collected in three stages (Figure 5.1)<sup>171</sup>. The purpose was to build up a cumulative rich picture about each of my participants from the different perspectives these stages provided. The first stage involved collecting demographic data and information about participants' career trajectories. In the second stage, the three parts of my face-to-face interviews were purposefully designed to reflect Smith and Elger's advice (2014 p116) on using a multiple stage interview approach in ACR research in order to:

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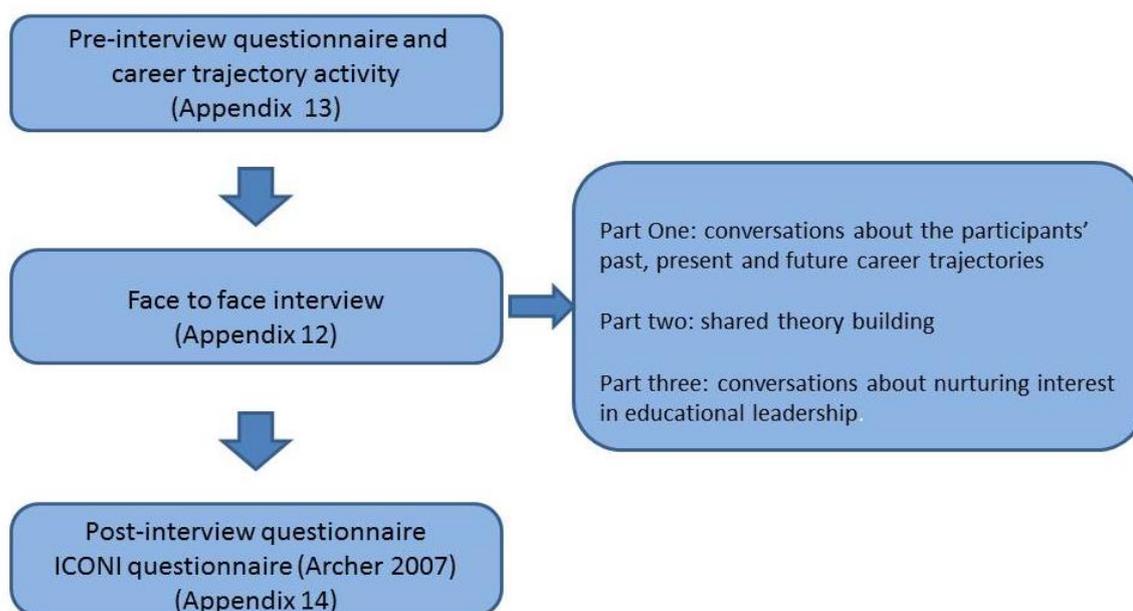
<sup>170</sup>According to Reed (2009) the term 'deep' in this context means participants are not necessarily aware of these mechanisms.

<sup>171</sup> See Appendix 12 for a detailed description of the process; Appendix 10 for the consent form and Appendix 13 for the pre interview questionnaire.

transcend the polarized rationales of quantitative positivism and qualitative phenomenology on the basis of a coherent alternative rather than mere methodological pragmatism.

In the third stage I followed up the interview with an Internal Conversation Instrument [ICONI] questionnaire, an idea borrowed from Archer (2007; methodological Appendix) which I describe in detail and discuss in Appendix 14.

**Figure 5.1 A three stage interview approach**



Interviews occurred in October 2015, took around one hour, and were held in privacy of academic offices. In order to ensure I ended up with a robust research design, I undertook a small pilot study (Appendix 11). I discussed my three stage approach with several colleagues and piloted it in full with a volunteer. As a result minor alterations were made to the timing of the process and the wording of the 'theoretical stimulus' (used in section 6). As I explain in chapter three, the approach I adopt as interviewer is 'active, investigative and analytically informed' (Smith & Elger, 2014 p.130).

### 2.2.2 Identifying participants

The first stage in the identification of my potential academic participants was *purposive* (Bryman, 2008 p.415) as I was only interested in talking to ECAs. Definitions of ECAs are somewhat contested in the literature (chapter three section 4.3). However, for this study I have defined ECAs as all academics who were in the first five years of their lecturing careers at UoE and/or had been

involved in PCAP in the last three years. With support from the University HR department, an email was sent to all academics who met these criteria on the HR database of academic staff. The second stage of the selection process was to approach the sixteen academics who responded positively to my request. At this stage I was involved personally in an e-mail interchange through which I was able to establish that, in reality, six of the volunteers fell outside the criteria I had chosen<sup>172</sup>. I explained the process to the remaining volunteers and all agreed to participate<sup>173</sup>. I was concerned to understand what had motivated these ECAs to volunteer and report on participant motivation in section 3.2.

### 2.2.3 Transcribing and analysing data

The interviews were fully transcribed and the transcripts transferred for thematic analysis<sup>174</sup> into computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)<sup>175</sup>; a process which I found efficient, effective and easy to use. One advantage of using CAQDAS was that I hoped it would support me in retaining a *degree of detachment* in analysis. However, in retrospect CAQDAS was not particularly useful in this respect and, like Mercer (2007), who describes this as a bracketing approach (see Appendix 15), I am not suggesting that detachment is either possible or desirable when undertaking insider research. Maxwell (2012 p.124) argues that one problem with CAQDAS is that it 'privileges certain analytical strategies and inhibit others' and, bearing this in mind, I have also chosen to use paper based analysis where I felt it was appropriate (section 3.1). In analysing my data I have taken three separate but complementary approaches (Figure 5.2). In devising these I have drawn on an ACR grounded theory process that Kempster & Parry (2014) advocate, based on some methodological propositions around sequential analysis found in Hycner (1985).

In section 3 my *case-based analysis* draws on the use of narrative summaries. I have analysed each interview separately to reveal the rich diversity in the lives,

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<sup>172</sup> Understandably there was some sensitivity about my accessing this information. Therefore HR insisted on handling the process of sending out my invitation to participate. The exact number of people contacted was not revealed but I was told that this was 'around two hundred'. The full list of names was not released. I found this a frustrating process but had to accept this was the best way of accessing appropriate participants for my study. The mismatch between my criteria and some of the volunteers was a particular concern about which I could do nothing.

<sup>173</sup> I discuss the limitations of this aspect of my research approach in chapter seven.

<sup>174</sup> I have used the term 'thematic analysis' here rather than, for example, grounded or textual analysis. Braun & Clarke, (2006) argue that this is a sensible pragmatic approach as the term is more open, less structured and has fewer ties to particular analytical approaches.

<sup>175</sup> QSR NVivo version 10 was used.

attitudes and motivation of individuals. These individual summaries are important elements of my analysis to be read in their own right<sup>176</sup>; I exemplify these in five vignettes incorporated into section 3. Following Hycner (1985 p.281) I suggest that these present ‘a sense of the whole’, facilitating reflection on the diversity (Maxwell, 2012) of individual characteristics and attitudes to AEL. Importantly, these rich individual descriptions allowed me to address a concern, commonly described by qualitative researchers, that data coding and categorisation loses sight of the broader external contexts and contingencies within which each individual respondent operates, and therefore responses become decontextualized (Maxwell, 2012 p.114; Roxa, 2015).

**Figure 5.2 Three stages of analysis in chapter five**  
(based on Hycner 1985)

	Chapter section	Focus and approach
Case based participant analysis	3	Focus on individuals. Uses narrative summaries .
Inter-case thematic analysis	4 & 5	Focus on themes. Uses coding and categorising.
Theoretical analysis Co-creation of reluctance to lead constructs	6	Focus on constructs and concepts. Uses coding and categorising.

In section 4 and 5 my *inter-case* analysis has involved detailed preliminary coding, followed by clustering the codes into themes to identify commonalities in my data<sup>177</sup>. To enhance confidence in my analysis, I involved an experienced second coder<sup>178</sup>. The main advantage of ‘dual coding’ in this study is that it has enhanced my own reflexivity; it has allowed me to think about the codes I had chosen, why someone else might identify different codes and to respond appropriately. Therefore, this process was personally helpful for ‘uncovering assumptions and extending understanding’ (Shaw & Holland, 2014 p.97). It was not my expectation that I would find that my codes were identical to the second coder, as there are multiple ways of conceptualising any qualitative

<sup>176</sup> See Appendix 15 for more details of my approach to analysis and the resulting summaries.

<sup>177</sup> This approach is widely used by qualitative researchers as a way of identifying similarities in their interview data (Maxwell 2012 p.113).

<sup>178</sup> As an experienced qualitative researcher, she analysed and coded three of my interviews independently allowing me to compare our results. I did not prepare or ‘train’ her in a way that might influence the themes she selected although some researchers do recommend this (Kempster & Parry, 2014 p.99). She had transcribed my interviews and was therefore familiar with the data.

data. There was a high degree of overlap between our understandings of the interview text, but also some differences, particularly in clustering the codes into themes<sup>179</sup>. I have taken some account of these differences in my analysis.

In section 6 my *theoretical analysis* brings together the outcomes of the shared theory building activity in stage two of my face to face interviews (Figure 5.1), in order to build a typology of constructs focused around conceptions of reluctance to lead. Once again, I use coding and categorising and have been supported by the same second coder.

While the analytical processes in each of the three stages appear to be independent, the outcomes do tend to interact, and this has allowed me to develop conceptual frameworks which can be informed by all three stages (section 9). It is important to note that the approach I have adopted to analysis is not unique. It can be found in work of other researchers but expressed in different ways<sup>180</sup>.

#### 2.2.4 Undertaking interpretative evaluation

Most qualitative researchers, including ACRs, devise techniques to assess whether the ideas that emerge from their research are credible<sup>181</sup>. Typically they refer back to the original participants as part of this confirmation process. However, I decided not to return to participants, having been made aware during interviews that all but one did not wish to engage in this process. In searching for an alternative, I have adopted an approach introduced in Kempster & Parry's study (2014 p.98 & p.107), which involves engaging with others working in similar positions. These new participants are referred to as pragmatic common referents [PCRs]. I involved a group of forty ECAs, who met my inclusion criteria for this study, but none of whom had been participants in the interview process<sup>182</sup>. I took the view that this larger cohort would provide interesting and useful perspectives on the ideas which had emerged from the

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<sup>179</sup> For transparency purposes the two sets of codes are provided in Appendix 16.

<sup>180</sup> For example in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1988) and 'composite sequence analysis' (Miles & Huberman, 1994 p.204).

<sup>181</sup> Most focus on ascertaining the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman 2008 p377 -380) of their analyses. Qualitative researchers tend to avoid describing this process as 'validation' preferring the term *evaluation* to distance the approach from more positivist approaches.

<sup>182</sup> This group consisted of the full 2015-16 cohort of PCAP participants.

interviews with my relative small sample of initial participants<sup>183</sup>. I attended a PCAP workshop during which, I first asked PCRs to fill in a questionnaire (to provide some basic demographic data to confirm that they did meet my inclusion criteria and to underpin my subsequent analysis). I then provided each PCR with a list of quotations (Appendix 17), derived from the second stage of my face to face interviews, and asked them to indicate the extent to which their views coincided with the quotations (all about reluctance to lead). They were also asked to record any comments they might have<sup>184</sup>. To illustrate my approach, quotations were presented as follows:

	<b>Viewpoints: ECA conceptions of reluctance relating to educational leadership</b>	<b>Y y ? n N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	'education is not valued to the degree that research is value... it's to do with the status and the fact that it's – the perception is that education is like secondary to the main function of the university'.		

Individuals provided their responses which I then analysed (see section 7). As the researcher, I adopted the role of 'teacher-learner' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997 p.164); initially guiding the participants towards an understanding of my research focus, and to introduce and contextualise the quotations; and secondly, learning from them as 'experts', in the belief that they have 'privileged access' to the motives of ECAs and are in a good position to comment on, refute or elaborate on the quotations provided (Smith & Elger, 2014 p.117).

Having described the methods used in this chapter, I shall now describe and comment on the outcomes of my research, using the three stages of analysis outlined in figure 5.2.

### **3.0 Participant case based analysis**

In this section I report on the insights derived from my participant case based analysis. My aim is to draw out the diverse characteristics and contexts which underpin ECA attitudes to AEL. I describe the participants and introduce

<sup>183</sup>.The idea that a group of similarly placed individuals may be able to comment on, evaluate and add to the views expressed in the interviews seemed a useful approach to experiment with. This idea is related to, but not the same as, triangulation in qualitative research.

<sup>184</sup> Initially I considered giving focus groups several ideas to discuss but I rejected this on the basis that it might create a 'group think' approach and lose some of the individual distinctiveness which characterises CR research (Maxwell 2012 p.64).

aspects of their careers trajectories (3.1), discuss their motivation for taking part in this study (3.2) and summarise their conceptions of AEL (3.3). I then introduce rich narrative summaries for each participant (3.4.1 and Appendix 15) and present a summary (figure 5.7).

### 3.1 Participant characteristics

As a starting point, I summarise the demographic data provided through the pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix 13) in figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3 Pre-interview demographic data provided by participants**

Name	Current Role <sup>185</sup>	Academic discipline	Date completed PhD	Probationary status	Years working in HE (since PhD) <sup>186</sup>	Years as lecturer at University of Exeter	Professional training	Date completed PCAP
Deidre	Lecturer (proleptic)	Physical Science	2006	On probation	9	4	PCAP	2015
Pat	Lecturer (E&R)	Humanities	2011	On Probation	5	2.25	PGCE PCAP HEA fellow	2015
Wendy	Lecturer (E&R)	Medical Science	2010	Completed (research fellow)	5	2	PCAP	In progress
Winnie	Lecturer (E&S)	Science	2009	Completed	5.75	3.75	PCAP HEA fellow	2013
Brian	Lecturer (E&R)	Physical Science	2008	On probation	8	2	PCAP	In progress
Sharon	Lecturer (E&S) and (E&R)	Humanities	2011	On probation	4	3	PCAP HEA Fellow	2014
Frank	Senior Lecturer (E&R)	Humanities	2007	Completed	8	3	PCAP HEA Fellow	2013
Fred	Lecturer (E&R)	Social Sciences	2003	On probation	9*	3	PCAP HEA Fellow	2015
John	Lecturer (E&R)	Social Sciences	2011	On probation	4*	4	PCAP HEA Fellow	2012
Keith	Lecturer (E&R)	Social Sciences	2010	On probation	5	2.5	PCAP	In progress

<sup>185</sup> As described in chapter four, the terms E&R and E&S refer to the two main 'families' of lecturers at Exeter. E&R roles are strongly research based while E&S roles have more emphasis on teaching. Proleptic lectureships are awarded to researchers (on research (R) contracts) who are guaranteed an E&R post at the end of a given period of time.

<sup>186</sup> The time spent working in HE was normally given as post-PhD. Frank and John had also worked as lecturers in HE before completing their PhD.

All the participants are clearly identifiable as ECAs having been in lecturing roles for four years or less, although the time spent working in HEIs varies considerably. Seven of the ten are in E&R roles; one has recently transitioned from an E&S role to an E&R role and one is on a proleptic (research) contract. Only Winnie is in an E&S role and seems likely to remain so. My research is therefore focused mostly on the attitudes of E&R academics. This was not planned but is a consequence of my approach to identifying participants. Why E&S academics did not respond to my invitation is unknown but there are potential analytical consequences (see chapter seven).

The participants split fairly evenly between Science, Humanities and Social Science. Serendipitously, there is also a fairly even spread by gender and across the three campuses of the University (not shown to preserve anonymity). Although these contextual characteristics were not 'designed into' the sample they do provide an interesting source of participant diversity around which some tentative analysis is possible (Maxwell, 2012).

All but three are on probation and have participated in PCAP as part of their probation process.<sup>187</sup> Their probationary status potentially has an impact on how confidently they view their futures and, I would anticipate, on whether they have developed firm attitudes or stances relating to AEL<sup>188</sup>.

The career trajectories of the ten participants have been very varied (Figure 5.4). Two spent most of their early careers abroad and came to the UK in order to join the University (Brian, John). Three have had long and varied careers before starting their PhDs (Wendy, Fred and John). However, all of these ECAs have worked *only* in HE since completing their PhDs, suggesting that they have developed their emerging identities as career academics during their doctoral research and have since pursued trajectories which they anticipate will lead to permanent academic positions.

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<sup>187</sup> As a reminder, probation was a five year process at Exeter at the time of interview for E&R academics; it is now three years. The three who finished earlier either completed probation in a previous role or have been fast tracked as they met the criteria at an earlier date.

<sup>188</sup> Åkerlind & McAlpine, (2010 p.158) suggest ECAs are often singularly 'focused on meeting the next requirement' and find it difficult to envisage what is required of them to build a future beyond probation.

**Figure 5.4 Participant career trajectories**

Name	Pre PhD (but excluding UG)	PhD Date	Career Trajectory post PhD			
Deidre		2006	Post Doc 3 years	Post Doc 2 years	Post Doc & proleptic lecturer 4 years	
Pat	PGCE/primary teacher 2 years MA 1 year	2011	Teaching Associate 2yrs	Lecturer E&R 2yrs	Departmental EL role 5 months	
Wendy	NHS 3years Research Council and Two MSc degrees 9 years	2010	Post Doc 3 years	Lecturer E&R 2 years		
Winnie		2009	Post Doc 1 year	Lecturer E&S 4 years		
Brian 189		2008	Post Doc 2 years	Post Doc 3years	Post Doc <1 year	Lecturer E&R <2 years
Sharon	MA 1 year Gap year out 1 year	2011	Lecturer and occasional teacher 1 year	Lecturer (E&S) 1year	Lecturer (E&R) 2 years	
Frank		2007	Post Doc <4 years	Temporary lectureship 1 year	Lecturer/ Senior Lecturer E&R 3 years	
Fred	Manual work ? years Research Assistant 1 year	2006	Post Doc 6 years	Lecturer E&R 3 years		
John	Manual/ clerical/ professional work 11 years Lecturer 1 year	2011	Lecturer E&R 4 years			
Keith		2010	Research assistant 1 year	Research Fellow 3 years	Lecturer E&R 2.5 years	

The amount of time (one to six years) spent working in between one and four locations, in mostly post-doctoral but also, in some cases, lecturing roles, before arriving at Exeter reveals how diverse the career trajectories of these ten ECAs has been<sup>190</sup>.

<sup>189</sup> The grey shaded areas indicate time worked abroad.

<sup>190</sup> This also mirrors the lengthy and diverse post-PhD career trajectories found by McAlpine & Amundsen (2016) in their study of forty eight early career researchers.

### 3.2 Motivation to take part in this study

As I was concerned that, given my very small sample, there might be some bias in motivation which could influence the viability of my analysis, here I report briefly on the motivating factors leading to the ten ECAs taking part in this study as described by the participants in their pre-interview questionnaires. Some participants identified several motivating factors, and I have collated these into four categories:

- Those who had a general interest in the focus of my research (4):  
*'seemed a valuable project' 'interest in the area of research' 'interested in the idea' 'interested in the project'*
- Those who had personal career interests in the area of research (5):  
*'interest in career pathways in current climate' 'wanted to reflect on my own career path' 'interest in differences between career trajectories for staff in the discipline' 'interested in becoming a leader' 'wanted to hear more about others experiences'*
- Those who felt that the university system needed to be critically investigated and wanted to be involved (3):  
*'concern about the leadership structure in department' 'concern about the system in the university'*
- Those who expressed an altruistic interest in supporting a fellow researcher (4):  
*'wanted to help fellow researcher'*

Whilst all of these motives indicate a reason for engaging in my study, there was little evidence that the participants had external or personal agendas which might negatively influence the outcomes of my research.

### 3.3 Conceptions and experience of AEL

In this chapter, I have needed to be aware of how participants conceptualise AEL, and its role in their past and present experiences. This was captured in pre-interview questionnaires. I summarise this information in figure 5. 5<sup>191</sup>.

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<sup>191</sup> As a reminder, AEL is the term I use for consistency in this study – it was not used by ECAs until I explained the meaning *after* they completed the questionnaire.

**Figure 5.5 Conceptions and experiences of AEL**

Name	Conceptions of educational leadership	Experiences of educational leadership
Deidre	AEL refers to anything not associated with pure research roles or qualities. Formal AEL roles include head of department; dean; director of education; leading a module or developing a course. Informal roles/qualities include a proven record in teaching and research; using innovative teaching methods; reliability and sound judgement as a member of staff.	She had not had any experience of AEL as she understood the term but she had been involved in PGR admissions processes. She was involved in self-leadership in her limited teaching opportunities.
Pat	AEL involves being a leader in mentoring students and early career researchers in educational journey towards independent research. Developing the departmental educational ethos and structures from individual seminars through to whole programmes.	She had taken on informal administrative and AEL roles from the second year in the post. She had been in a formal AEL role as Deputy Director of Education for several months.
Wendy	Developing teaching strategies and programmes; this is in contrast to academic leadership with responsibility for developing research strategies (for funding, collaboration and impact) and departmental or university strategy.	Her personal experiences of AEL were related to self-leadership in the small number of opportunities she had to teach and assess. Her understanding of AEL came from observing others.
Winnie	AEL <i>should</i> be about inspiring and encouraging people to innovate and recognising good teaching. <i>At present</i> it is about managing staff who are experiencing increasing teaching loads (suggest these two are in opposition)	She had experienced several opportunities for AEL in her PhD and post-doctoral career. These involved self-leadership and were teaching related. She has also been heavily involved in a national AEL role working with her disciplinary association.
Brian	Sees 'education leadership' as empty words – he did not understand the term and felt perhaps it related to proficiency in teaching. When prompted during the interview he said this was leadership in academic development (as a university activity). He did not identify with AEL as a personal activity but pointed to some senior roles in the Department and College which could potentially be seen to be AEL roles.	He did not believe his role involved AEL and was reticent to take on roles which were ostensibly leadership roles but which he saw as administrative and management roles.
Sharon	AEL is one of several career pathways from low level responsibility to high level leadership. She would <i>like</i> it to involve fostering authentic and productive interrelationships between research and teaching; instigating clear goal and ambitions for education which authentically focuses on the student experience; developing high quality learning environments in which students take responsibility for their own learning. She did not seem to think this was the reality at present.	She had taken on self-leadership responsibilities as a PGR and her first post for planning sessions for UG students. She had also had a leadership role in negotiating PGR teaching contracts. In her recent posts she was had been responsible for convening teaching teams including leading on one major strand of the first year UG experience. She had administrative responsibilities for marketing in the department.
Frank	He suggests AEL can be conceived in three different ways. There is AEL in a department to guide and support staff to shape and carry out the departmental aims for teaching; AEL for supporting UG and PG students and it also refers to the senior management who lead the University.	He has had opportunities to lead in student politics and through this in institutional governance as a UG and PG . In his current post he had had several leadership/ management roles in both research and education. He has an external leadership role working with a doctoral training centre.
Fred	Did not address the question directly – suggest the	He claimed that he did not have any

	qualities leaders generally <i>should</i> demonstrate are transparency, engagement and equality.	experience of AEL although his description of working with students suggests he is self-leading in his current post. There was also evidence that in the past he developed self-leadership abilities in his research posts.
John	No response was recorded in the pre-interview questionnaire but I followed this up by probing in the interview. AEL involves firstly ensuring you are informed as a teacher by educational research and secondly leadership of the work of students and especially their UG/PG projects. Contrasts this with research leadership which is developing others and leading in publishing as a research. Suggest that AEL and research are closely linked	He had experienced leadership in several of his pre-academic roles and developed what he called autonomous/self leadership abilities. In his current role he has responsibilities for module and programme development and has what he prefers to call administrative responsibilities.
Keith	AEL means: mentoring others; representing the interests of a group to those higher up; fostering cohesion. Being approachable and inclusive but also decisive. Having a clear sense of direction. Felt strongly that should not see it as furthering personal interests at the expense of others.	In his current roles he has taken on the AEL of aspects of some modules, has designed and led a complete module and recently led a major departmental student activity. He sees PhD supervision and pastoral care for students as AEL roles.

**Conceptions of AEL** vary, ranging from those who struggle to find any meaning in the term (Fred, for example) through to those who have a subtle understanding and, in some cases, have considerable experience of informal and/or formal AEL roles and responsibilities (Sharon; Pat; Deidre). The majority draw heavily on their current experiences of working with students to illustrate their understanding of AEL. For most this involves leading the teaching of modules and supporting groups of students.

Cross referencing to figure 5.3, the size of academic unit to which individuals belong and, in association with this, their discipline seems to contribute to the way AEL opportunities and responsibilities are made accessible to ECAs. Three participants who belong to small Humanities departments (Sharon; Frank; Pat) have been involved in more formal AEL activities than the others and this, in turn, seems to have contributed to their greater understanding of the complexities surrounding AEL. It is also clear, for many, that the concept of AEL is embedded in their understanding of wider academic leadership (Pat; John; Wendy); in particular several refer to AEL in the context of research leadership<sup>192</sup>. This is unsurprising given the dominance of their past

<sup>192</sup> Bolden et al. (2012 p.28) identified something similar in their research.

experiences as research fellows at this stage of their careers.

### 3.4 Exploring diversity

What I have suggested so far is that, despite some apparent structural and temporal commonalities in their current experiences (working in the same institution and for less than five years), participants come from diverse social, geographical and institutional backgrounds, are following distinctive disciplinary and academic pathways and have been engaged to a greater or lesser extent in working beyond academia (figures 5.3 - 5.5). This **multiplicity of trajectories** (figure 5.7) is of particular interest because it can be argued that it might influence their diverse present attitudes to AEL<sup>193</sup>.

Through the use of rich narrative summaries (section 2.1.3; Appendix 15), I have been able to get a sense of the diverse attitudes and stances of individual ECAs. I have used some of this rich material as extracts from the narrative summaries which are included in the text below as vignettes to give the participants a stronger voice and to enrich my analysis. I have suggested that there are links between these attitudes and stances, past experiences and future ambitions which they themselves suggest have informed their views.

In my narrative summaries (Appendix 15) I also explore how personal attitudes to AEL may have formed when participants mediate deliberately and reflexively between their own concerns and the objective contexts in which they find themselves (Archer, 2012; Smith and Elger, 2014). For this I draw heavily on Archer's work (section 2.1.1; Chapter three section 2.2) and the use of her ICONI tool. In Appendix 14 I spell out in detail the method used (and its possible shortcomings), to provide insights into participants' internal reflexivity and associated stances. As figure 5.6 (taken from Appendix 14) shows, participants are mostly meta-reflexive although the majority also have strong autonomous characteristics. Only one (Wendy) is communicative and none are fractured reflexives. This is potential evidence that there is potentially *less diversity and more convergence* in participants' inner conversations than suggested by their distinctive career trajectories.

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<sup>193</sup> Goodson and Sykes (2001) call these 'prior scripts' and suggest they persist even when the 'cultural milieux which shape lives' change (p.75).

**Figure 5.6 ICONI results**

Dominant Reflexive Mode	Communicative	Average	Autonomous	Average	Meta reflexive	Average	Fractured	Average
Deidre A	126	3.00	755	5.67	565	5.33	2265	3.75
Pat M	314	2.67	644	4.67	456	5.00	2533	3.25
Wendy C	666	6.00	634	4.33	663	5.00	5525	4.25
Winnie M	425	3.67	522	3.00	566	5.67	2312	2.00
Brian M	214	2.33	721	3.33	572	4.67	2211	1.50
Sharon A/M	224	2.67	736	5.33	646	5.33	3323	2.75
Frank M	524	3.67	642	4.00	655	5.33	3212	2.00
Fred M	724	4.33	746	5.67	766	6.33	2656	4.75
John M	226	3.33	634	4.33	626	4.67	2322	2.25
Keith M	523	3.33	645	5.00	655	5.33	1335	3.00

*(Each individual's dominant reflexive stances is shaded in the table)*

Despite this apparent convergence in reflexive modes, I have been able to use the narrative summaries to identify distinctive ECA characteristics and to construct a typology of **attitudinal clusters** which I discuss below and summarise in figure 5.7.

Four of the participants essentially have **negative attitudes** to AEL. Two (Brian and Fred) stand out as having **strongly negative** attitudes. Their past experiences, both in other institutions and in their current roles, have contributed to their negative views of AEL. They have experienced an institutional managerial/ bureaucratic form of AEL which has reinforced these negative perceptions and has led to them avoiding taking these roles. In addition, even within college and departmental contexts, they are critical and disappointed about how senior colleagues perform as AELs.

**Strongly negative: Brian**

When I met Brian he was less than two years into his role as an E&R lecturer at UoE. Much of his experience had previously been in research posts in universities in other parts

of Europe. His ambition was to complete probation and then move fairly rapidly through the academic career trajectory to professor.

Brian claimed he had little conception of the meaning of AEL and that he was generally antagonistic to leadership as a concept. *'I don't particularly like the term leadership, I don't really understand who you are a leader of, but – that's me not fully understanding the, the terminology'*. He felt that *'those who are in principle in charge of how we are supposed to teach'*, both at College and University level, lacked understanding of the diversity of ways teaching can be done well and the practical implication of their decisions for the quality of teaching. He did not believe academics were instinctively against taking AEL roles particularly where they involved curriculum innovation. Rather he felt reluctance originated from the lack of agency they feel about engaging in the process *'So it's not that people are reluctant, I mean, I'm reluctant if I have to change the curriculum the way that somebody else wants me to change the curriculum, but I'm not necessarily reluctant if we are going to rewrite the curriculum'*. However, he suggested that academics, including himself, develop strong resistance where their academic freedom is threatened.

In discussing his future he was adamant that he did not wish to become an administrator or manager at any cost and he argued that any kind of formal leadership in the current university structures involved these responsibilities. *'No, absolutely, no. You never know if you will change your mind ten years in the future but right now, definitely not. The reason that I'm doing an academic career is because I like to do science'*.

As meta-reflexives both have particularly strong personal ideals which lead them to look for alignments between the structural and cultural contexts in which they find themselves and their own projects. As this dovetailing of concerns is not apparent, they express considerable dissatisfaction with institutional structures and adopt a negative, somewhat subversive, stance which influences their attitudes to AEL.

In addition, I have identified some ECAs (notably John and Keith although this was a feature of many interviews) whose attitudes to AEL I would describe as **regretfully negative**. By this I mean that their past experience has given them an interest in AEL and they hold strong personal and idealistic views about the importance of ensuring students get the best possible experience; something

they feel highly responsible for. However, they have become increasingly aware of structural and cultural constraints which have 'turned them away' from focusing on AEL. Both John and Keith suggest this is related to the immediate threats associated with their potential non-completion of probation; others identify a range of experiences which have led them to believe that there are few rewards, and rather little positive recognition, associated with AEL.

**Regretfully negative: Keith**

When I met Keith he was two and a half years into his probation period at UoE. This was his first full academic post and followed several short term research contracts. His immediate ambition was to pass his probation and become a senior lecturer.

He described how he had become involved in AEL through leading aspects of modules, designing a module and leading a departmental field trip. As a PhD supervisor he saw pastoral care for students as an important leadership role. He saw AEL within the department as a mentorship role and leaders more generally as representing the best interests of a group; fostering group cohesion. He believed that individual leaders need to be approachable and inclusive but also decisive and set clear directions but was concerned about a trend he has seen for leaders to further their careers at the expense of others. As a result he felt many senior academic leaders have lost their connection with their communities at a lower level.

His reluctance to take on AEL roles was linked to the fact that PGRs/ECA's are not encouraged to value teaching (despite the BISS rhetoric about this he felt little investment into AEL is made at the institutional level) and suggested that no esteem is associated with AEL. As a result the people who take on the roles are often coerced into doing them *'people really are dragged kicking and screaming into them. And some of them do a good job, and some of them are frankly awful'*. This, he felt, is ironic given that most academics are good at performing as *'neoliberal citizens'*; they tend follow the institutional line and try to exceed institutional targets. His attitude suggested that he was anxious that his post might not become permanent unless he could attract additional grants; something he was not confident about. This anxiety had resurfaced memories of past bouts of depression he had suffered which had led to a career interruption. His somewhat disparaging attitude to how the university and the department are managed and led surfaced several times in his interview and related to his belief that leaders are disconnected from the wider academic community, something he would wish to avoid himself.

As meta-reflexives these participants are unsettled by the experience of wishing to pursue their ultimate concerns (becoming established as academics on full permanent contracts), while still wanting to retain the idealistic commitment they have to their students. Finding that it is difficult to harmonize their concerns at UoE has led to difficult choices, and they suggest that early career idealistic commitments (to taking a range of institutional roles), have been eroded over time; as a result, a more strategic approach is evident in their conversations about their thoughts and plans for the future<sup>194</sup>.

Four of the participants have developed more **positive attitudes** to AEL which have their origins in past experiences. These include those who have current experience of AEL (Pat, Winnie and Sharon)<sup>195</sup>. They have the most developed conceptions of AEL and have considered future careers in which they would build on their current AEL responsibilities (figure 5.5). Whilst these three ECAs have all held research posts in the past, they have combined these with other activities which have heightened their interest in AEL, resulting in **unconditionally positive** approaches to taking AEL roles in the future.

**Conditionally positive: Frank**

When I met Frank he was over three years into his lecturing career at Exeter and very unusually had already passed his probation and become a senior lecturer. He was confident that he would move through a traditional career trajectory and become a professor.

In terms of AEL he had been module convener and had redesigned aspects of both UG and M level courses at UoE. He saw curriculum development as an important part of AEL. *'I'm interested in teaching, I like teaching and I want things to work well, to work better, and actually, from when I first arrived here I was slightly wanting to revise things'*. He had been in charge of PGR for his department and had led on external relations with the research council and with the doctoral training centre. He saw these roles as combining leadership and management of both research and education.

His attitudes to AEL had been formed as a PG student where he became aware of how HE leadership approaches differed, how power was distributed and decisions made. Personally, he

<sup>194</sup> This raises questions about whether Archer's direct links between reflexivity and stances are adequately subtle in the context of my research. This is discussed in chapter seven.

<sup>195</sup> There are interesting potential gender issues here which I have not explored but see as an important research issue going forward.

suggested that he has a slight reluctance to lead which he attributes to the *'great British reserve'*. However, he believes it is important to contribute to AEL, at least at departmental level. *'You know, there are things to be done to make sure everything works and we need to do them... and in some sense take turns doing them...there is a bit of a sense that if you're being paid more then you should probably, you know, accept that you're doing these things'*. He recognised that many of his colleagues do not take this view and would avoid roles related to the student experience and other departmental business which they don't see as central to their academic research identity. Their reluctance stems from the rejection by many of the shift to marketization/business models in universities and the loss of control by universities. This is particularly the case when they have worked for a long time in HE and have experienced the loss of autonomy this brings. *'I think you will find quite a lot of academics... generally, who don't like their university and talk about what 'the university' does and that they are in opposition to it'*.

While he took a critical and analytical approach to some of the structures of the modern university he saw these as something to work with and work around in a positive way. However, he did acknowledge that ECA views are shaped by people immediately around them. He suggested that, for some ECAs, this can lead to negativity about taking on AEL roles; this can be seen as a kind of learned reluctance which is difficult to dispel.

Others are **conditionally positive**, indicating that they see AEL roles as integral to, but not necessarily dominant, in their academic careers going forward (Frank was the best example of this but others expressed similar interests). For these ECAs there is a strong allegiance to the discipline, and a sense of altruistic collegiality relating to sharing roles and responsibilities in the interest of the discipline. However, Frank in particular emphasises he is not attracted to the *wider* institutional AEL roles, which would take him outside the disciplinary community to which he is committed.

**Unconditionally positive: Sharon**

When I met Sharon she had been lecturing at UoE for four years and had moved from an E&S post to an E&R post. Her immediate ambition was to complete her probation and become a senior lecturer; she then wished to progress up the academic career pathway. Unusually, however, she saw AEL as her pathway to promotion moving up *'the education strand and I would like to be – I want to be in charge of the GTAs and then I'd like to be, you know, if I was going to up that strand I'd*

*want to be, like, Director of Education at some point, like, that's the strand that I'm interested in'.*

AEL opportunities had been important during her PGR training and she had since developed an understanding that AEL will be *'increasingly important...coming to the centre alongside research'*. Her vision for leadership was one where AEL *'fosters authentic and productive relationships between research and teaching'* and she was well aware that this view aligns with the University's strategic approach. However, she would resist management roles where people become *'hated'*-hoping that further into her career institutional *'climates'* might change and she might be able to do things differently.

Amongst others she saw reluctance to take on AEL roles as partly personality driven *'the researcher character does not marry with being a good teacher. I think there's that personality conflict that is partly why people don't like it, I think people from different backgrounds can see it as an inconvenience'* and partly driven by institutional values *'it's just bred out of a system that doesn't privilege teaching... they don't care, they want your publications and your grant. So the system tells you it doesn't have value, so why would you value it?'* She argues that many ECAs are reluctant quite regretfully –they are passionate about teaching and care a lot but the structures *'grind you down'*. She was not planning to allow these to influence her own career development.

These more positive ECAs are aware that their attitudes are different from most other academics at UoE, and that an overriding interest in AEL might be a career risk. As meta-reflexives they might be described as agential idealists – recognising the constant tension between their own ideals and the social/cultural structures they are experiencing. Some are frustrated by the negative attitudes to AEL they experience in others. Whilst they demonstrate understanding about how these attitudes might emerge, as individuals they display some immunity to institutional constraints and are willing to negotiate or even subvert these; this buys them some 'freedom' to act, but they understand that this is potentially at a cost to their careers. For example, Frank, while displaying some of the idealistic characteristics of a meta-reflexive towards his overall academic responsibilities, takes a more strategic view of AEL in his future role.

For some of the participants (notably Deidre and Wendy) their posts have involved **limited opportunities** to take on either teaching or AEL roles. In their

current roles they suggest that they are actively discouraged from engaging in AEL activities, and they believe that their future roles are unlikely to create opportunities for AEL. While in both cases they recognize that their future careers, in the context of an ambitious RIU, are effectively secured by continuing to be successful researchers, they express some regret that their opportunities to work more closely with students and develop educational opportunities are curtailed. They argue that their access to AEL opportunities is so constrained that only with considerable persistence and some personal risk would they be able to circumvent these constraints. Their views are influenced by guidance given by mentors and line managers<sup>196</sup> about how best to progress their careers in academia.

**Limited opportunities: Wendy**

When I met Wendy she was two years into a E&R position having spent many years working in research roles in and beyond academia. Her future career was almost inevitably going to follow a research trajectory and new opportunities were opening up which would facilitate this. However she was interested in teaching *'I'd like to pursue it further, but I think the problem is that there just isn't enough support for it ... it does tend to be the teaching side of things that loses out'*.

Her experiences of AEL were not personal but based on how she had seen other people leading course and programmes. She suggested *'I think in the more sort of junior levels of your career you don't really get opportunities for leadership, it's just a question of – more like getting experience and trying to sort of work your way up and getting more qualifications'*. However, in describing her own work she implicitly indicated that there had been many opportunities for self-leadership as she was required to work autonomously.

She was clear that reluctance to lead in education came from mentors and line managers who advised ambitious ECAs to avoid AEL roles. Also she believed that at institutional level RIUs will try to attract the best researchers and tend not to appoint or support those with an interest in teaching through development or promotion. Reluctantly she felt there were limited opportunities at UoE for her to develop her interest in enhancing the student experience.

Interestingly, Deidre (autonomous-reflexive) and Wendy (communicative-reflexive) are the only participants who are not meta-reflexive. In the summary

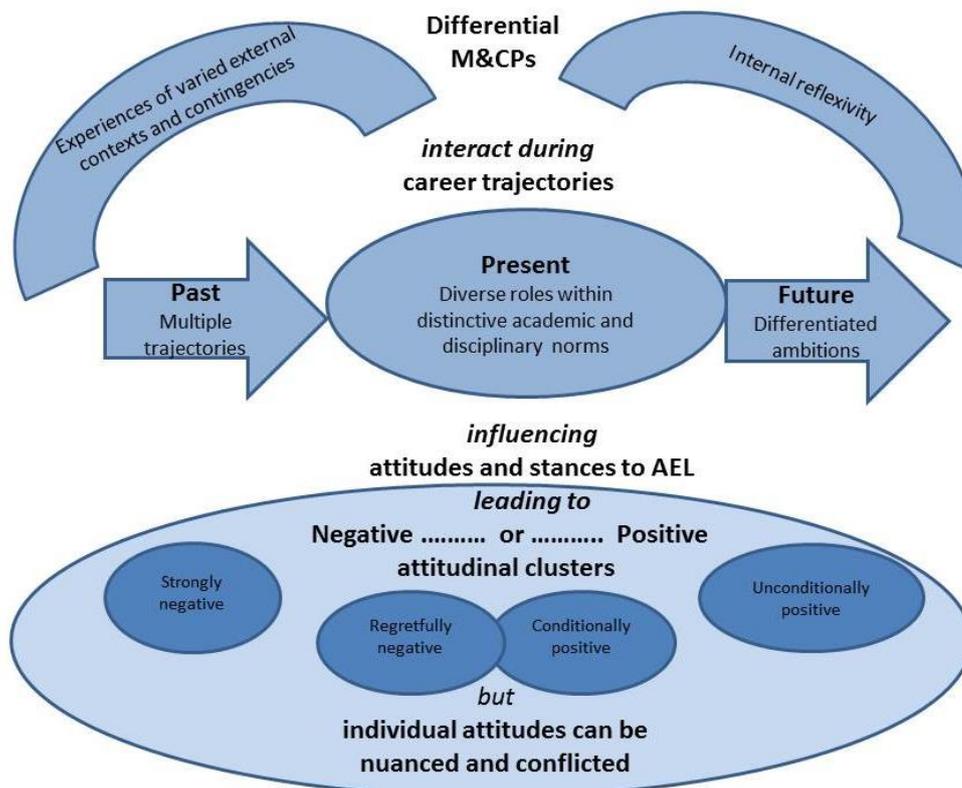
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<sup>196</sup> This is an interesting example of the **altruistic protectionism** I discuss in chapter four.

narratives (Appendix 15) I have explored in some detail how this might have contributed towards their attitudes to AEL.

The research reported in this section suggests that attitudes and stances are more **nuanced** than previously suggested<sup>197</sup>. All participants demonstrate somewhat **conflicted** attitudes to AEL, which are neither entirely negative nor entirely positive. Each individual has a complex set of attitudes which is entwined with their past and present identities and their understanding of the institutional context in which they work. However, when brought together there is evidence that the participants form what I have called **attitudinal clusters** (figure 5.7).

**Figure 5.7 ECAs: Trajectories, differential MCPs and attitudinal clusters (Framework D)**



Whilst I have taken the opportunity to group together participants to emphasise certain characteristics, it is interesting to note that some ECAs express concern about evidence they have encountered of ‘engrained negative stereotyping’, in relation to academic attitudes to AEL, being perpetuated in the university. Two of them (Winnie & Brian) had chosen to take part in these interviews because

<sup>197</sup> In contrast, in figure 4.3 I indicated that *homogeneous* academic attitudes and stances can lead to morphostasis.

they specifically wanted the opportunity to express their concerns about why this might be the case and what might be done about it. However, if figure 5.7 is read as evidence that there are clusters of *attitudes* in addition to clusters of *individuals* this becomes useful in pointing towards underlying M&CPs which potentially influence academic attitudes and stances.

In summary, in section 3 I identify the importance of individual experiences and personal traits (in particular the intrinsic agentic tendencies revealed through the reflexivity of individual actors) in forming attitudes to AEL. I suggest that the extent to which individuals are willing to take AEL responsibilities varies, ranging from strongly negative to unconditionally positive. Important generative M&CPs that underpin these attitudes have been implied, and in section 4 I explore these.

#### 4.0 Thematic inter-case analysis

In section 4 I report on the insights derived from my thematic inter-case analysis (see section 2.1.3 for the methods used). My aim is to draw out the M&CPs which act as influences on ECA attitudes to AEL (research question two). I categorise these into macro-level (4.1.1), meso-level (4.1.2) and micro-level (4.1.3) MCPs<sup>198</sup> and summarise these in figure 5.8.

#### 4.1 M&CPs: Influences on ECA attitudes and stances

Central to ACR principles is the idea that M&CPs include actual (material) structures and underlying 'real' mechanisms which can be identified in, or inferred from, empirical data gathered through interviews (Smith & Elger 2014). In this section I have taken the view that it is helpful, not only, to categorise the M&CPs I have identified at the macro, meso and micro levels (Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014), but also, to refer to them as material-structural and socio-cultural<sup>199</sup> as appropriate.

##### 4.1.1 Macro level MCPs: external to the university

Awareness of global and national trends, and particularly the influence of **marketization** and **neo-liberal political pressures** on institutional strategy, is implicated in the way many ECAs analyse their personal positions in regard to

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<sup>198</sup> I draw again on Bhaskar's seven levels of scale model of lamination (see Appendix 2).

<sup>199</sup> I am conscious as Roxa (personal communication) suggests that this is not a clear divide and that socio-cultural norms can often become, or be seen as, as structural conditions.

AEL. Some identify the ‘tick box mentality’ involved in complying with the requirements of **professional bodies** (in medicine for example); others suggest the external pressures of meeting REF criteria are particularly onerous:

(Sharon) It’s just about what are you going to give us for REF. That’s it, which is – ‘cause they’re a really ambitious institution and that’s the way they think, I guess.

Some believe that **government policies** leave universities few options and argue that university senior managers have a point when they suggest that they have little control over the strategic direction they are forced to take

However, others feel the UoE could take a more robust stance:

(Frank) you’re the ones that are putting these processes in place, you’re the ones that are saying what this pathway is; it’s not some inevitable change’.

Also, by allowing external ideologies to be internalised this has had a negative influence on academic attitudes and stances:

(Keith) we try and meet these bloody targets that keep coming down, people try and exceed them rather than push back against them, you know, in that sense, you know, that form of government governance has massively succeeded because we’ve internalised it, become self-policing.

While some of these are seen as structural influences, others are cultural. The nature of the **externally-promoted business model**, that UoE is perceived to have adopted, is viewed critically by some ECAs and influences attitudes they adopt to taking leadership roles within the University:

(Frank) I think it’s that sort of sense of moving to a kind of managerial culture ...more of the model of a classic corporation or a business.  
(as a result) I think you are seeing a bit more of a divide emerging within universities and within academics, between the managers and the rest.

(Fred) a lot of me kind of doesn’t believe in the university system any more, the way it’s run, ‘cause it’s a business, they’re businesses aren’t they?

#### 4.1.2 Meso level MCPs: within the broader institution

The drive to bring research income into the university, the limited **availability of resources** generally, and choices the university and colleges make about how these are deployed, are influential in forming attitudes to AEL. ECAs had nearly all experienced pressure to generate **research funding** as the highest priority

in their early careers. Success normally results in reduced teaching and administrative workloads:

(Deidre) I think there's so much emphasis on research for new staff that that's really all they're focused on ... getting large grants ... means that they have very little time for teaching anyway.

Institutional **workloads models** are seen as a negative influence on taking on AEL roles; for some the allocation of hours for these is seen as unrealistic compared with the burden of work involved. Fred suggests 'the higher you get promoted the more work you bring on' and Wendy argues 'if you take on too much on the education side then obviously it does take time away from other things... and education is less valued'. However, some ECAs manage this more easily than others and provide examples of how they manage AEL roles within their time allocations: 'they are very good with SWARM<sup>200</sup>. I think pretty much everything we do, does get some sort of recognition'(Pat).

Organisational **employment structures, policies and processes** are mentioned by most as key influences on their attitudes and stances. Perceived inequities in university probation processes are of particular concern. Keith, Fred and John all feel that they are caught in a difficult position where their futures are in doubt because they have not met some of the criteria for probation. In all three cases they feel that they had been encouraged to engage in AEL work which they now believe is viewed as relatively insignificant in successfully completing probation; this has led some to recognise that ECAs have to strategically *reduce* their commitment to AEL activities:

(Winnie) if they don't get grants their positions are at risk ... they'll say 'No, I need to write this grant 'cause my job depends on this grant and this is more important'.

Keith and John both suggest that their concerns about **job security** are unfairly exacerbated because the way in which criteria are interpreted seems to have *shifted away* from education during their probation. This is a cause of distress and annoyance, and both have become somewhat disengaged from both the institution and their departments as a result (see section 3.4):

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<sup>200</sup> The SWARM work allocation process was discussed as an M&CP in chapter four. It is widely believed by academics that it is applied differently between Colleges, Departments and individuals.

(Keith) I understand the pressure that all institutions are under, believe me, and I sympathise, I really do [cynical laugh]... (but) I don't think we serve the interests (of anyone) by putting people like me under the pressures that we, apparently, think are appropriate at the moment.

(John) (what) really annoys me, is that... whole list of things of targets and metrics that you've got to tick. And I went through and I've ticked all of them.... what I was promised, or what was said to me and what's happening now is quite different. And it's a lot of stress... for me, and it's not nice.

**Promotion criteria**<sup>201</sup> are also a significant deterrent to taking on AEL roles.

Whilst the policies and processes themselves are not explicitly designed to act as barriers (see chapter four section 4.2), their negative attitudes are generally developed on the basis of advice given by colleagues and line managers:

(Pat) (people) get the impression that all the promotion criteria are associated with research rather than teaching...although the university has tried to put more emphasis on teaching I don't really know whether (academics') opinions have changed

However, where ECAs are interested in taking AEL roles, as Sharon suggests, this is sometimes in spite of accepting that their chances of rapid promotion will be negatively influenced by inequitable promotion criteria. Several ECAs see informal rewards and other kinds of recognition as necessary to promoting positive attitudes to AEL. Winnie, as the only E&S academic in the group, felt there have been recent developments which she acknowledges as significant:

it's probably getting better and things like ASPIRE and stuff help people be recognised for doing good teaching, but I think there needs to be more recognition and more opportunities for people to say 'Look, this is what I've done'.

But she was also particularly emphatic about the importance of informal recognition from line managers and other colleagues for those who focus on AEL, and did not think this was generally forthcoming:

if you bust a gut ...and put a load of time into it, you don't get as much recognition from, say, the dean, as if you, um, got a big grant from somewhere, and it might take the same amount of time or more time ... no one sort of patted you on the back and said 'Well done, I think you should become senior lecturer now', you know. So that, I

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<sup>201</sup> These are discussed in some detail as M&CPs in chapter four. Only one of the ECAs seemed to be aware of the recent changes in promotion criteria for E&S and the Exeter Academic proposals for E&R when they were interviewed.

think a lot of that isn't recognised and that's what slightly irritates me about my position at the moment.

So far I have identified strategic and structural influences but most ECAs also emphasise the socio-cultural. While there are variations in individual experiences, most ECAs feel that **institutional cultures** underpin a lack of formal and informal recognition, and deter them from taking a serious interest in AEL careers. They feel that this ethos percolates right down to the level of the department:

(Wendy) my line manager suggested that I don't take it (an AEL role) because – for the simple reason that it's time-consuming and it's also a thankless role and a role that will not help you to progress up the academic ... promotion channel. So I've actually been suggested not to take on leadership roles on the teaching side of thing.

Interestingly, those who make comparisons with their previous experiences (Brian, John, Frank) make it clear that they have worked in institutions where they perceived that the ethos was more supportive, or at least less of a deterrent, to choosing AEL as a career trajectory.

Underlying these views about institutional culture (and associated structural policies and processes) is a cynical attitude to **hierarchical and centralised power structures** and how these emerge through disempowerment and poor communication<sup>202</sup>. Some took the view that any interest they may have in AEL is stifled by the sense that taking on responsibility is not commensurate with gaining the power to act autonomously as leaders:

(Pat) ...you are gaining a lot of responsibility with perhaps not much extra power, I think it's that kind of play off that people consider. The sense that ... if you're giving up something, say, you know, some of your teaching time, and you are gaining extra responsibility, but in turn you get an opportunity to, say, shape the future of a programme or shape the future of a department, genuinely. I think that perhaps people might be (interested) – but I think there's a general scepticism about whether that power, in fact, exists.

Brian and John, who had both worked in other countries, are particularly concerned about where the power lies at UoE in relation to educational decision

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<sup>202</sup>The importance of power structures when nurturing leadership is also emphasised by Bolden as a 'constraining and enabling influence on the abilities of leaders to pursue their goals and the ability of followers to accept or resist these goals'. (2011 p.97).

making, believing that the power has shifted from academic leaders to highly centralised managers, and that this undermines the commitment of academics to taking AEL roles. Pat and Frank, who had both spent time working in Oxbridge colleges, contrast the ways in which power was devolved in these institutions with their current experiences of hierarchical and centralised power. They feel that their current experiences are a disincentive to taking an interest in AEL:

(Frank) you've moved away from this model of a sort of largely self-governing group of academics. Um, and I think that, that upset quite a lot of people, and um, certainly people who've been in academia or in particular institutions for quite a long time and have therefore experienced this shift and are used much more to controlling their time and controlling matters that are particularly at departmental level.

Aligned with this is an issue of **poor communication**, which can cause frustration and lead to disengagement :

(Winnie) (I) feel like there's this disconnect between lecturer, senior lecturer, line managers and then course directors, deans, vice deans, deans and ... So I think more kind of cross-talk between levels, more recognition would help.

(Brian) when you go higher in the pyramid, things become a bit more disconnected. I mean, (*name removed*) ... is a lot more disconnected, he has no idea what's happening. And when I tried to talk with him about problems at the college level that are coming down to bite us, er, there was no communication, just like we were speaking two different languages. ...a lot of us have problems on how teaching is organised in this university and this department, but we are talking to a wall, there is no feedback possible. We say 'Look, this should be done differently' and the answer is no, without any rationale, er, explanation, the answer is just no'.

Finally, I was told by several ECAs that they had not been adequately briefed about AEL structures and responsibilities; in some cases, they are not even aware of the people who hold AEL roles in their departments/colleges. This has led to the belief that it is not held in esteem by their colleagues (see below).

#### 4.1.3 Micro-level MCPs: local and individual

The importance of enhancing and retaining **esteem, status and collegial approval** emerges as critical for ECAs. There is a tendency, at least on the

surface<sup>203</sup>, to follow perceived disciplinary attitudinal norms; this can involve avoiding AEL roles, which some ECAs feel lead to low collegial esteem:

(Keith) People really are dragged kicking and screaming into them (AEL roles)... I think if we talked up, um, learning and teaching service as much as we talk up the other kinds of academic service, then there would be more esteem associated with it.

(Wendy) It's to do with the status and the fact that it's - the perception is -that education is like secondary to the main function of the university.

The influence of other colleagues (SALs, academic leads, mentors), acting as **good or bad role models**, permeates all the interviews. ECAs absorb ideas about what AEL should be, and how they should act, in their interactions with others (see also section 8). 'Good role models' can be influential in different ways. Some positively inspire ECAs to consider AEL roles as career enhancing:

(Fred) My teaching mentor,...I've learned quite a lot from him ...(and) the person who's the educational director in our department is really good... so she leads, she's very approachable and she's willing to help when you're not sure about things.

In contrast, others 'good' role models are academics who have strategically *avoided* AEL and through this process have been able to achieve success. They have a powerful influence<sup>204</sup> on the way ECAs conceive of AEL as peripheral to their careers:

(Wendy) my academic lead, when I sort of spoke to him about taking on the teaching role he basically said, 'don't do it because it'll take too much of your time and there will be opportunities ...that might be more appropriate'.

Bad role models (as perceived by participants) also have influences on ECA's attitudes to AEL. In many cases these attitudes related to actions and behaviours involving specific (named) senior AELs, who had come to be seen as poor AELs; this was attributed (for example by Wendy) to disinterest, lack of training or inexperience.

One of the most important concerns for ECAs is the extent to which they wish to

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<sup>203</sup> In referring to 'on the surface' and later 'behind the scenes' I am reflecting Goffman's thinking about front stage and back stage identities.

<sup>204</sup> This can be seen as related to altruistic protectionism which emerged in chapter four section 6.2.3 as an important M&CP.

avoid roles which **disrupt their relationships** with colleagues. Their perceptions of what this means in terms of supporting the disciplinary academic endeavour and, at the same time, maintaining close professional and social ties are vital. This was expressed in many ways, but perhaps most forcibly by Sharon:

(there are) people that move up in management and get so divorced from the ground of research and teaching that everyone hates them [laughs]! That division there is between the people higher up and the people lower down, that's like – fuels so much bad feeling, I guess, you don't ever want to be so ambitious and career-focused that you lose a sense of what it's really like.

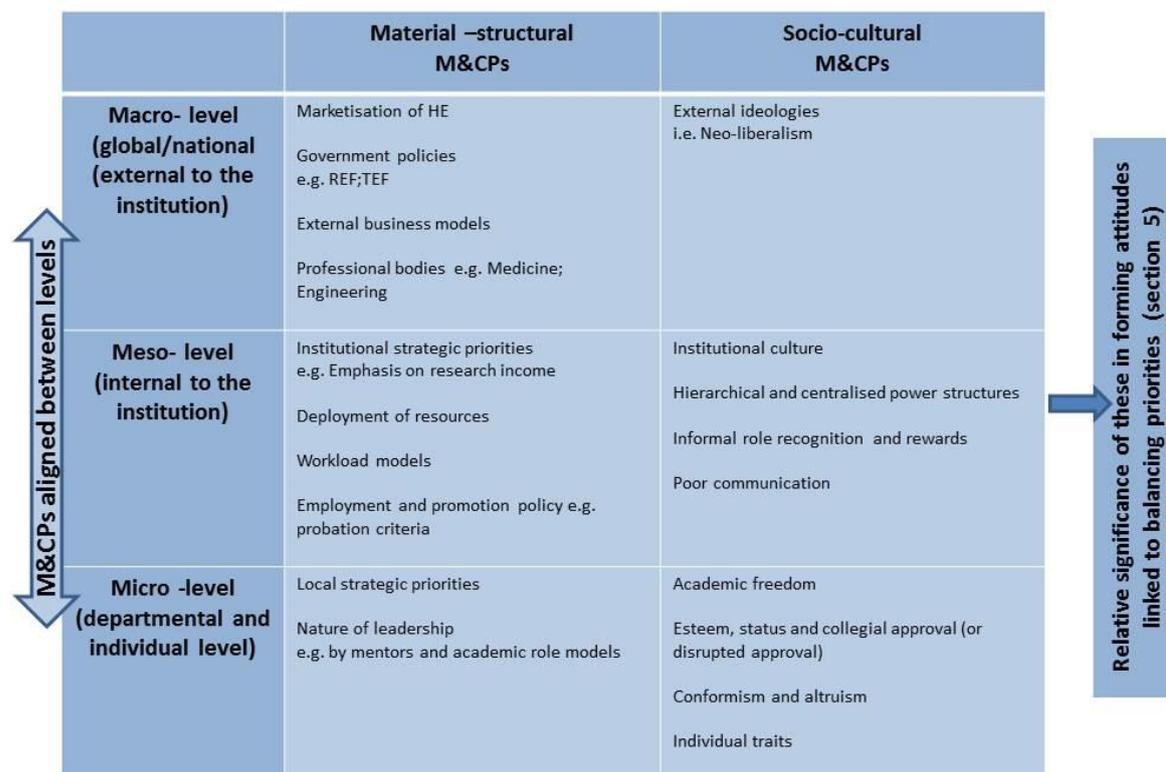
Finally, central to the ECA view of academic life is the importance of individual **academic freedom**. Most interviews contained references to how choosing an academic career means taking an **active agentic stance** to make choices about how and what to focus on, and this includes whether or not to take an interest in AEL: Some express this quite strongly:

(Brian) 'One of the reasons why all of us chose this job is because of academic freedom. I like to think that when I teach a course that I have academic freedom ...I will decide and be sure ...if you don't agree, we can discuss, but I'm not going to accept an order'.

Where this freedom appears to be curtailed (ECAs suggest this can happen in many ways and can relate to teaching or research) participants sometimes express less interest in taking (any) leadership roles. Keith, for example, talked about 'hyper-individualised academics' whose careers are not served by taking on AEL roles.

My thematic approach in section 4 has allowed me to explore, at three different levels, just how 'multi-faceted' (Meyer & Lunnay, 2012 section 4.14) the M&CPs which underlie ECA attitudes to AEL have become. My analysis suggests that both material-structural and socio-cultural influences are implicated at all levels and, at the micro level, I have introduced the significance of individual traits (active agentic stances). I summarise these in figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8 ECAs: Levels and lamination (Framework E<sup>205</sup>)



The diagram illustrates that particular M&CPs operate at different levels but, unlike those I identified in chapter 4, which suggested attitudinal **dissonance** between levels<sup>206</sup>, they appear to act in **alignment** and reinforce each other (Scott & Bhaskar, 2006) This helps build up a picture of why so many ECAs position themselves as relatively disinterested in taking on AEL roles. In the next section I shall consider what my interviews have revealed about how ECAs at UoE adapt to balance their priorities.

## 5.0 Balancing priorities

In section 3 I explored the unique and often divergent individual agentic stances of ten different ECAs, and in section 4 I identified some convergence in the underlying explanations they give for their attitudes. The interplay between these creates conditions in which ECAs find themselves constantly balancing their priorities. In this section I consider this interplay of priorities.

<sup>205</sup> The levels I use here have much in common with the ‘nested contexts’ described as important in McAlpine & Amundsen’s study of early career researchers (2016).

<sup>206</sup> This thinking aligns closely with the CR concept of lamination which I introduced in Appendix 2 and I shall revisit in chapter six section 3.2.

## 5.1 Balancing teaching and research

Most participants are ambitious academics attempting to balance aspects of their work to maximise their career opportunities, and for most this means establishing themselves first and foremost as successful researchers. Most believe this influences their (and others) de-prioritisation of teaching, and ultimately AEL:

(Winnie) University academics that are on the research pathway...would say 'I'm going to try and minimise my teaching' ... 'cause, for them, their important thing is getting data and writing grants and that's their priority.

While this is in part an expression of personal commitment, as Sharon, Fred and Pat suggest, it also strongly reflects the institutional and **departmental cultures** within which they work.

However, in most cases ECAs also express a strong personal commitment to supporting their academic subject, and their own students, through engagement in education activities. This can be seen as interesting and highly motivating:

(Sharon) we all kill ourselves over our teaching, we really care about it and we really care about the students and we care about changing the programme and improving the programme and thinking about how we can make it better.

However, as I have already suggested education work can become demotivating where (as Brian suggests) it is overly bureaucratic and individual autonomy in designing and delivering courses is undermined, or where (as in the case of John, Fred and Keith) there is evidence that taking on AEL is negatively affecting career progression.

Others (particularly Sharon and Winnie) take a more positive **individual stance** towards AEL; claiming to regret and, at least 'behind the scenes' reject' the dominantly negative views of education (AEL) as a valued career pathway:

(Keith) I feel sad that that (negative view of AEL) is inculcated into how we develop career-wise. I think, um ... whilst I think the term is problematic we are exceptionally good, academics are exceptionally good, at performing as neo-liberal citizens.

It is interesting that Winnie, who feels strongly about engaging in AEL going forward, still has a sense that this will not necessarily be a sensible career

move. She calls this a 'dead end situation' and, later in the interview, considers alternative priorities, which would require her to move away from her AEL ambitions.

Interestingly, rather little was said explicitly about prioritising quality of life and home responsibilities by the participants I interviewed<sup>207</sup>. This can possibly be attributed to their career stage in which the struggle to establish themselves is overwhelmingly dominant (McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010; Peters & Ryan, 2015). There were exceptions amongst those who had family responsibilities such as John who was concerned that his poor career prospects would adversely affect his family who had moved from another country, and Deidre, who was facing up to the changing priorities associated with starting a family.

## 5.2 Balancing social identities and inner conversations

It is important that the ECAs I interviewed are all at transitional stages in their careers and engaged in establishing not just a research identity but also a wider social identity as member of an academic community<sup>208</sup>. In the context of their academic lives, **social identity** can be seen to relate to their past histories and to their experiences during their early careers. For example, as I have suggested above, past teaching and AEL opportunities are important for Sharon and Pat in how they define their current identities, and in forming positive attitudes to AEL. However, they both suggest that their attitudes to education contribute to becoming rather isolated as they resist the dominant discourses of at UoE.

Where there is a lack of confidence about social integration into academia or where social identity is in flux some ECAs avoid risk-taking by developing **conformist attitudes** towards AEL. Wendy comments on observing this amongst colleagues who do not wish to risk taking on AEL roles, or risk 'being seen as not providing good leadership...and then it will obviously be detrimental to their career if it doesn't work out'.

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<sup>207</sup> Implicitly, however, these issues are raised in relation to pressures of work (see section 4.3).

<sup>208</sup> In existing research, the perception that early career professionals feel the need to retain strong social and personal identities can be seen to complement other (career-related) priorities (Åkerlind & McAlpine, 2010; Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014).

These cautious attitudes relate to how ECAs view themselves as belonging to coherent disciplinary groups<sup>209</sup>, within which they develop close and respectful professional and social relationship with colleagues (and students) and have access to powerful role models (see section 4.1.3). In balancing their priorities, the evidence from these interviews suggests that there are important influences on the way ECAs view AEL<sup>210</sup>. Both Pat and Frank, while being positive about AEL, suggest that the strength of their **departmental allegiances** is a factor in dissuading them from moving into AEL (or any) roles at institutional levels:

(Frank) So there's a kind of ambivalence about moving out of the departmental environment where you get this nice, um, you get this research - teaching combination ... And I'd miss, I'd miss that sort of daily contact with colleagues ... and I'd miss that contact with students as well, to be honest with you.

In addition, where AEL roles are currently taken by people who ECAs do not respect as disciplinary academics, then the influence on attitudes can be negative:

(Fred) there's quite a... nasty kind of ...mind set where there's been some bullying and things like that... I couldn't treat people like that, like some of the people here do, it just doesn't agree with how I believe you treat people.

In a small study it is difficult to detect any tendency for *particular* disciplines to create environments which are supportive of, or discourage, ECA involvement in AEL. However, it is worth noting that there is a potential 'humanities effect' in my research. Those most involved in formal AEL at an early stage (Pat; Winnie; Frank) are humanities academics; however it is difficult to ascertain whether this may be to do with the size of the department or whether it is related to the departmental culture:

(Pat) We're a small department so it's kind of natural that people that are at an earlier stage should take on quite large admin jobs ...and it's somewhat inevitable that we should, actually, when we don't have many staff, you know, it's just by default, necessary for that to happen.

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<sup>209</sup> In chapter two section 4.3.1 I refer to Elder-Vass' (2012) use of the term 'norm circles' in this context.

<sup>210</sup> As I have already suggested in chapter three Kligyte & Barrie (2014) and Roxa & Martensson(2011) discovered, strong collegial departments can provide contexts in which positive attitudes to AEL can flourish.

Finally, there is also evidence that many ECAs believe that their group identity is balanced by their **inner conversations** (of the kind I have referred to as represented in a range of stances in figure 3.2). Winnie, for example, argues that where individuals have confidently established an academic identity within the dominant research discourse of the institution, this can potentially result in a kind of **confident negativity** about AEL. However, in section 3 I comment on the importance of individual meta-reflexives adopting positions of resistance in relation to group norms; their personal reflexivity can be associated with subversive and nonconformist attitudes to AEL. The most interesting example is Fred's idealistic and somewhat subversive commitment to taking a lead on supporting widening participation:

generally the university prizes research and publications and funding rather than the students, I think it's really bad, that's my personal view. So something that would, um, influence direction ... the way students are taught ... would be really good, amazing.

He relates his stance to his unconventional background (see figure 5.4), even though he realises that 'if your face don't fit you're not going to last very long here'. He is aware that his 'outsider views' might a career risk.

In conclusion, section 5 has illustrated that tensions exist for ECAs between and within their different academic roles, their social/ group identities and their individual priorities and motivations. This results in ECAs facing complex decisions about balancing priorities early in their careers. It adds further evidence to sections 3 and 4 that suggest that the degree to which ECAs are interested in AEL is varied, and the influences on their attitudes and stances are complex and somewhat contradictory. Therefore, a key theme to have emerged is the importance of diversity of attitudes and stances. This somewhat ameliorates the dominant view expressed in the literature (chapter three), and in Black's analysis of UoE (chapter four), of a negative and disengaged academic community with a disinterest in leadership in general and AEL in particular. My analysis so far hints at reluctance rather than resistance. In an attempt to add explanatory power to this analysis, ECAs were invited to theorise about reluctant attitudes to AEL and the next section captures this thinking.

## 6.0 Theoretical analysis

From the very beginning of this study I have argued that my experience leads me to believe that academic stances to AEL are possibly captured best by the term 'reluctant'. Drawing on interview material<sup>211</sup> this section explores this idea. All participants agreed to co-developed (with me in conversation) theoretical constructs which help identify and then explain stances and attitudes *they believe are held by other academics*<sup>212</sup>. The seven constructs of reluctance which I have identified in section 6.1- 6.7 are derived from these conversations. The categorisation into these constructs resulted from coding of interview data (see section 2.2.3). Illustrative quotations reflecting participant's views are not included here but can be found in the table in Appendix 17. I provide a key to these by numbering them in brackets in the text below. These are mostly drawn from the conversations in the theoretical part of the interview but many have already emerged in the analysis in previous sections. The seven constructs are captured in figure 5.9 in what I have called 'typologies of reluctance'.

### 6.1 Constructs of avoidance

These constructs vary from fairly extreme views on avoiding AEL to more moderate and somewhat resigned avoidance<sup>213</sup>. Explanatory stances include: ***Resistance and rejection (1/11/25)***. Institutional structures and cultures act as M&CPs which override other influences and lead to negative attitudes to taking on AEL roles. The unwelcome pressures associated with these M&CPs lead ECAs to adopt stances where they reject or resist AEL roles.

***Fear driven reluctance (5/6/27)***: Fearful attitudes relate to ECAs anticipating a negative impact of taking on AEL roles on career progression (particularly probation), and therefore, on job security. They are also concerned about the intensity of the role requirements and the impact this has on developing a balanced academic career.

### 6.2 Constructs of acceptance

These constructs vary from definitely positive views on AEL to more moderate conditional acceptance. Explanatory stances include:

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<sup>211</sup> In section 2.2.3 I describe how I adopt CR 'theory building' methods (Kreiner & Mouritsen, 2005; Pawson, 2002) taking data from part two of the face-to face interview (see Appendix 13 for how I explained it to the participants).

<sup>212</sup> These may not always influence their *personal* actions.

<sup>213</sup> This has similarities to the defensive routines in figure 3.3.

**Reluctance overridden by personal commitment (22/32):** Positive views about AEL, or combining AEL with other roles, arise because ECAs have a real interest in what they might personally achieve in this area, and this overrides potential career-limiting constraints.

**Reluctance overridden by altruism(12/29):** An altruistic stance is underpinned by a commitment to academic citizenship, or a desire to ensure that education activities are well led and run smoothly.

### 6.3 Reluctance as contagion

These constructs are formed in the social and professional contexts in which ECAs become enculturated into academic life. Explanatory stances include:

**Shared reluctance(5/8/17):** Antipathy to AEL is something which is shared by more experienced colleagues with ECAs, who then internalise this as an academic cultural trait, which it is considered safe to demonstrate. ECAs have become aware that taking on AEL roles may lead to changes in the dynamics of their relationship with colleagues and they are not keen to risk this.

**Learned reluctance(33):** this develops over time in contexts where ECAs are constantly become, or are made, aware of the constraints which the institutional structures place on those who show an interest in AEL. These gradually alter the way they see their own careers, and stances are adopted to align with this thinking.

### 6.4 Reluctance as personal identity

These constructs are formed as individual academics transition into their academic careers and start to make sense of the cultural norms that they encounter, and how these relate to their own beliefs. Explanatory stances include:

**Ideological reluctance(7/19):** In part this relates to a mismatch between ECAs' personal ideologies and those of the University and its leaders. AEL is particularly susceptible to this thinking, as many are reluctant to take on AEL roles when it appears to involve responsibility without power. It also relates to ways in which individuals have experienced AEL styles of which they disapprove e.g. leadership which undermines academic autonomy or is part of a bullying culture. This means that ECAs are reticent about becoming involved in AEL and adopt disengaged stances –and/or (less commonly at this stage of an academic career) they can choose to challenge prevailing university structures.

**Personality related reluctance (9/18/31):** This construct relate to academics' personal traits and how they are reflected in their reluctance to become involved in AEL. Academics are seen by some to have personal characteristics and associated stances which are influential in how they respond to AEL opportunities (in specific structural and cultural contexts). This is particularly the case where they have strong idealistic values and views of academic identity.

### 6.5 Reluctance as career stage

These constructs are specific to the different career stages academics move through. While the explanatory stances described are not unique to these stages they are captured in my conversations with ECAs and therefore I report them here:

**Reluctance as early (junior) career stage dependant (14/2):** This construct suggests ECAs are typically focused on the immediate career requirements in an intensively competitive RIU. They really should not be expected to consider AEL as part of their future careers at this point in time as it can be seen as a unnecessary diversion. It is argued that so early in their careers the type of education roles they are involved in (supporting students and designing their own teaching sessions and courses) is not AEL; rather this is seen as part of every academic's role, and where AEL roles are taken on, they can be dominated by relatively menial administrative tasks.

**Reluctance as late (senior) career stage dependant (10/16/20/28):** This construct sees senior academics adopting reluctant stances to AEL which they develop through time as they become more focused on their own careers in a research context. Those who do have AEL roles are often held in low esteem, and the attitudes which ECAs develop relate to being aware of this.

The five constructs I have summarised above are underpinned by two additional contingent constructs. By this I mean that these are behind many of the stances I have already identified, and in some ways can be seen as deep M&CPs in the context of my research.

### 6.6 Relative reluctance (2/13/21)

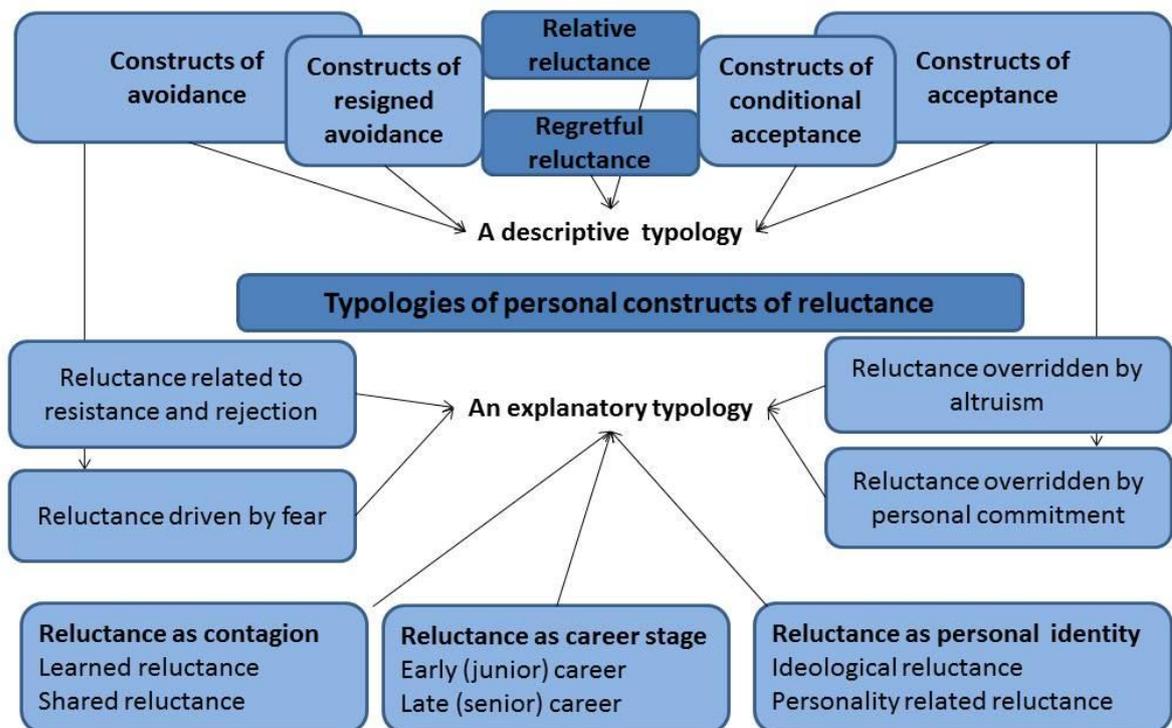
Reluctance should not be described as stance through which ECAs *reject* AEL. Rather it seems to originate in attitudes based on comparing AEL with (in

particularly) research leadership, and in the UoE structures which require ECAs to make choices about specialising in one or the other. Most ECAs chose the research route as it forms the central tenant of their personal ambitions around which their identity emerges; but, it also provides more security and is more likely to lead to rapid career progression as I have illustrated in section 5.2. For many, it is not a matter of total disinterest, but rather one of relative disinterest.

### 6.7 Regretful reluctance (3/15):

Some ECAs believe that academics generally regret that they are not likely to continue to engage in, or they feel they need to abandon, their interest in AEL. As I have indicated earlier, they are given signals from other people, or through the institution, that an interest in AEL might be detrimental as a career route. Despite this, they show a personal commitment to AEL, which surfaces in my interviews. The term ‘regretful reluctance’ indicates that academics may feel that it is unfortunate that they are ‘constrained’ to distance themselves from AEL as a potentially fruitful, and personally rewarding, career pathway.

**Figure 5.9 Typologies of personal constructs of reluctance**



In summary, the *top part* of figure 5.9 provides a **descriptive typology** which suggests that a continuum of stances is identifiable. At the two extremes

(avoidance and acceptance) there is little evidence of reluctance. However, beyond these, the approaches identified provide a more subtle analysis of the range of stances found in my conversations with ECAs, which suggest a continuum of reluctance exists. The *lower part* of figure 5.9 brings together an **explanatory typology** of stances (a summary of sections 6.1-6.5). These point towards a complex configuration of structural and agentic M&CPs operating to influence the stances identified.

The last two constructs, (relative and regretful reluctance) are particularly significant in my analysis as they are evidence of deeper M&CPs which underpin attitudes and motivations. In addition, they also provide insights into potential opportunities for influencing academic stances, which I discuss further in section 8 and return to in chapter six where I discuss the implications of this typology for nurturing ECAs for future AEL roles (Figure 6.4).

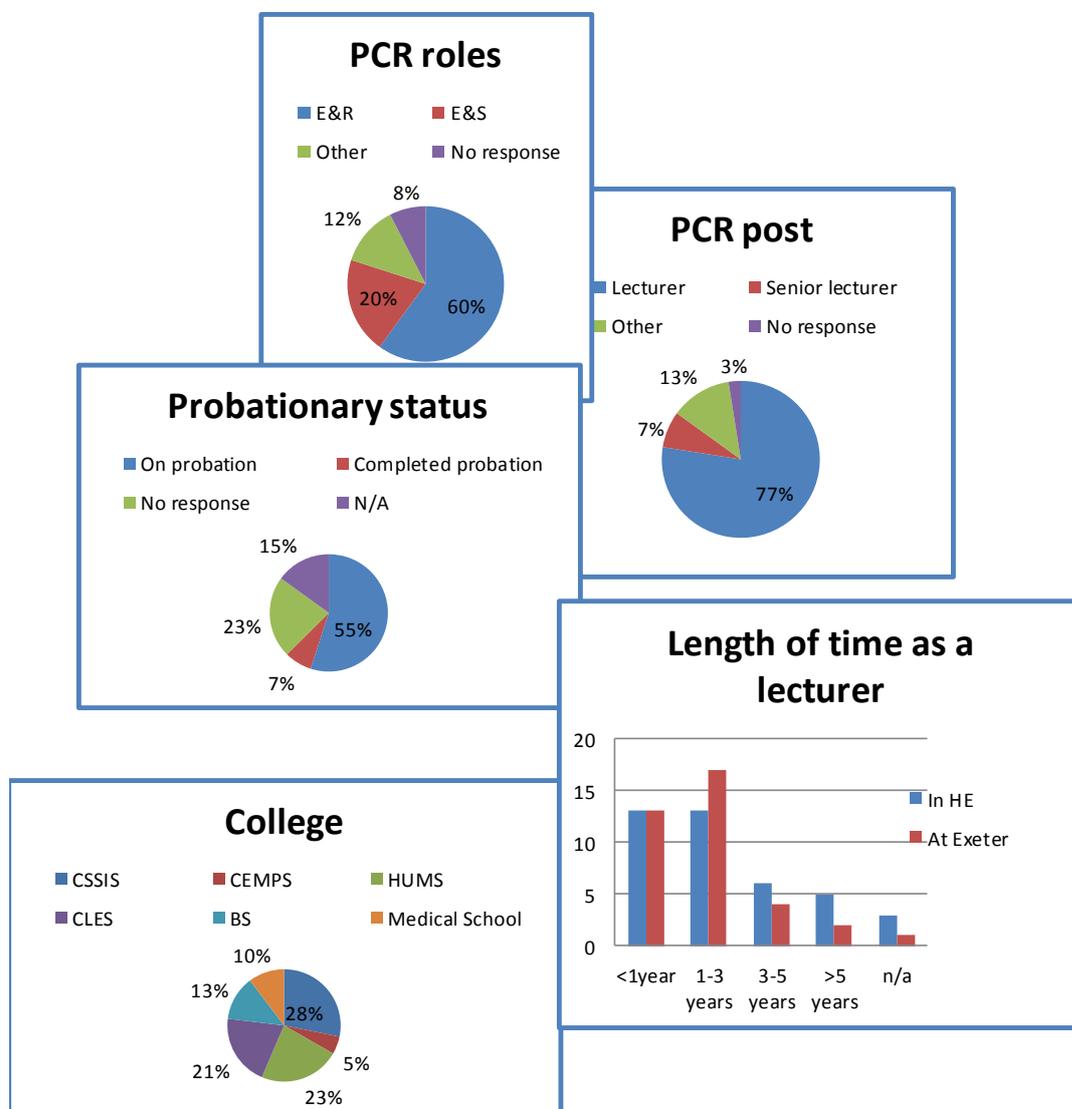
Finally, in undertaking my theoretical analysis, I have faced two sets of challenges. The first set of challenges relate to the diverse perceptions and conceptual ambiguity surrounding the term AEL to which I have already referred (see figure 5.5). I have to assume that these influence the way ECAs construct their ideas about reluctance. For example, it appears that negative stances are linked to the belief that AEL is dominated by administrative, managerial and bureaucratic responsibilities, while positive stances relate to creative, innovative and more strategic roles. I also accept that same individual can appear both *more reluctant*, when their experience is administration-heavy, and *less reluctant*, when empowered to be engaged in more autonomous, creative initiatives.

The second set of challenges relate to whether it is acceptable to theorise on the basis of a small number of individual perceptions. This concern is particularly pertinent as my intention is to take the outcomes of this analysis forward into evidence-based suggestions about how best to nurture AEL at UoE. In the next section I report on one approach I have used to address this concern.

## 7.0 Interpretative evaluation: Pragmatic common referents

Forty ECAs, attending two PCAP workshops in April 2016, were asked to take part in an interpretative evaluation exercise acting as PCRs. The intention was to establish whether the theoretical constructs discussed in section 7 are ‘recognised’ more generally by a larger group of ECAs. In section 2.1.4 I explain why this method was used, describe who the participants are, and discuss the processes involved<sup>214</sup>. This approach can be considered as somewhat experimental and I shall discuss its limitations in chapter seven (section 6.1.4).

**Figure 5.10 Demographic characteristics of PCR group**



Initially some demographic information was collected about the PCRs to allow

<sup>214</sup> Appendix 10 includes the ethics approval and appendix 17 describes the approach in detail and presents the raw data collected.

me to establish whether they met the criteria for my original ECA study. The results are presented in figure 5.10.

Commonalities with the original participants are evident (see figures 5.3 and 5.4 for data relating the original ten participants). Dominantly, the PCRs are lecturers in E&R posts and on probation, who had been lecturing for less than 3 years. They are based in all six colleges. A higher proportion of E&S staff and a number of research fellows ('other' on figure 5.10) add diversity, which was not there in the original group.

Three of the workshop attendees ('no response' on figure 5.10) met the criteria for attending PCAP, but were not academic staff and would therefore have been outside my original selection criteria. These individuals did not respond to the demographic survey arguing, that the questions I asked were not applicable. They did complete the questionnaire (see below) but it is beyond the scope of this exercise to consider whether their responses were different to those made by the academics in the group.

The questionnaire (Appendix 17) was devised using thirty two quotations from the ten original interviews<sup>215</sup>. Quotations were randomly scattered through the questionnaire but were then collated for analysis based on the constructs which they represented. The results are tabulated in full in Appendix 17 and summarised in figure 5.11.

This table captures the responses of those who gave a definite answer (for most questions there were also some who were uncertain or gave no response). In calculating percentages I have first based these on the positive and negative responses alone (results in bold in the table) and secondly on *all potential responses* including those which were uncertain or did not respond (results in italics in the table).

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<sup>215</sup> These were the same quotations which I refer to by number in section 6.1 -6.7 to exemplify theoretical constructs about reluctance to lead.

**Figure 5.11 PCR's attitudes towards theories of reluctance**

ECA stances (see figure 5.9)	Quotation (numbers relate to questionnaire in Appendix 17)	Results Total number of responses (these vary in relation to the number of statements) <b>Summaries</b> <b>Percentage of positive/negative respondents in bold</b> <i>Percentage of all potential responses in italics (all less than 100%)</i>	
		Agreement (Y y)	Disagreement (N n)
<i>Resistance and rejection</i>	1 11 25	72	24
<i>Fear driven reluctance</i>	4 6 27	64	29
<b>Constructs of avoidance</b>		<b>72%</b> <i>57%</i>	<b>28%</b> <i>22%</i>
<i>Altruism and personal commitment</i>	12 22 32 29	82	24
<b>Constructs of acceptance</b>		<b>78%</b> <i>51%</i>	<b>22%</b> <i>15%</i>
<i>Shared reluctance</i>	5 8 17	54	18
<i>Learned reluctance</i>	33	23	4
<b>Reluctance as contagion</b>		<b>62%</b> <i>48%</i>	<b>38%</b> <i>14%</i>
<i>Ideological reluctance</i>	7 19	44	13
<i>Personality driven reluctance</i>	9 18 31	43	41
<b>Reluctance as personal identity</b>		<b>81%</b> <i>43.5%</i>	<b>19%</b> <i>27%</i>
<i>Reluctance as late career stage dependant</i>	10 16 20 28	102	23
<i>Reluctance as early career stage dependant</i>	14 23	50	13
<b>Reluctance as career stage</b>		<b>77%</b> <i>63%</i>	<b>23%</b> <i>15%</i>
<b>Relative reluctance</b>	2 13 21	86	8
<b>Regretful reluctance</b>	3 15	37	37
<b>Totals</b>		708	251
<b>Totals %</b>		<b>74%</b> <i>59%</i>	<b>26%</b> <i>21%</i>

Quote 30, 24 & 26 explored ambiguity around AEL as a concept and are excluded from this table.

Of the 959 responses which indicate agreement or disagreement with the statements made by my participants, 74% were in agreement suggesting a broad tendency to align themselves with the stances taken by my ten participants. This suggests, in general, that there is wider recognition by this larger group of the views expressed in the interviews. In particular, stances relating to career stage are well supported; this is possibly linked to how ECAs see senior academics influencing their attitudes and this idea is reinforced by the large majority who associate themselves with a quotation about learned

reluctance. Stances influenced by personal identity are also important, perhaps linking them Archer's approach to reflexivity<sup>216</sup>.

There is substantial agreement with views associated with relative reluctance. These results provide some support for the idea that AEL is not something which is *totally* undesirable for most, but is widely seen as *relatively less* desirable (see section 6.6).

The result for regretful reluctance is interesting. I expected this to reflect the result for relative reluctance but this does not seem to be the case. I suspect this is a result of my choice of quotations and I shall discuss the shortcomings of the method used in chapter seven. Results for quotations 3 and 15 both suggest that CPRs feel positively about teaching but neither provides an opportunity to clearly identify evidence of reluctance.

Alongside this general tendency towards agreement, there is a more nuanced picture. Considerable diversity can be detected in the spread of responses which is evident when the data is disaggregated (Appendix 17). This is probably inevitable given the complex and idiosyncratic nature of the quotations and the resulting range of possible interpretations. There is also a fair degree of uncertainty about whether the quotations reflect the PCR's stances. This can be seen in the differences between the first (in bold) and second (in italics) sets of percentage figures. The table shows that the larger the difference, the greater the numbers of uncertain responses<sup>217</sup>. The combination of these two considerations means that it would be unwise to draw very firm conclusions from this exercise. However, I do think it has been useful (see chapter seven section 6.1.4 for a further discussion), and overall, it has enhanced my confidence in the relevance of the theoretical constructs proposed by my original participants. The typology of reluctance which I constructed on the basis of the attitudes of a small group has been helpfully supported by the tendency for a larger group of PCRs to align their thinking with these attitudes<sup>218</sup>. With this

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<sup>216</sup> These are both discussed further in chapter six.

<sup>217</sup> The table in appendix 17 contains the raw data which supports this analysis.

<sup>218</sup> I have subsequently used a version of this exercise in three workshops in other RIUs. While I do not have research data to report here, there has been a high degree of interest, and recognition of the sentiments expressed in the quotations.

in mind, in the next section I move on to consider what my interviews revealed about nurturing ECAs to be less reluctant to become AELs.

## 8.0 Nurturing future careers

I asked participants to reflect on *anything* which might influence them to rethink their attitudes towards AEL<sup>219</sup>. I have summarised their responses using the same approach as I used in sections 4.1-4.3. These range from macro-level policy interventions through to micro-level shifts in culture. These are summarised in figure 5.12.

### 8.1 Macro level interventions

Shifts in national policies towards an emphasis on students and the quality of teaching are seen as potential drivers for shifting attitudes at both institutional and personal levels. The introduction of the TEF is considered by some (Sharon; Keith) to be of particular contemporary significance although how this might impact is not yet clear:

(Keith) maybe TEF will be a good thing in that regard... if we try and think positively, maybe it will lead to the recognition of teaching in a meaningful way.

It is suggested that national level interventions and support from well-respected (disciplinary) educational leaders might influence attitudes:

(Winnie) we have a few visitors from ...other universities that come in and do talks about their educational research, and that's quite good. 'Cause that's another little boost thing, isn't it, you think 'Oh, they've done something really good, we can try that here.

### 8.2 Meso level policies and processes

As I have already suggested, developing and consistently implementing revised institutional strategies, policy and processes for promotion, recognition and reward is advocated by many as key to changing attitudes:

(Wendy) I think the only thing would be if they placed more emphasis on taking a more active role in sort of education and education leadership when it comes up to promotion.

Whilst it is recognised by some that this is an existing UoE priority, many are sceptical about its influence on attitudes to date. Revised practices need to be

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<sup>219</sup> See appendix 3 section three of the questionnaire for how I approached this.

well communicated and consistently applied, for a considerable period of time, before academics become confident that the institutional rhetoric around AEL is matched by reality.

### 8.3 Micro level practices

Several respondents suggest that micro-level cultural changes would be most likely to influence attitudes; when esteem and collegial recognition are enhanced by taking on AEL roles, then they believe academic reluctance would diminish:

(Winnie) I went to see a colleague... who just said 'Actually', like 'You've done loads, well done!' and was really encouraging about it, and I thought actually, you just need a tiny bit more of that. And I went away feeling – I feel really inspired to do more now, It makes a massive difference, I think.

However, Frank suggests this is only likely to occur slowly, alongside an intrinsic attitudinal shift linked to visible evidence that devolved strategic planning and the autonomy to take decisions or to exert control over educational practices is genuinely increasing.

However, my ECAs generally feel that the challenging shift in identity required when taking on an AEL role (Ladyshevsky & Jones, 2007) requires more than attitudinal change. Individuals need to take time for self-reflection and to stand back to consider their future careers in a wider context. Most ECAs suggest this is facilitated by appropriate and supportive developmental approaches.

### 8.4 Nurturing future careers: supportive approaches

Many felt that they are ill prepared for the challenges involved in leadership and in AEL in particular<sup>220</sup>. They provide examples of approaches which they feel would be supportive and these frequently differ from those which ECAs feel are currently offered (figure 5.12). Several ECAs feel that ELD is generally unavailable and, where offered (e.g. as one element in the PCAP programme), it is overly generalised. Winnie describes being 'thrown in at the deep end' and having 'a bad experience' of AEL and Keith suggest this is evidence of the low value placed on AEL arguing that **investment in training** is 'an implicit way of demonstrating you value (AEL)'.

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<sup>220</sup> Åkerlind (2011) suggests that there are unintended consequences in separating teaching and teaching development from other aspects of academic work and academic development.

ELD is also seen as **poorly targeted**. Brian and Pat both advocate focused opportunities, which related to particular career stages, and which are devolved to recognise and support disciplinary diversity, as alternatives to centralised courses. For Keith and Pat, opportunities to practice AEL from an early stage are best achieved by working within the departmental contexts, or with mentors and role models, rather than attending courses.

For others, **informal events** involving conversations about good practice were seen as a good approach to development:

(Sharon) we have like, um, teaching and learning seminars, like a couple across the term, and they're very informal and people can come and have a chat, and I think *that's* really great ...I think *that* needs to be made much more central and more regular and be a bigger part of the conversation so that people are learning from each other and there are ways from learning from good practice.

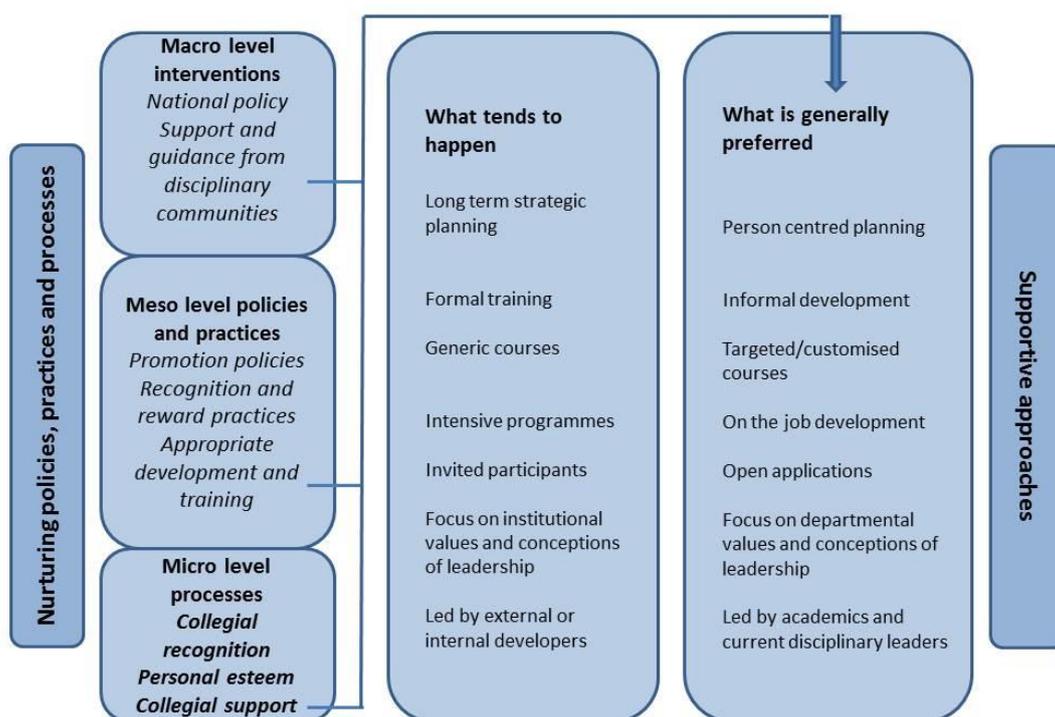
However, most acknowledged they are reticent to take up developmental opportunities because of conflicting demands on their time. Pat suggests that to overcome this AEL 'training' might need to be a requirement for promotion, although she acknowledges this would be unpopular with some. Several feel that this reticence could be addressed by creating more career synergies between research and teaching, achieved by bringing together developmental opportunities for research and educational leadership. Sharon suggests that at present these are 'in competition with each other in really superficial ways'.

In section 8.1, I suggest that ECAs recognise the need for external inspiration. In addition, hearing more from well-respected UoE senior colleagues about how they achieve these synergies in their own careers potentially helps reduce the relatively low esteem of AEL compared with research leadership:

(Sharon) I guess if people in different academic leadership positions just talked a bit about what those positions meant, it would be really interesting, actually.

In figure 5.12 these supportive approaches are represented as 'what tends to happen' in comparison with what ECAs say they would prefer. This is all set in the wider context of the macro, meso and micro influences which underpin these views. This diagram informs some practical proposals I make in chapter six (section 4.8).

**Figure 5.12 Viewpoints on nurturing AEL careers**



In conclusion, the diversity of approaches which ECAs advocate for ELD present a considerable challenge to those with responsibilities for current institutional policy and practice (see chapter four). In chapter six (section 4), I shall review whether the approaches advocated by ECAs align with institutional practice, and whether the suggested approaches, if implemented, might potentially become effective enablers for nurturing AEL.

## 9.0 Emerging conceptual frameworks: ECA perspectives

In bringing the research in this chapter together I revisit the three dimensions which I used in frameworks A, B and C in chapter four section 7). I to construct three complementary frameworks:

- Framework D: Trajectories, differential MCPs and attitudinal clusters;
- Framework E: Levels and lamination in ECA interviews; and
- Framework F: Structure, agency and complex configurations in ECA interviews.

## 9.1 Framework D: Trajectories, differential MCPs and attitudinal clusters

This framework is found in figure 5.7 and discussed in section 3.4. I show that combinations of different influences work through the career trajectories of individuals in ways which lead to considerable diversity in how they conceive of AEL. It appears that, through time, external contingencies acting in different contexts, interact with the emerging personal identity (through the reflexive inner conversations of individuals) leading to diverse and flexible stances as exemplified by the ten participants in this study. However, as these have become fixed in the cultural belief systems of the university it can be suggested that there is convergence of attitudes which results in what were impermanent personal and cultural beliefs becoming embedded and semi-permanent aspects of the UoE's social system (exemplified by attitudinal clusters in figure 5.7). This suggests that a form of attitudinal morphostasis exists in the stances adopted by the participant ECAs towards AEL, and that the persistence of these is an importance influence on the way they envisage their future careers.

## 9.2 Framework E: Levels and lamination

This framework is found in figure 5.8 and discussed in section 4. How and why attitudinal morphostasis occurs amongst the ten ECAs can in part be understood from a consideration of how the different socio-cultural and material-structural MCPs interact at different levels in the organisation and beyond. In figure 5.8, I suggest that ECAs develop strategies to balance their personal priorities and projects with those required of them by the university. As I have suggested at the end of section 4, M&CPs influence ECA attitudes at different levels appear to act in **alignment** and reinforce each other (Scott & Bhaskar, 2006)<sup>221</sup>. This helps build up a picture of why so many ECAs position themselves as disinterested (in various ways) in taking on AEL roles. However, it cannot be assumed that the direction of influence is always downwards in UoE. There is some evidence in my interviews that ECAs are often active agents, creating M&CPs which operate upwards<sup>222</sup>.

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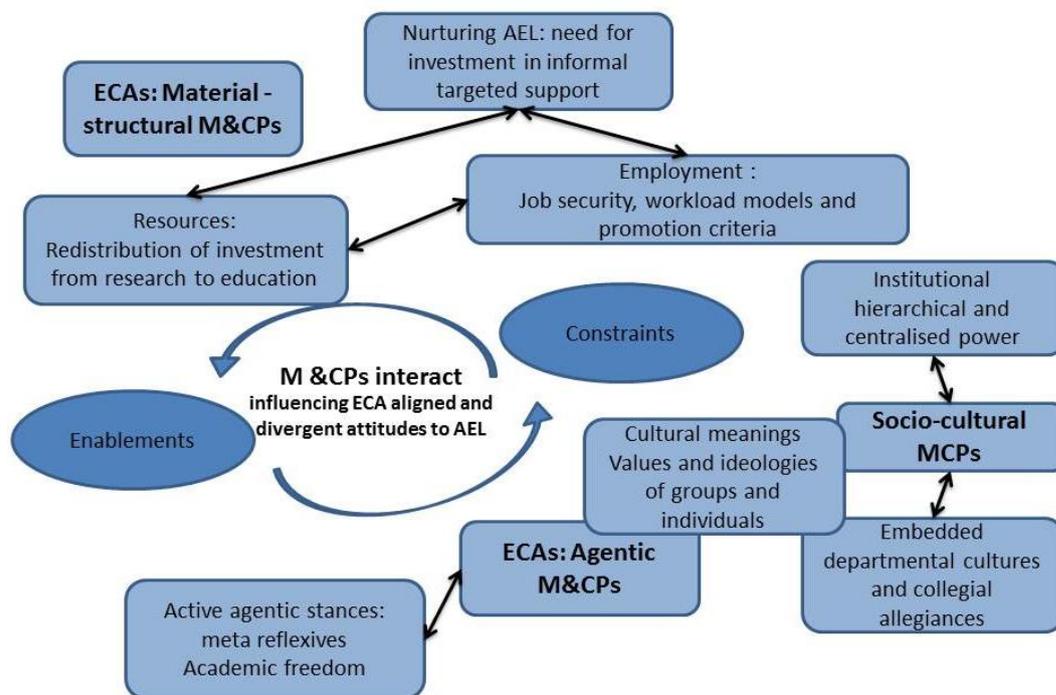
<sup>221</sup> This thinking aligns closely with the CR concept of lamination which I introduced in appendix 2 and will revisit in chapter six (section 3.2).

<sup>222</sup> This thinking aligns with Archer's and Elder Vass's (2012) approach to upward causation discussed in chapter three section 4.3.

### 9.3 Framework F: Structure, agency and complex configurations

This framework is found in figure 5.13 and is discussed below.

**Figure 5.13 ECAs: Complex configurations, structure and agency (Framework F)**



My analysis throughout this study has reinforced the idea that at UoE, structure and agency, often through embedded cultures, interact to create complex cultural configurations.

From the ECA perspective, M&CPs which act as constraints and enablers are important influences on their sometimes divergent, and sometimes aligned, attitudes and stances. These are found (in bold text) throughout the chapter and are brought together in figure 5.13. The diagram emphasises the importance of both the separation of, and the interaction between, material-structural, socio-cultural and agentic M&CPs, in a way that reflects Archer’s (1995) analytically dualistic approach.

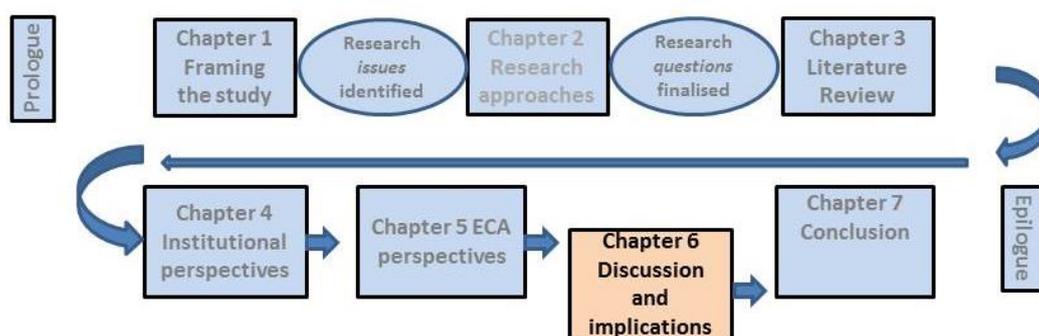
In conclusion, section 9 has involved bringing together some insights into ECA attitudes and stances in three frameworks. Once again a **retroductive** approach in this chapter has allowed me move between my data and my frameworks to contribute further to an emergent view of what might contribute to ECA attitude and stances relating to AEL and ELD.

## 10.0 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that ECAs are influenced by a range of M&CPs that contribute to their reluctance to lead. However, through an analysis of their diverse perspectives, I have emphasised how the active agency of individuals is a significant finding in this chapter. Greater understanding of diversity has led to the construction of theoretically informed **typologies of reluctance** (Figure 5.9), in which I capture the more nuanced stances which emerge from ECAs' constructs of reluctance. In chapter six I shall discuss the interaction of these findings with others from chapters two, three and four.



## Chapter 6 Discussion and implications



### 1.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss my research findings based around the three research questions introduced at the end of chapter two:

Question one. What are the attitudes and stances adopted towards AEL at UoE?

Question two. What are the mechanisms and causal power (M&CPs) that influence these attitudes and stances?

Question three. What are the possible policy and practice implications for nurturing AEL?

In sections 2 and 3 I discuss findings relating to questions one and two, bringing together insights from my literature review (chapter two), institutional perspectives (chapter four) and the perspectives of ECAs (chapter five). These are summarised in a revised typology (Figure 6.1), and an elaborated conceptual framework (Figure 6.2), which build on the emerging frameworks found in chapters two to five.

In section 4 I address question three. I discuss the implications of my findings for both institutions and academics, contextualise these in an example (Figure 6.3), and present a developed typology of reluctance to lead (Figure 6.4), which draws on my earlier work to provide a practical ('real world') view of the implications of my research.

### 2.0 Attitudes and stances

In this section I focus on research question one. In section 2.1 I consider

evidence which addresses the assumption of academic attitudinal negativity and in section 2.2 I discuss how this is related to academic stances. In section 2.3 I revisit the idea of a typology of reluctance to lead.

## 2.1 Attitudes to AEL

The prevalence of negativity towards AEL emerges early in my study as a 'hunch' based on my personal experience, and it is supported by the research literature (chapter three section 3), in which general sociological theories around workplace cultures indicate a tendency towards negativity. This negativity also relates to attitudes to leadership. Scase and Goffee's (1993) suggestion that workers are increasingly becoming disinterested in management (and by implication in leadership) is borne out in a range of more focused recent research into academic attitudes to AEL (chapter three section 3.2). This research is partially supported by my findings (Chapter five section 3.3). I had considered it was possible that negativity towards AEL might be muted in UoE because of its successful record in relation to education, and its positive institutional attitudes towards promoting and rewarding AEL (Chapter four section 3.1/section 5). However, negativity emerges as a persistent theme amongst both SALs (Chapter four section 6) and ECAs (Chapter five section 4) at UoE. While negativity is certainly significant, my deeper analysis suggests that, amongst ECAs, there is a range of nuanced attitudes towards AEL, that I describe as attitudinal clusters (Figure 5.6). This finding echoes Reybold's (2005 p.107) concept of 'trajectories of disillusionment' in which she argues that the disillusionment process evolves along a 'continuum of expectations, resulting in differential thresholds of faculty dissatisfaction'.

## 2.2 Stances associated with AEL

The dominant academic stances, which are associated with negativity towards AEL, are discussed in my analysis of the research literature (chapter three section 2.4.1). This has revealed that an orthodox view has arisen around the link between workplace negativity and a tendency to avoid taking on additional responsibility. However, my own research supports a more **nuanced view** that there is a continuum of stances, ranging from avoidance through reluctance to acceptance, in how academics position themselves in relation to AEL (Figure 5.8).

To some extent the stances I have identified align with the Archerian typology (Figure 3.2) that I have used in my analysis (Appendix 14), and through which I capture agentic variability (Appendix 15)<sup>223</sup>. In chapter five I argue that, given that the majority of the ECAs I interviewed are identified as meta-reflexive, this is less useful as an approach to differentiating between academic stances than I hoped it would be (section 3.1 below). However, an alternative way of viewing these findings would be to suggest that as meta-reflexives (and therefore agential idealists) it is inevitable that they set themselves up as commentators on leadership, tending to criticise those who aspire to provide it.

Despite this, my analysis suggests that ECA stances are not on the whole characterised by the extremes of avoidance (resistance) or acceptance found in much HE research<sup>224</sup>. Instead, conditionality characterises the stances adopted and I have chosen to adopt the term **reluctance** to describe this. Primarily, this is because I found relatively little evidence in my empirical research of unconditional positive engagement, or of active disengagement, overt subversion (Fanghanel, 2012) or even rebellion (Waring, 2013); the stances which exemplify resistance. In contrast, my research suggests a more nuanced continuum of academic stances, reflecting **different degrees of reluctance**, with resistance tending to be a relatively uncommon stance at one end of the spectrum (see figure 5.9: constructs of avoidance). In support of my view some researchers (e.g. Whitchurch and Gordon, 2010; Pirrie, Adamson, & Humes, 2010) argue that the extreme negativity sometimes implied by the term resistance, is not as widespread in HE as some might suggest. Parker, (2014 p.282), in a personal account of academic responses to unwelcome institutional changes, describes their responses as 'muted dissent'. (Louise) Archer (2008 p.269), in a study of new academics, shows how they negotiate the institutional pressures for 'performativity' by adopting 'protective practices' which ameliorate potential act of resistance.

I see reluctance in my research as a **conciliatory** concept that reflects the agentic and sometimes conflicted 'inner conversations' associated with academic reflexivity (Archer 2007; Appendix 14).

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<sup>223</sup> This also has similarities with O'Byrne's research (2015 p.227) in which she uses Archer's identity formation typology to classify her research participants as adopting strategic, evasive and subversive academic stances.

<sup>224</sup> Chapter three section 2.4.2 focuses on this research.

This is supported by Parker (2014 p.282), who, in a highly personal account of academic responses to unwelcome institutional changes, describes responses as 'muted dissent'.

It is also clear that the participants in my study adapt their stances through time, or in relation to particular situations. In McAlpine and Amundsen's (2016) study, they refer to this flexibly as evidence of both intentionality and resilience amongst early career researchers. This is conceptualised in the term 'chameleon-like qualities' (Garratt & Hammersley-Fletcher, 2009 p.316). I discuss this further in section 3.1 below.

### 2.3 A typology of reluctance

The diverse reluctant stances I identify in my 'theory-building' conversations with ECAs are discussed in detail in chapter five section 6. Broadly these suggest that ECAs are supportive of the idea that reluctance characterises academic stances towards AEL. However, unlike some leadership research where reluctance is seen as single dimension of a more extended typology (chapter three section 3.2.1), my research reveals that reluctance is far from being uni-dimensional. Instead it encompasses **diverse constructs of reluctant stances** as presented in Figure 5.9. In devising this framework I have taken the view that combining an explanatory typology (lower part of diagram) with a descriptive typology (upper part of the diagram) provides some insights into the M&CPs behind the diversity of stances identified by ECAs.

Two important constructs are revealed in this typology, and are pivotal to how reluctance is perceived. The first is the concept of **relative reluctance**. My original ECA participants and the pragmatic common referents (chapter 5 section 7) suggest that AEL is not, in itself, something that they are disinterested in; many see that there are career opportunities related to AEL. However, overwhelmingly they express the view that there are things that they are *more* interested in and these might offer *better* career opportunities<sup>225</sup>. This finding is perhaps not surprising given that my research has revealed that the majority of the original participants are meta-reflexives (Archer, 2003; Appendix 14) and will therefore tend to be agential idealists (Figure 3.2). As Archer

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<sup>225</sup> The idea of relative reluctance is also supported by the views expressed by SALs in chapter four section 6.2.

argues (in the contexts of her quite limited research with early career academics), this means they need to give themselves wholeheartedly to their *ultimate* concerns (i.e. research), but they can be dissatisfied when this means their *other* concerns are not achieved to a high standard as well (see chapter three section 2.4.2).

The second is the related concept of **regretful reluctance**. By this I am referring broadly to the *partial* ambivalence found in the attitudes of academics to AEL summarised in figure 5.9. Again, Archer (2003 p.277) has identified this as a typical meta-reflexive characteristic. Their agentic idealism suggests that they are aware of the enablements and constraints associated with AEL but:

They neither evade them nor seek to circumvent them, but exhibit outward *immunity* towards them. They will try to advance their projects in the face of constraints by resisting their powers, and will pursue them with indifference to whether or not enablements are on their side.

This is supported in my research, which suggests that reluctance (often associated with compliance rather than resistance) characterises academic stances towards AEL. However, I have found that reluctance is tempered by a degree of optimism. Barnett (2014), provides support for this 'regretful reluctance' construct in his CR analysis of the evidence he has found for 'natural pessimism and due optimism'. These, he argues, have a *factual* (realist) component, based on an understanding of structures such as managerialism, and a *values* component, based on academic values of criticality, integrity, authenticity and autonomy.<sup>226</sup> Where pessimism dominates, this is in a context of academics seeing no realistic chance that the present 'shape of things can change'; where optimism dominates, this is found in the 'microspaces' in which academics work as active agents to transform institutional cultures into more congenial environments<sup>227</sup>. However, he argues that 'pessimism seems to have carried the day' (p.302); and this analysis aligns well with my observations. As I have already suggested, a slightly different perspective is provided by Garratt and Hammersley-Fletcher (2009 p.316), where they suggest that academics are 'chameleon like' in the ambivalent stances they adopt in different contexts.

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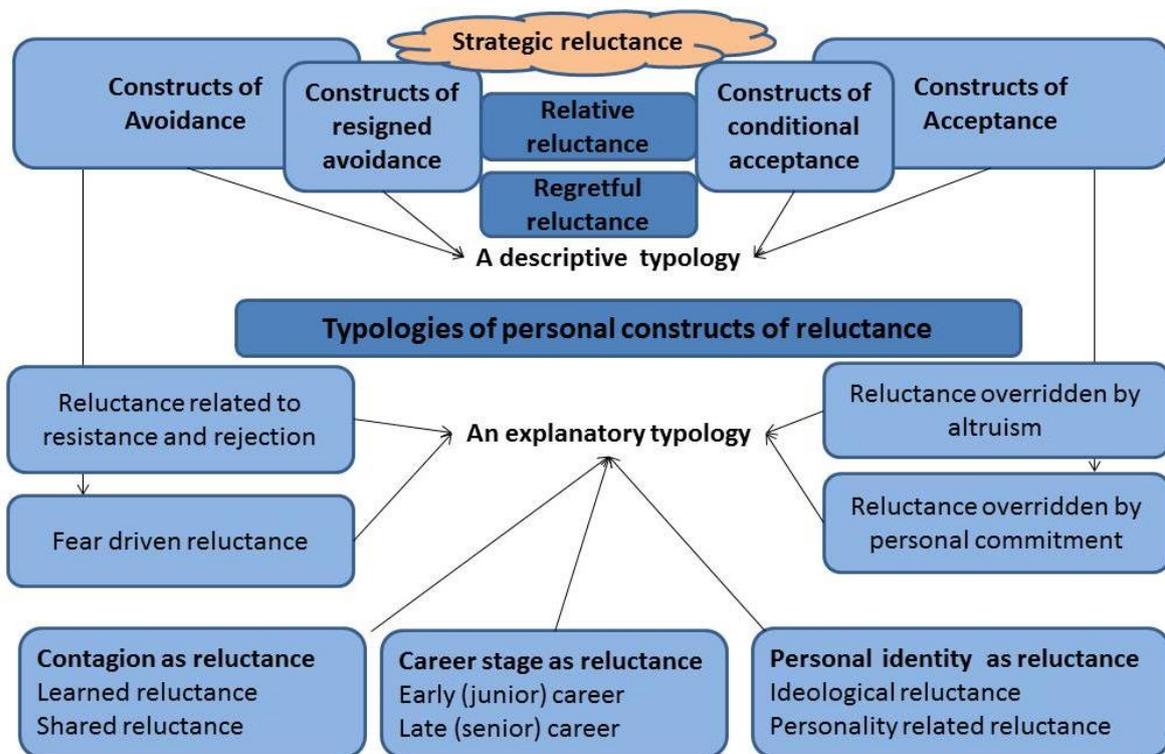
<sup>226</sup> Smyth's recent analysis of 'non-ethical' 'zombie leaders' (cited in Wheeler, 2017 p.46) describes the 'Pathological Organisational Dysfunction' in HEIs as explained by an intrinsic logic framed by neoliberalism.

<sup>227</sup> Barnett (2014, p.302) describes this as 'critical realism with a smile on its face'

Evidence that individuals can be flexible in their stances is found in my research (Chapter five section 3.4), and somewhat counteracts the idea that fixed academic stances are formed early in ECAs' careers.

It is in the context of relational and regretful reluctance that the ECAs I interviewed at UoE make decisions, and it is these which need to be better understood by UoE, in attempting to nurture future AELs. Several ECAs express regret that the structural and cultural conditions within which they are working are not conducive to pursuing an interest in AEL.

**Figure 6.1 Revised typologies of personal constructs of reluctance**  
(Figure 5.9 is adapted here to include strategic reluctance)



This is an important finding in the context of *structural* change. If it is the case that, at least some ECAs, have an inclination to take on AEL roles, but are largely impeded by poorly aligned institutional structures, then there is potential to change their attitudes through structural adjustment (see section 4 below). To the extent that *cultural* conditions influence regretful reluctance, then better understanding of how these conditions arise, are perpetuated and can be ameliorated is important for nurturing future AELs. I am adopting an analytically dualistic approach by suggesting that strategic concerns are important in ECA

responses to AEL. In Archer's analysis of inner conversations, she suggests that strategic behaviour is linked to autonomous individuals. Therefore, this is an interesting and contradictory finding in my research. However, as have made clear (Chapter five section 3.4), most of the ECAs in my study have a combination of autonomous and meta-reflexive characteristics suggesting that this finding is not unexpected.

In my typology of personal constructs of reluctance (Figure 6.1) I have shown that relative and regretful reluctance are individual responses mediated through several M&CPs. I am now suggesting that these constructs reflect both the structural context in which individuals find themselves, and the joint autonomous- meta-reflexive stances through which they respond to those contexts. This leads me to suggest that there is an overarching category of reluctance, which was missing in my original typology (Figure 5.9); I have called this **strategic reluctance** and added it to figure 6.1.

Amongst the many insights that have emerged in this section, I conclude that, although many academics are disillusioned, adopting negative attitudes towards aspects of UoE structures and cultures, my research exposes more nuanced responses than might have been expected from existing research literature. This becomes apparent in the context of my research into AEL<sup>228</sup>, where attitudes relate to a broad spectrum of academic stances which I suggest can be captured in a typology of reluctance (Figure 6.1).

### **3.0 Mechanisms and causal powers**

Here I focus on my second research question though a discussion of the M&CPs I have identified in chapters four (Figure 4.4, 4.5; Appendix 9) and five (section 4 and figure 5.7). I bring these together in an elaborated framework of influences on 'reluctance to lead' (Figure 6.2) which I comment on from the perspective of my personal enquiry paradigm (Figure 2.2)<sup>229</sup>.

#### **3.1 Influential M&CPs: Configurations and stratification**

Through my study I have identified a range of influential M&CPs that underpin attitudes to AEL. These can be stratified into the empirical (perceptions and

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<sup>228</sup> Chapter two section 2.4 focuses on this research in detail.

<sup>229</sup> Appendix 2 presents the key CR principles in more detail.

experiences identified directly from the conversations held with ELs, SALs and ECAs), the actual (the structures, strategies cultural processes observable in UoE practices and described in chapter 4) and the real (the underlying M&CPs, that are not directly observable, but are influences on ECA attitudes to AEL described in chapter 5).

My research does not at first glance suggest that any particular M&CPs are entirely dominant; rather it highlights the interplay between different structural and socio-cultural M&CPs, individual reflexive stances and how, together, they can become important motivating or disrupting forces<sup>230</sup> in the specific contexts (see fig 5.6). I have described this as creating **behavioural-attitudinal dissonance** leading to **defensive routines** of the types identified in the research literature (Figure 3.3). These are evident in the stances adopted by ECAs (but interestingly, also by ELs and SALs).

To exemplify this, while socio-cultural M&CPs (e.g. social esteem/ collegiality ) and personal autonomy emerge as important influences on ECA's attitudes to AEL through my empirical work (Figure 5.7), there is also evidence that these are interrelated with powerful strategic-structural M&CPs operating at the institutional level (Figure 4.4). For example, the evidence I have presented in chapter four suggest that UoE's success has **exacerbated stress**, often disrupted identities (Figure 4.3) and resulted in what Potter (2015) describes as **alienation** from engaging in institutional leadership. My research suggests academics have tended to retreat into **instrumentalism**, by avoiding responsibilities which add to the burden of work, particularly where they do not anticipate clear benefits (Chapter four section 7.1 and figure 4.3). Black's analysis and UoE staff surveys support this assertion. SALs also point to academic dissatisfaction as characteristic of contemporary working life. ELs, while arguing that this is a widespread characteristic of academia generally, accept that negative attitudes towards taking on AEL responsibilities present an institutional challenge. I have found that these perceived benefits take different forms, as is apparent in past studies (discussed in chapter three section 2.3.1).

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<sup>230</sup> Reybold (2005) describes the balance between motivating forces (sources of meaningfulness) and disrupting forces (interruptions to meaningfulness) for individuals.

I have already shown that Archer's analysis (2003, 2007a) suggests how inner conversations and reflexive modes of thinking (Figure 3.2) can be significant agentic influences on attitudes and stances. However, although eight of the ten ECAs I interviewed tended towards meta-reflexivity (Appendices 14 and 15), this has not necessarily led to resistance, subversion or the 'immunity to outside influences' that Archer (2003 p.312) suggests, when she describes her research with academics who she claims 'are moved by what (they) care about, which is ideational, not material'. In my research there is evidence that ECAs *are* aware of organisational structural, social and cultural enablements and constraints and that they are sensitive to these in the context of their careers<sup>231</sup>. This reinforces the point I made above, that in contrast to Archer's meta-reflexive ECAs who she describes as subversives (see figure 3.2), many of my participants have autonomous instincts, tending towards more strategic career-focused stances<sup>232</sup>. Likely explanations for this lie in the collegial influence of other academics (3.2 below) and the individual experiential trajectories of the ten ECAs (3.3 below). However, it is important not to overemphasise the links between stance and reflexive mode. The rich detail found in the ECA interviews (Appendix 15) means that, like Brew, Boud, Lucas, & Crawford (2017, p.387) I 'repudiate essentialist assumptions' and see Archerian modes of reflexivity as no more than a 'useful tool' for reflecting on active agency as it has emerged in my study.

Here, and again in chapter seven (section 3), I clarify how some of these M&CPs are brought together to highlight the importance of '**dissonance**' in my study.

### 3.2 Hierarchical dimensions: Levels and lamination

My research suggests that national (macro), institutional (meso) and local (micro) M&CPs (Figure 4.3) operate hierarchically at UoE, both within and between levels. *Within* levels, an interesting finding has been the evidence of **strategic dissonance** (Chapter four section 4.2.2)<sup>233</sup>. UoE's education and

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<sup>231</sup> This conflicts with Archer's view that the courses of action that meta-reflexives set for themselves are immune to directional guidance from social structures.

<sup>232</sup> I have reflected this conclusion in figure 6.4 where I include a 'strategically driven' stance which does not emerge in my earlier typology (Figure 6.2).

<sup>233</sup> Archer (1988 p.291) describes something similar in discussing the effects of 'systemic malintegration'.

people strategies have been asynchronously developed, leading to a lack of strategic alignment as a potential source of confusion and a contributor to academic reluctance to lead.

*Between* levels at UoE there is also evidence of **hierarchical dissonance**. For example, there is a well understood hierarchical structure of AEL roles which acts as an M&CP in itself, with attitudinal consequences. This can best be described with reference to both downward and upward causation (Elder-Vass, 2012; Figures 4.5 and 5.7). The downward causal effects described by ELs suggest that *devolved* AEL is embedded in the UoE culture; however, these are counteracted by upward effects identifiable in both SAL and ECA cynicism about both the *existence* and the *value* of devolved responsibility for AEL.

An important finding has been the evidence of **stratified dissonance** (lamination) that exists between levels in the articulation of strategic priorities and in the attitudes of SALs as influential actors. They suggest that key elements of institutional strategies relating to AEL are absent, or understated, in college and departmental plans and processes<sup>234</sup>. In addition, SALs have **fragmented identities** in their approaches to institutional priorities when mentoring ECAs. The **altruistic protectionism** demonstrated by many (Chapter four), suggests that, through downward causation, reluctance to lead amongst ECAs has its origin in this process, and that this is a partial explanation for **contagion** (identified in figure 5.9). However, SALs have increasingly been drawn into advocating on behalf of the institution, and the combination of these two mechanisms works like a 'pincher movement' (Gentle & Foreman, 2014 p.5) creating potential confusion for ECAs (Chapter five section 6)<sup>235</sup>. Both these are significant causal powers in relation to ECA reluctance to engage in AEL.

Further evidence of upward causation lies in how ECAs exhibit instrumental, and somewhat disinterested, attitudes towards institutional priorities around AEL. These are formed in a context where, as Clegg (2008) argues, they feel

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<sup>234</sup> The Exeter Award is one important example of a strategy which it is claimed is poorly mirrored in college strategies and processes.

<sup>235</sup> These attitudes adopted by well-established academics are also highlighted in research reported in chapter two section 2.4.3.

that their identities are under threat. This outcome of my research supports Archer's view (2012 p.312) relating to organisational hierarchies in HE, that it is the reputational goods, 'conferred by a diffuse, global constituency in ways that largely defeat instrumental rational strategies', which motivate academics<sup>236</sup>.

### 3.3 Temporal dimensions: Trajectories

Key findings in this study relate to the trajectories identified through my retrospective analysis of both institutional trajectories of change (Figure 4.2), and the way academics position themselves as a result of their personal histories and career trajectories (Figure 5.4 and 5.7).

My understanding of Archer's morphogenetic approach (Archer, 2007b; summarised in figure 2.1), led me to anticipate that structure, culture and agency are ontologically reflexive and would operate sequentially<sup>237</sup>, as different M&CPs are brought into play at different points in time. The iterative nature of this concept seems to be borne out by how **institutional trajectories** are captured by my research; structural M&CPs, which operate at the national and institutional level in times of rapid change, have created socio-cultural conditions that fairly rapidly have an effect on UoE institutional norms and behaviours (Figure 4.2).

However, the effects are not as might have been anticipated (from Archer's morphogenetic trajectory - see figure 2.1) for the way in which academic **personal trajectories** are influenced by this process. My research suggests that my participants are bound by their enduring stable values, which tend to counterbalance structures which are designed to lead to change. This finding tends to undermine Archer's view (1988 p.312) that despite these enduring values:

homo academicus is dead and that what should appear on his death certificate is 'morphogenesis'. He died from the speed of change that precludes hierarchical sclerosis.

In contrast, my research reinforces thinking which confirms the idea of persistent academic stances. Goodson and Sykes, (2001) refer to these as

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<sup>236</sup> Archer identified this trait in her research with academics suggesting that mostly we have 'no vested material interests in our local universities because what keeps us going is neither materially nor institutionally based'.

<sup>237</sup> I explain this in chapter one section 3.3 and develop the idea in chapter two section 4.1.

'prior scripts', which influence people's thinking long after they can be explained by the new realities surrounding them. I discuss the idea that academics cling to collegial discourses at times of rapid change in chapter three (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Macfarlane, 2014).

In an attempt to reconcile these two views Martin (2016), argues that the *slow drip feed* of cultural change creates compliance, which academics may demonstrate towards changing HE cultures; he is surprised at the increasing numbers of academics 'meekly accepting' (p.21) changes in their working conditions. He draws on the 'beguiling metaphor' of the 'boiled frog' to explain how some academics can be 'worn down' by the incremental erosion of their academic values, and accept the unpalatable consequences, something they would never have done if they had been very suddenly 'dropped into' radically changing work conditions.

In my analysis there is evidence of **temporal dissonance**; both **attitudinal morphostasis** and **organisational morphogenesis** occur, suggesting that a wide range of M&CPs have a role to play in particular contexts and for different academics (see figure 6.2). This is similar to the conclusion Archer comes to (1988 p.310) in explaining 'how morphogenesis in one domain undermines morphostasis in the other'.

My research also supports the importance of the idea that ECAs are **emotionally engaged** (McAlpine et al., 2010 p.138), and that while both positive and negative emotions are invoked as they look both backwards and forwards and 'try to intentionally navigate the complex academic world', there is a sense that it is the *intellectual and networking* aspects of their work which is fulfilling, while there is evidence of the *institutional strand* of their career identity trajectories being a site of tension. In my research these emotionally inspired, intellectual and networking contexts tend to reinforce the stability of ECA attitudes and can override the 'rites of passage' (p.149) or **transitions** (such as role changes), that are built into the public face of academic practice and are a dominant theme in career pathways.

The processes I have just described can be seen to lead to a kind of **attitudinal morphostasis** and suggest that, in contradiction to the apparent simplicity of Archer's morphogenetic trajectory (figure 3.1), it is possible to identify **multiple coexisting, rather than sequential, trajectories**; one of morphogenesis relating to high level organisational and structural adjustment and another of morphostasis relating to micro level (social group and individual) socio-cultural stability. The outcome is potentially similar to that expressed by Bolden et al., (2012) in figure 3.4; by re-conceptualising their analysis as a dynamic process rather than as a static condition, it is possible to identify **fractured trajectories** (represented in figure 6.2 below) associated with contemporary academic life, which are potentially an important M&CP; contributing to reluctance to take on AEL responsibilities.

### 3.4 Summary: An elaborated three dimensional framework

In figure 6.2b I present a summary framework drawing on frameworks introduced in chapters two to five (Figure 6.2a). In chapter three (section 4) I introduced research that suggests that institutional **strategic and socio-cultural structures** are anticipated to have a strong influence on academic attitudes; but also that both can be counteracted or reinforced by powerful academic **agentic behaviours and actions**. In my research, Archer's approach (Chapter three section 4.3) has emerged as important; material-structural influences are important, but are supplemented by cultural influences and each is at times both counteracted, and reinforced, by the active agency associated with **agentic reflexivity**. This thinking aligns with Archer's conception of **analytical dualism**.

My evidence also suggests there are diverse ways in which ECAs respond to strategic, social and cultural M&CPs<sup>238</sup>. Alvesson's (1993) concept of **multiple cultural configurations** closely represents my observations. However, my study suggests that configurations go beyond the 'cultural' and are implicated differently at different **levels** (multiple nested contexts) and **through time** (multiple co-existing and fractured trajectories). These three dimensions were first introduced in figures 2.6 and 3.3 and here I return to them in my elaborated

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<sup>238</sup> In chapter two (section 4 I), I describe Archer's emphasis on structural and agentic interplay as a challengeable idea. The balance between structure and agency is key; but this varies between levels, between organisations, within organisations and between individuals and, even, within one individual's responses at different times and in different situations.

three dimensional framework. To reflect these observations I have chosen to use the term **multiple complex configurations** and refer to this later as 'Alvesson +'.

In chapters four and five I identify and summarise (in frameworks A-F) some **deep** M&CPs which are important for understanding the attitudes and stances of ECAs (but also SALs and ELs) at UoE. The six frameworks can be conceptualised as embedded in my elaborated framework which captures **high level** M&CPs. In figure 6.2a I have portrayed this visually. The interaction between the six frameworks (which are now seen as constituent parts of the elaborated framework) can be viewed as representing an open and emergent system which captures the complexity of the UoE agentic, cultural and structural environment<sup>239</sup>, and which illuminates the influences these have on academic attitudes and stances towards AEL. Key to these perspectives is the wide range of constraints and enablements, some congenial and some recalcitrant, (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014), which influence the diverse attitudes and stances and are captured in frameworks A to F.

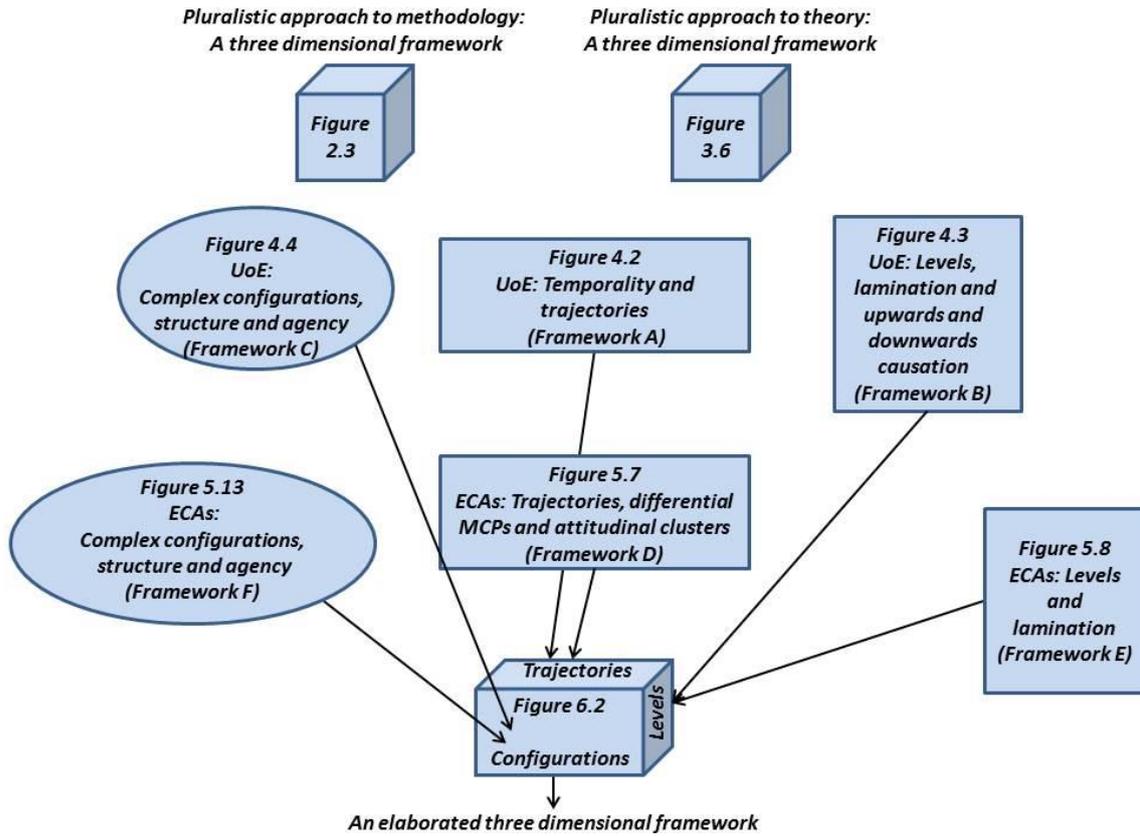
My approach is supported by Delbridge and Edwards' research (2013 p.927) in which they use Archer's dualist approach to 'refine existing explanations of how actors inhabit complex institutional settings'. They argue that this type of empirical work highlights 'the complexity of explaining actions and structures in organizational fields, particularly where there are multiple logics in play' (p.929). In much the same way as I have done in my analysis, they use an elaborated framework to highlight deep M&CPs at work at various levels and various times in one organization.

I need to make it very clear that my elaborated framework has neither 'the rigour of a theory or the simplicity of a model' (Hoyle & Wallace 2005 p.8), but it does offer insights or 'profitable perspectives' (p.7) on M&CPs relating to AEL and ELD in UoE.

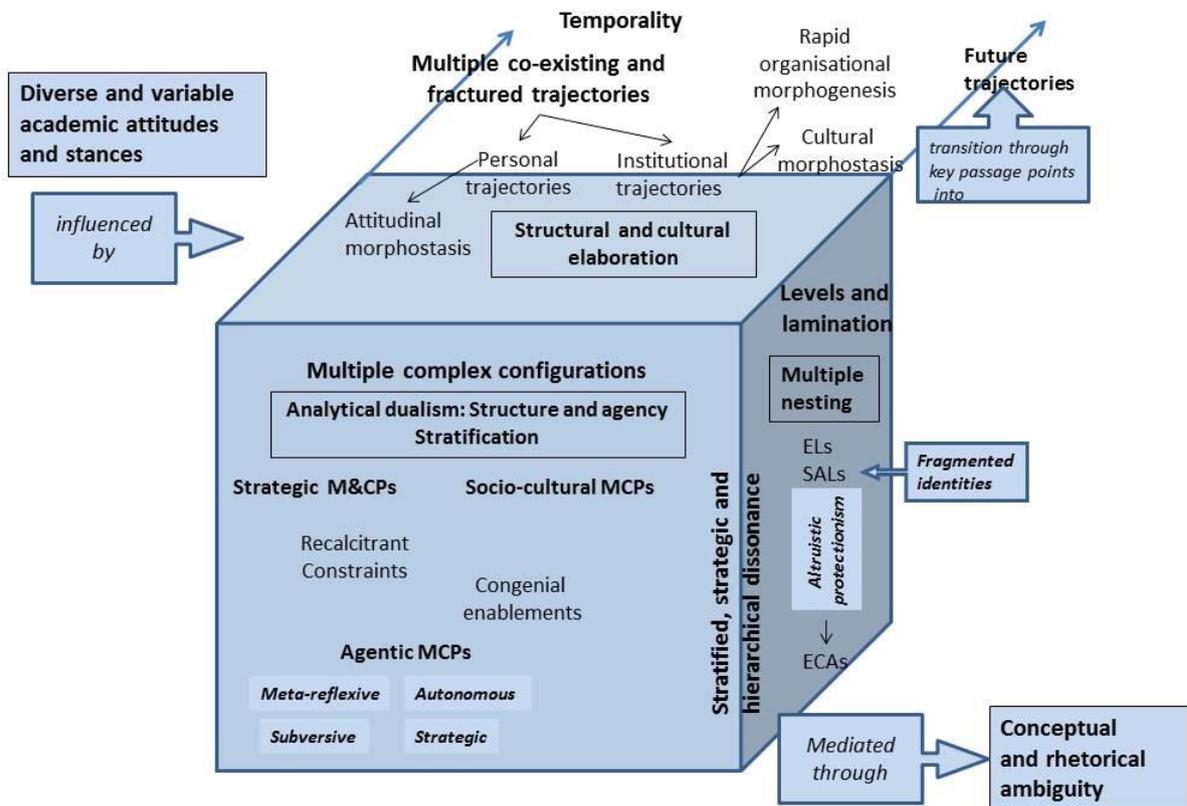
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<sup>239</sup> See my discussion of how Flinn & Mowles (2014) characterise complexity in chapter three (section 5).

**Figure 6.2a Summary diagram: Frameworks A to F**



**Figure 6.2b Elaborated three dimensional framework**



One further outcome of my research is the variable extent to which structures, strategies and processes are made explicit at UoE. As Åkerlind and McAlpine (2010 p156) suggest, it appears that there are 'privileged and neglected aspects of academic practice', and how these play out in UoE is important for understanding how attitudes towards AEL may form. To discuss the impact of this, two further M&CPs have been added to my analysis (as indicated in the bottom right hand corner of figure 6.2b). Together they characterise the modes of representational discourse associated with AEL, and through which other M&CPs are mediated. While my study has not been theorised in the context of discourse analysis, I discuss the importance of these influences briefly in sections 3.5 and 3.6.

### 3.5 Conceptual ambiguity

In chapter 1 (section 1.2) I discussed how understandings of management, administration and leadership can be contested, conflicted and ambiguous (Bolden et al. 2013), and are not always self-evident even to those working in HEIs (Bolden et al. 2012). This study has revealed aspects of this to be true at UoE.

This is exemplified both by the lack of clarity around how AEL is described and reflected in institutional strategies (Chapter four section 4.2) and by evidence of how SALs' (Chapter four section 6.2.2) and ECAs' (Chapter five figure 5) conceptions of AEL often vary as a result. While these may be influenced by how cultural and structural realities are perceived, it is also a feature of my research that priorities around AEL seem to be consistently understated. In chapter four section 7.4 I refer to this as the rhetoric of **understated priorities**, leaving room for academics to doubt institutional intentions.

One outcome of this ambiguity is that my research suggests that many academics take the view that leadership and management are conflated<sup>240</sup>, and both can be overwhelmed by administrative responsibilities. In my research, this emerges as an influence on ECA attitudes and stances towards AEL. The

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<sup>240</sup> These findings conflict with the views expressed in figures 3.4/3.5 where Bolden et al. (2012) suggest that academic leadership and academic management have diverged and that in contemporary HEIs a 'wedge' has been driven between academic leadership and management. This drives academic leaders 'underground' and creates a separate cadre of academic managers.

perception of **conflation** leads to a general sense that AEL is ‘unpalatable’ work and that it does not create conditions conducive to career advancement (chapter five section 3.3).

### 3.6 Rhetorical devices

Throughout my research attitudes are expressed about AEL that are both underpinned by, and influenced by, forms of rhetoric<sup>241</sup>. In this context, I am referring to rhetoric which is apparent in the written discourse identifiable in institutional policy, and the persuasive spoken rhetoric often attributed to ELs although it can also be found in the discourse of SALs and ECAs.

This is partially exemplified and discussed in chapter four (section 7.4) where I counterpoise **consensual rhetoric** with **oppositional rhetoric**. I identify these as coexisting within institutional conceptions of AEL at UoE. Here, I focus on the twin lenses of rhetoric and reality<sup>242</sup> in relation to AEL.

The personal accounts of academics in my study suggest that there is a mismatch between institutional rhetoric around AEL and their lived experiences, which they see as a kind of **empty rhetoric**. As Corrigan (2013 p.70) suggests, there are dangers when institutions deliberately employ rhetorical statements to articulate ‘powerful and visionary’ thinking in contexts such as HEIs. These may ‘play well to public opinion’ but are less likely to be acceptable to academics who may ‘see through’ these practices.

My research has tentatively shown that, when UoE leaders and strategies use rhetorical language this can result in cynicism about AEL amongst academics (Chapter four section 6.2.1), and lead to reluctance to engage amongst ECAs (Chapter 5 section 6.0). I describe this conclusion as tentative because investigating rhetoric and reality has not been central to my research. Instead it has emerged gradually as a potentially significant M&CP. I have some concerns about using the twin viewpoints of rhetoric and reality as an oversimplified straightjacket to report what I have identified. Given that this may carry with it

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<sup>241</sup> Other researchers have also identified rhetoric as an influential M&CP in relating to academic attitudes (Churchman & King, 2009; Inman, 2014; Juntrasook, 2014).

<sup>242</sup> These terms are typically used in conjunction with each other to indicate a disjuncture (Hoyle & Wallace 2005; Knight & Trowler 2001) or dissonance between high level aspirations or statements of intent about EL and the ‘reality’ of personal experiences.

value judgements which, as Macfarlane (2015)<sup>243</sup> argues, can become a moralistic stance (something I would wish to avoid as a researcher), I do not wish to overemphasise the significance of rhetoric in this study. However, in combination with conceptual ambiguity, I believe it is significant enough to be incorporated as an M&CPs in figure 6.2.

In conclusion, it is apparent from figure 6.2 and my related discussion, that UoE as an organisation is characterised by open and emergent systems in which the complex interplay of M&CPs creates what Flinn and Mowles (2014) describe as conditions of ‘stable instability’ within which ECAs (and probably most academics) form their attitudes and stances and chart their careers.

### 3.7 Conclusion

My study has involved ‘confirming work’. It supports research relating to conflationary tendencies (reported in chapter three) that academics have fairly uniform negative views about AEL and why this occurs. However, it also introduces some ‘disconfirming’ evidence of diversity that challenges orthodox views (Chapter three section 2.4).

I have identified some less well recognised M&CPs; these bring me closer to understanding why ECAs adopt particular attitudes and stances, and how these can become linked to reluctance to engage in AEL. I have argued that my research at UoE aligns with the wider thinking that cultural configurations are complex and multifaceted (Alvesson, 1993) and that these configurations can lead to **attitudinal morphostasis** – sustaining the existence of traditions, attitudes and behaviours which help explain why many ECAs choose to avoid AEL career trajectories.

My research also highlights the importance of **diversity** as a key mechanism in itself, and how this is reflected in the nuanced attitudes and stances of ECAs<sup>244</sup>. In the next section I discuss the implications of all these observations for UoE and how these may translate into concrete actions for nurturing AELs.

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<sup>243</sup> Macfarlane (2015) suggests that this kind of dualist thinking can at times serve as a useful, simple descriptive or classificatory framework but that the evidential base (p.101) for this kind of dualist thinking seldom ‘survives critical examination’ and can ‘have a distorting effect on the design of research and broader understanding’.

<sup>244</sup> Maxwell (2012 chapter four) describes diversity as one of the most important mechanisms emerging from most contextualised and case study CR research (see figure 2.5).

#### 4.0 Implications, advice and guidance for nurturing practice

In this section I focus on my third research question and consider the practical (real world) implications for UoE of my research. This section also invokes the two principles of pragmatism: *reflexive realism* and *an ontology of the future* (Chapter two section 3.1). In considering what 'ought to happen' and 'what might be' my work takes a 'normative turn'. In my prologue I suggest that my study aims to look for 'solutions'. Implicit in this is the assumption that there are ways of building leadership capacity which might be accessible to institutions if only there was better understanding of what might pass for academics as 'good practice'. There are dangers of overgeneralisation and my suggestions are tied closely to the observations in my empirical chapters.

The contrast between the institutional perspective (Chapter four) and the ECA perspective (Chapter five) presents me with a challenge. Institutional attitudes (Chapter four section 4.2.2) suggest an implicit expectation of conformity to a central standard and approach, while academic attitudes (Chapter four section 6 and chapter five section 8) explicitly favour creating shared understandings within a context of caring relationships. In an attempt to bring these together and in making suggestions I draw on my own *experience* (see my prologue) in addition to my research findings<sup>245</sup>. I suggest that the combination provides useful insights for UoE and potentially for other HEIs. Including an experiential gaze aligns well with my claim (Chapter three section 3.2) that a pragmatic approach to methodology is appropriate in real world research, where one aim is to 'reconstitute the present in order to contribute to a transformed future' (Rosiek, 2013 p.699).

In order to encourage and nurture future AELs my research suggests a number of cultural and structural M&CPs need to be addressed, and an uplift of resources is required. However, this is not a simple process. The diversity of attitudes and the prevalence of strategic, structural and attitudinal dissonance create somewhat toxic conditions, in which nurturing AEL requires a multiplicity of strategies. In particular, it requires an **integrated approach**, which goes well beyond revising top down development programmes favoured by many HEIs,

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<sup>245</sup> Here my analysis moves into the realms of more 'lovely' research (Lipton, 2004). I discuss the strengths and limitations of this kind of 'risk taking' in chapter seven section 6.3.

and usually led by central professional units. These are often perceived unfavourably by academics as a kind of **social engineering** or **cultural conditioning** (Marshall et al., 2011).

#### 4.1 Some preliminary considerations

I have reported in my research that AEL has emerged as a broad concept; chapters four and five show that academics have different perceptions and belong to a range of norm circles (represented in this study by ELs, SALs and ECAs) whose views vary. It is also evident from my research, firstly, that not all academics will want to take on AEL roles; there are diverse career trajectories (Figure 5.4) and opportunities for academics and AEL is not attractive at all points in their careers. Secondly, not all academics make, or might make, good AELs – both motivation and inherent characteristics come into play here<sup>246</sup>. As Barcan (2017) argues, if academics have become demotivated about AEL, then *re-motivation* and a rebalancing of attitudes is key to nurturing academics. Thirdly, where the evidence suggest that academics have never been motivated in the first place (as with some of my ECAs), then this presents different challenges. Finally, UoE does not *need* large numbers of AELs beyond the level of module leader. It would in fact be difficult to accommodate all academics in these roles (Chapter 4 section 4.2.2); identifying and nurturing *enough* AELs is a sufficient strategy.

Consequently, I am accepting the implications of my earlier analysis that there are good reasons why many (if not most) academics will be reluctant to take on AEL roles and I am particularly focusing on how institutions can inspire and nurture *some* academics to become AELs. Potentially these are those who are least reluctant to engage for various reasons (see ‘zone of maximum nurturing effectiveness’ in figure 6.4). In sections 4.2 to 4.7 I focus on six approaches UoE might adopt to nurture AEL. In section 4.8 I suggest how integrating some of these approaches might possibly be one way forward. I illustrate this in a retrospective analysis of one initiative introduced five years ago.

#### 4.2 Addressing ambiguity and rhetoric

I have suggested that there is a need to communicate meanings more clearly

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<sup>246</sup> Akerlind (2010 p.47) discusses the idea that there is an ‘implicit assumption’ that academics all have the same basic perception and the same motivations for being an academic; something she argues is not the case.

(3.5 above). Firstly, this involves clarifying what AEL means in different contexts. My research has shown that even UoE's most senior leaders can be unclear about what AEL means; and ECAs have a very limited understanding of AEL (Figure 5.5). Describing AEL activities and roles centrally (for example, in the Exeter Academic), does not appear to provide clarity and there is very little national guidance which helps<sup>247</sup>. HR strategies are poorly internalised by SALs and ECAs, and many do not recognise the leadership language used in the context of local departmental structures. Accessible and local interpretations of the meanings of AEL are potentially useful but none was identified in my research.

Secondly, being realistic about the fact that AEL roles at UoE include significant administration and management responsibilities would reduce academic cynicism about institutional rhetoric (3.6 above) For example, it might be expected that past post-holders would provide accurate and realistic information about the role and time commitments to new post-holders (Chapter four section 6.2.2). This information could also be used to construct appropriate and contextual workload allocations (see section 4.4 below), and would provide evidence for negotiations with managers about allocating sufficient administrative support.

#### 4.3 Addressing embedded cultural norms: cultural reconciliation

The need to address deep cultural M&CPs associated with perceptions of collegial (and self) esteem is one of the most important implications of my research<sup>248</sup>. I suggest that this might be described as **cultural reconciliation**. Paradoxically, this can be addressed through *structural* adaptations. One example (Chapter four section 6.2.2) is the way in which established college promotion panels interpret the criteria associated with AEL. Small shifts in panel membership, a rebalancing of the profiles of external reviewers (for senior promotions) and greater transparency about how criteria are applied (e.g. in panel minutes or feedback to applicants) could bring about behavioural change,

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<sup>247</sup> Some help might have been expected to come from the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff national role profiles (2004) but leadership is incorporated into management in these until it reaches the higher levels (and this is not relevant for ECAs) <http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/empres/paynegs/jnches-agree/>.

<sup>248</sup> Barnett (2014), whose ideas about pessimism and optimism I introduce in section 2.3, argues that for optimism to 'win the day' (p302) it needs to be put to work 'against the severest criteria of feasibility, value, principles and deep realism' (p.303). These, I suggest, are characteristics of cultural reconciliation.

which could enhance the perceived status of AEL amongst ECAs.

In general, however, addressing cultural M&CPs is challenging. Here I draw on a detailed example from my research to illustrate the challenges. My research has shown that ECAs are likely to become reluctant to lead as a result of mentoring and guidance they receive from SALs. My evidence (Chapter four section 6.2.3) points to the well-meaning **altruistic protectionism** that lies behind how SALs mentor junior colleagues. This, in turn, has become central to how ECAs articulate their reluctance to lead, influenced by the **processes of contagion** (Figures 5.9 and 6.1). It reflects how they have learnt, and come to share, senior colleagues' attitudes about AEL. This supports to some extent the view (Bolden et al., 2012, p.10) that many academics have the intellectual, cultural and social capital to 'turn managerial practices to their own ends'. This did seem to be the case for ECAs in this study. Most do not see AEL roles as providing them with additional autonomy either to act or to lead; in fact there was evidence in Black's work (2015) to the contrary, suggesting that ECAs tend to develop compliant attitudes (Chapter four section 3.2) from an early stage in their careers<sup>1</sup>.

All this suggests strategies need to involve understanding, and addressing academic cultures which are perpetuated in the 'resigned compliance' of SALs (Figure 4.3). Somewhat paradoxically this means that ECAs, who *favour* being nurtured by departmental leaders (Figure 5.12) may find they are offered institutionally-led developmental opportunities that have been designed to *reduce* local contact (a type of reverse protectionism) and *minimise* the negative impact (from the institutional viewpoint) of SALs on ECA attitudes<sup>249</sup>. Apart from the fact that this is probably not a strategy which would enjoy widespread success (it could have the opposite effect), I use it to illustrate the complexity of the problem from an institutional perspective. To address the impact of cyclical and persistent behaviours and cultures (attitudinal morphostasis) requires more than the occasional intervention of this kind; rather it requires some sustained reconciliatory strategies at various levels in the institution. These would have to be approached with great sensitivity and with the widespread support of the

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<sup>249</sup> In one SAL interview I was told that a new head of department was deliberately preventing senior professors from engaging with new ECAs in departmental meetings.

academic community. There is evidence in Black's analysis (2015) that the time it might take to 'turn around' attitudes (Chapter four section 3.2) would probably be poorly tolerated by UoE as an institution.

I have identified two examples of how difficult it is to address cultural **dissonance** between institutional, departmental and academic attitudes in relation to AEL. Interestingly this stands in contrast to the (many) synergies between institutional, departmental and academics attitudes relating to *research leadership*. The primacy given to research at UoE has been echoed in the response of academic departments and individuals; M&CPs create cultural alignment as they readily 'cascade' through levels (Chapter four section 3.2)<sup>250</sup>. Introducing cultural mechanisms for enhancing the esteem of AEL which mirror those found in research contexts<sup>251</sup> might lead to **cultural reconciliation** which would enhance its attractiveness.

#### 4.4 Addressing strategic and structural constraints: strategic realignment

UoE senior managers have tended to assume that strategic interventions such as revised promotion policies and reward structures (Chapter four section 4.2.2) will act directly as academic motivators and be quickly reflected in attitudes to AEL. My research has suggested that ECA responsiveness is variable and less predictable (Chapter five section 6). At UoE the experience of **strategic and structural dissonance** has been a constraining factor, as the example of asynchronicity between education and HR strategies has illustrated (Chapter four section 7.1). Well aligned strategies and a clearer (less rhetorical) commitment to demonstrating unambiguously how implementation impacts on local practices and processes is important in nurturing AEL.

As a further example, the differentiation between E&R and E&S job families<sup>252</sup> has been, and remains, a potential structural issue for UoE as it attempts to raise the profile of AEL. ELs are aware of this, but it has yet to be addressed<sup>253</sup>.

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<sup>250</sup> In contrast, Black suggests that where rapidly introduced structural interventions in research management occur this can also engender extreme resistance (Chapter four section 3.2).

<sup>251</sup> As an example, I refer to my attempts to introduce an 'inspiring leaders' initiative in my prologue.

<sup>252</sup> UoE also has research-only academics (such as Deidre) for whom AEL is not an issue.

<sup>253</sup> See EL interviews in chapter four section 5.2.3 where in 2013 this was described as a priority but in 2017 it is described as 'not a current priority'.

As a strategic device to enable REF criteria to be maximised, maintaining the two families may be effective (and will be more so when the outcomes of the Stern review<sup>254</sup> are implemented). Paradoxically, this is an area in which UoE has introduced changes. Clear and challenging AEL descriptors are integrated into E&R promotion criteria in the Exeter Academic (Appendix 4 boxes 11-13), and yet ECAs in my study were, on the whole, not aware of these and were relatively dismissive of them when made aware. Academics continue to describe the job family divide as a cause of reluctance to show an interest in AEL and they suggest that the Exeter Academic has not (yet) had the 'desired' impact. Ironically, one factor which may delay the *integration* of job families (something which is often described by E&S staff as desirable) is that it is E&S academics who tend to become mid-career AELs. This was the case in my study, where those with positive attitudes to AEL, and who were already in AEL roles (Figure 5.5), had all been, or were, E&S staff. Reassigning them to E&R roles might be desirable for individuals; however, for the institution there is a risk that UoE loses potentially enthusiastic and capable future AELs.

Finally a key structural intervention, which would enhance ECA interest in AEL, is a revision of workload models<sup>255</sup>. At the most obvious level this could simply involve a reworking of the workload allocation associated with particular AEL roles. However, a deeper M&CP (mentioned by ECAs and SALs) involves the perception that taking on AEL roles impacts on research career trajectories. This implies that 'protected time' while undertaking AEL roles and 'catch up time' when the roles are relinquished are vital (Appendix 8) and would help ameliorate the fear-driven reluctance ECAs identify (Figure 5.9).

#### 4.5 Addressing an uplift of resources

My research suggests an uplift of resources could prove particularly effective in inspiring AELs; however, not necessarily *directly* through enhanced salaries (although this would be well received), but through improved role-related 'packages' (Appendix 8). For example if resources were channelled into increased levels of administrative and management support for those in leadership roles this would have a positive effect. This is not to negate the need

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<sup>254</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-excellence-framework-review>

<sup>255</sup> In chapter four section 6.2.2 the majority of the SALs interviewed saw the workload allocation as a key constraint on leading to reluctance to lead amongst all academics.

for additional resources to be used for correcting what one SAL described as ‘**asymmetrical promotion prospects**’ (chapter four section 6.2.2); funds to support personal promotion and rewards *are* required but these have been shown (Peters and Ryan, 2015) to be relatively poor motivators. I have shown that the Exeter Academic already does this through its promotion criteria (Chapter four section 4.2.2) but this has not yet had a significant impact.

#### 4.6 Addressing sensitivities about academic career trajectories

As I have already argued, my research suggests that many ECAs are *relatively* and often *regretfully* reluctant to engage in AEL (chapter five sections 6.6/6.7) . There are two contexts in which these insights might be incorporated into an institutional approach to motivating ECAs.

Firstly, defensive stances are almost inevitable at particularly sensitive points in an academic’s career (Figure 5.9). I have found that ECAs do take on AEL responsibilities but at critical career points they are reluctant to accept additional responsibilities<sup>256</sup>. The experience of several of my interviewees has been that they have been ‘forced’ into AEL roles at times when their (research) careers (and sometimes their personal lives) make this unsustainable (chapter five section 4.1.2). However, ‘critical turning points’ in careers can influence these attitudes and, through supportive mentoring and individual self-reflection, some ECAs become positive about taking on AEL roles. This support is sometimes provided by late career academics as I report in Appendix 8. My experience suggests that an ELD approach which UoE should encourage involves small scale responsibilities and incremental approaches located in a supportive disciplinary context and starting early in ECA careers<sup>257</sup>.

The second occurs in situations when institutional (and sometimes national) transformations in high level policy create ‘congenial’ conditions which enhance the status of AEL, making related career opportunities more attractive. Significant shifts in attitudes are created when institutions are quick to ‘catch the moment’. At UoE evidence exists that through adroit leadership this has been achieved in the past (Figure 4.3). However as Black argues, for at least two

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<sup>256</sup> Acker & Haque (2010 p.101) introduce the idea that being overly exposed to teaching responsibilities at an early stage can create negativity amongst academics recruited into RIUs.

<sup>257</sup> My report (Appendix 8) suggests that introducing ‘deputies’ for many departmental AEL roles is a good example of how this strategy can work.

decades these opportunities have been weighted in favour of research leadership (seen as reputationally enhancing), and against AEL (seen as reputationally damaging).

It could be argued, however, that the balance is changing. In the recent past the publication of national league tables based on NSS scores has impacted on the range of roles created for AELs. However, the best current example (2017) of this relates to the significant impact that the 'disciplinary level TEF' may have in the near future<sup>258</sup>. Exactly how this might reflect in the resources allocated and the esteem attributable to AEL at UoE is not clear, but nationally there is evidence of a recent increase in career opportunities relating to AEL<sup>259</sup> which, in turn, may influence academic attitudes towards future AEL career trajectories.

#### **4.7 Re-orientating education leadership development (ELD)**

Institutions have traditionally set up targeted and centrally provided ELD programmes to incentivise and nurture AEL (Chapter three section 4.1.3). These programmes and processes are examples of institutional structural 'devices', which *may* be successful at achieving their aims when theoretically-informed and sensitively targeted combinations of central and local initiatives are introduced (Lovasz, Dolnicar, & Vialle, 2014). However, these are not always successful.

My research has shown that UoE offers generic leadership training and has more recently enhanced this offering with more targeted AEL support, for example for programme leaders (chapter four section 4.2.2). However, both SALs and ECAs suggest that these centralised initiatives are often out of alignment with academic preferences and ideologies (see chapter 5 section 6.4). Figure 5.12 summarises the preferred ELD strategies mentioned by ECAs and indicates the dissonance between their preferences and the structures they have encountered. It is clear that for these academics many AEL programmes are viewed as unacceptable social engineering (Marshall et al., 2011).

Addressing this mismatch is not as simple as might be anticipated. My

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<sup>258</sup> Given how recent this initiative is and how it comes right at the end of my research, I have left the discussion of its potential impact to my epilogue.

<sup>259</sup> This is visible in online advertisements in the THE, SEDA and NTFS websites.

discussions with ELs (chapter four section 5.2.3) suggest that ELD providers are aware of these preferences but believe that they face four constraints: They are personally accountable for delivering on this agenda which is vested in their managerial responsibilities; their resources are limited; attempts to draw in academic units to take on ELD responsibilities can be met with resistance as they are low priority for departments and finally, the need to ensure quality and equity of provision across the institution is a factor. Interestingly, however, there are also examples where disciplines/departments express a preference for taking on responsibility for leadership development with the specific (and potentially cynical) intention of circumventing central initiatives, rather than from a genuine desire to engage.

Despite this, I have found that there are ELD approaches which are more likely to trigger transformative stances and these tend to be those which will, as de Souza (2013 p.146) suggests, 'reconfigure or differently activate the underlying causal mechanisms situated within pre-existing social structures'. These are likely to be highly integrated approaches to ELD.

#### 4.8 Integrated approaches

Here I argue that my research and my professional experience indicate that strategies for nurturing that involve **doing different things** (e.g. those which meet most of the criteria described by SALs and ECAs and summarised in figure 5.12) are needed in order to address ECA attitudes to AEL. Harris and Nolan's study (2014 p.33) shows how difficult it is for ECAs to find and be given opportunities to get involved in AEL initiatives where genuine leadership skills are developed. They advocate educational project management, involving '(the) ability to influence others and team building skills for maintaining long-term cohesion, direction and loyalty'. Globally, strategies to address these sorts of issues are starting to emerge and I have mentioned some of them in chapter three section 4.1.3.

Amongst the initiatives introduced at UoE in recent years only two have been designed with the explicit intention of nurturing and motivating future AELs<sup>260</sup>. In this section I introduce, and critically evaluate, the second; a practical initiative

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<sup>260</sup> The first was referred to in my prologue as 'inspiring leadership', an initiative which suffered from 'being 'turned' for strategic purposes, and I do not intend to reflect further on this.

developed across UoE and embedded in the current education strategy<sup>261</sup>. I am suggesting that this initiative illustrates how it *could* be possible to create and sustain attitudinal transformation in relation to learning to be an AEL.

Grand Challenges [GC] is a curriculum initiative which is in its fifth year at UoE. This initiative is co-ordinated centrally by a professional team<sup>262</sup> with responsibility for recruiting challenge leaders; setting up the learning environment; recruiting students; room allocations; timetabling and arranging a final celebratory ceremony. It is led and operationalised by highly respected senior academics, with international research profiles, working with ECAs and research students to devise stimulating learning activities focussed on global problems (Burkill, 2013, 2015).

GC's primary pedagogic objectives relate to research-informed interdisciplinary teaching and learning, student skill development and employability. However, a further objective relates to ELD for ECAs; this is predicated on the belief that involved ECAs develop enthusiasm, confidence and skills, but also self and collegial esteem relating to AEL. This occurs in a contingent and contextualised environment (chapter three section 4.1.3), working on a research-related project to which they are highly committed.

In retrospect, it has proved possible to show how four sets of M&CPs are implicated through this initiative - the structural, cultural, agentic and, taking a lead from de Souza (2013), the relational.

**Figure 6.3 Nurturing AEL through the GC integrated approach**<sup>263</sup>

M&CPs	Key characteristics (drawn from this chapter (sections 4.2 – 4.6) and figure 5.12)	Ways in which GC creates a positive nurturing environment
Structural	Moving responsibility for ELD away from the centre	The preference ECAs show for informal localised, contextualised and contingent development is addressed as AEL is practiced in the GC academic environment.

<sup>261</sup> See Appendix 4 (box 5).

<sup>262</sup> <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/grandchallenges/>

<sup>263</sup> Existing project and published personal evaluative research (Burkill, 2015) into the impact of GC on ECA motivations is drawn on heavily in figure 6.3.

	Clarity of role definition and link to strategy priorities (strategic realignment)	<p>The ambiguity around AEL which emerges through my research is addressed through clearly defined leadership roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>These are defined as being ‘deputy leader’ roles providing the small steps to leadership described above (4.6). Possibly more important to ECAs, it is made clear that these are intensive but temporary roles from which they will be able to return to their substantive academic work within a few weeks.</p>
	Additional resource availability	Additional financial resources and the availability of administrative support reduce the pressures often associated with AEL leadership. While no assurance of personal reward or recognition follows involvement in GC, workload allocations have been negotiated over time to cover GC commitments.
Cultural	<p>Working closely with other respected academic mentors from across the university.</p> <p>Meeting with and learning from respected external experts</p> <p>Contributes to cultural reconciliation.</p>	<p>The emphasis on learning from colleagues and experts within a context which reflects ECAs’ own cultural values’ and which they perceive adds value to their credibility amongst influential SALs’ is an important motivational feature of GC.</p> <p>Importantly this also reduces the possibility of SALs adopting altruistic protectionist stances, and, in turn, reduces the possibility of ECAs developing ‘contagious reluctance’.</p>
Agentic	<p>Autonomous activity</p> <p>Flexible and self managed learning</p> <p>Curriculum flexibility</p>	<p>These are all features of GC which potentially create a sense of empowerment and raised self esteem.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that this freedom can also be overwhelming and have the opposite effect for ECAs who lack confidence or are poorly supported by senior colleagues.</p>
	Recognising and respecting individual diversity	Respecting ECA preferences, often <i>not</i> to take on GC roles, and that many will invoke personal and professional commitments (4.1 above) to avoid GC roles has been important. While, some SALs and ELs may <i>encourage</i> ECAs to get involved in GC, for both institutional

		and individual career related reasons, no stigma has been attached to those who resist. As I have suggested, SALs and ELs may dissuade ECAS from involvement, motivated by altruistic protectionism (or sometimes more self-serving reasons).
Relational	Alignment between the three previous mechanisms.	The recognition of the need to align deep structural, cultural and agentic mechanisms which underpins this initiative should be an enabler. More evaluation is needed to confirm this.
	Alignment between institutional goals and individual or personal goals.	The number of ECAs who have taken part in GC over several years is an indicator that this is motivating activity and, more instrumentally, may be viewed as useful career related development.

This is not the place to evaluate the overall success of the GC scheme; rather, it has been my intention to demonstrate that designing initiatives, with a research-informed understanding of their potential to have impact, may be one way forward for UoE. The design of GC has activated understand of how M&CPs, such as the ones identified through my study, can be reflected in practical ‘interventions’(Pawson, 2006) which could enhance ECA motivation to engage in AEL.

Inevitably this process takes time. It requires several cycles of structural and cultural elaboration, and institutional acceptance that additional resource is required over a sustained period. Without these, the scheme may remain a minority activity for both students and staff. However, perhaps this misses the point. If the aim is to nurture a small, creative and highly motivated group of future AELs then *scale* is not an issue; the freedom to be creative, and to lead without concerns for burdensome quality processes, are much more important.

There are two other features of GC which suggest that it may provide useful insights into nurturing AELs from early in their careers. Firstly, **temporality** is important. The process of morphogenesis, through which this initiative has been sustained, has relied on empowering ECAs to critically reflect on the outcomes

of one year's programme, and then redesign aspects of GC for subsequent cohorts. For ambitious ECAs, opportunities of this kind allow them to prove their leadership capabilities in one context and move on to apply them in another. This is something they do not find easy to achieve in formal, and more traditional, AEL contexts<sup>264</sup>.

Secondly, it is sometimes necessary for institutional cultures (and individuals) to experience **disruptive and discomfoting learning experiences** to invoke sustained changes in attitudinal norms. GC was difficult to launch; there was considerable opposition from professional and academic staff, largely because the changes I have described involved significant cultural and structural upheaval.<sup>265</sup> For some this resistance remains. The project has experienced several uncertain years but now appears to be stable and is identified as an important element of the UoE education strategy. Data collected to evaluate the overall success of GC (Burkill, 2015) indicates that most students and academics have had positive experiences and that the (small number of) ECAs involved do generally see GC as a developmental and career enhancing opportunity.

There is little formal evidence that the GC experience has contributed widely, either to changing academic attitudes, or to reconciling cultural differences around AEL at anything other than an individual level. However, in my experience GC represents a small, high impact initiative of the kind that my research suggests might make a difference to how ECAs view AEL and ELD. In my published research (Burkill, 2015), I describe how ECAs report finding themselves interacting with different communities and groups which transcend the boundaries and hierarchies which underpin their normal lives. Undertaking an informal leadership role in these contexts involved them in developing new skills and defining themselves in terms of a 'shared social identity', something Haslam et al. (2011) call 'a social identity approach'; this draws on notions of leadership as 'citizenship' (Bolden et al., 2013, p.12).

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<sup>264</sup> Although Pickering (2006) suggests that early stage lecturers who take part in formal developmental programmes adjust their thinking about what is possible and desirable in their future careers.

<sup>265</sup> Having acted as a consultant on this initiative for several years I have an insider's view of the tensions involved but also a somewhat biased view of the success of the initiative.

This example suggests that UoE might need to pay more attention to the complex ways in which AEL identities are created and sustained when considering approaches to nurturing leaders. The evidence from my research (Figure 5.12) tends to suggest that developmental opportunities are best located in local action-based contexts, where the integrity of ECA identities is retained, but where opportunities to experiment might nurture ECA leadership abilities and motivation to lead<sup>266</sup>. Beyond this evidence, and building on personal experience, I suggest that three future developments might enhance the impact of GC (and other similar projects). Firstly, resources might be channelled into initiatives like GC from central HR funds for ALD; currently this does not occur. Secondly, the *research* strategy and associated processes could be transparently aligned with GC, offering tangible rewards for engagement. Finally, there is more scope for openly celebrating the impact of such initiatives for nurturing AEL<sup>267</sup>. All these potentially lead to **strategic alignment** and **cultural reconciliation** (Figure 7.1).

In concluding this section, it is important to recognise that any single attempt to nurture AEL can be undermined by the sheer complexity of other M&CPs operating at UoE. However, as Roxa, Mårtensson, & Alveteg (2011 p.99) argue it is worth experimenting:

a multitude of inter-related initiatives over a long period of time is likely to distinguish strategies that are successful in influencing academic teaching and learning cultures.

As I have already argued (section 4.1 above) these sorts of opportunities are not available to all, and are not attractive to most. Therefore, it is a challenge to establish which academics might be supported to develop as AELs in this way. In the next section I suggest how my research might help identify potential 'candidates' for this kind of ELD.

## 5.0 A practically orientated 'reluctance to lead' framework

Throughout this study I have adopted a retroductive approach, elaborating on

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<sup>266</sup> In this way my work mirrors Martensson & Roxa's, (2016) practical but research-informed approach to ELD.

<sup>267</sup> The AEL focus of interesting initiatives is not always made explicit. For example, a novel teaching experiment described in the THE (D. Matthews, 2017) *must have* required inspirational leadership and nurtured AELs but no mention is made of this.

my initial conceptual frameworks incrementally as more empirical research evidence accrues. Here, I bring these together by combining my typology of reluctance (Figure 6.1) with the practical thinking about nurturing AEL found in section 4 (above). This leads to a practically orientated 'reluctance to lead' framework (Figure 6.4).

The framework initially (first row) reintroduces the **continuum of reluctant stances**, ranging from avoiding through to acceptance (from figure 6.1)<sup>268</sup>. Cultural, structural and agentic influences (M&CPs) which underpin these stances are summarised in the second row. The most likely institutional responses to academic attitudes are proposed (third row). Finally, differentiated nurturing approaches (from both an institutional and an academic point of view), which are sensitive to the variability identified further up the table, are added (fourth row).

The importance of **aligning strategies and reconciling cultures** is significant for reconciling the tensions between academic and institutional perspectives on nurturing AEL and this is shown on the left hand side of the diagram.

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<sup>268</sup> Individuals can shift position on this table. I describe this on p.277.

Figure 6.4 A practically orientated 'reluctance to lead' framework

Typology: continuum of reluctant stances		Avoidance				Acceptance	
		Resistant	Fearful	Relatively and regretfully reluctant	Altruistic	Strategically driven acceptance	Personally committed
<b>Academics: Personal attitude towards involvement in AEL</b>	STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND CULTURAL RECONCILIATION	Avoids or minimises involvement in AEL roles where ever possible.	Resentfully and cynically takes on AEL responsibilities e.g. to defer threats of job change/loss.	Generally avoids taking on AEL roles. Sees AEL as a low-esteem activity - other roles are seen as relatively more desirable.	Takes on AEL roles for the wider good of the discipline.	Takes on AEL roles which are likely to further career. High profile short term roles are sought.	Takes on AEL roles out of interest.
<b>M&amp;CPs influencing academic attitudes</b>		Extrinsic - highly aware of RIU structural and cultural constraints. Sees AEL as career impeding.	Extrinsic - driven by institutional pressures but in a context where there is personal vulnerability.	Extrinsic - learns attitudes from SALs (contagion); Intrinsic - learns reluctance early in career.	Intrinsic – relates to personal altruism . Extrinsic- AEL seen as an opportunity to serve colleagues.	Extrinsic/ intrinsic (but cynical) – often linked to career stage and strategic career planning .	Intrinsic –will offer to take AEL roles as an active agentic approach. Links to inner conversations and reflexivity.
<b>Institutions: attitudes and responses</b>		Simply accept and ignore or use compulsion.	Coerce possibly based on negative incentive.	Incentivize using positive incentives.	Show gratitude. Support and reward.	Work in co-operation to maximise benefits to both.	Offer plenty of encouragement. Protect from heavy workloads.
<b>Variable ELD approach institution might adopt and the potential academic responses</b>		Avoid offering ELD unless requested; academics can be resentful if required to undertake ELD.	Nurture through highly targeted support ; academics can be cynical about ELD.	Invest in range of motivating opportunities academics tend to minimise ELD commitments unless they are interesting.	Provide range of ELD with focus on departmental level activities. Academics keen to get involved if the focus is local.	Provide differentiated and 'just in time' ELD. Academics will select from opportunities strategically.	Provide range of ELD including institutional level activities. Academics will chose to engage in formal and informal ELD.

I am not suggesting here that individuals are fixed in their stances; as I have argued elsewhere, they are likely to be flexible, and at different times individuals may be located at different places on this table. Neither does the framework suggest that people fall into a single category at any point in time. For example, one academic might partly take on a role for the good of the discipline, partly because it is interesting, and partly because it might lead to career advancement. Another might resentfully and cynically take on an AEL role for strategic career advancement. As I suggest in chapter five (section 5), balancing priorities is vital for how individual academics develop as early career educators; something which also emerges strongly in the outcomes of McAlpine & Amundsen's (2016) observations about early career researchers.

From an institutional point of view the **'zone of maximum nurturing effectiveness'** is identified in this diagram. It is within this zone, that I would argue, the impact on AEL motivation can most effectively be achieved by appropriate nurturing approaches. As I suggested in section 4.1, UoE does not need large numbers of high level AELs, and this aspect of the framework is designed to highlight from an institutional view where energy, resources and intensive activity around nurturing AEL might be targeted. This is not meant to negate the importance of providing opportunities for all ECAs (from an equity point of view) nor of recognising the importance of broader strategies aimed more generally at cultural reconciliation and strategic realignment.

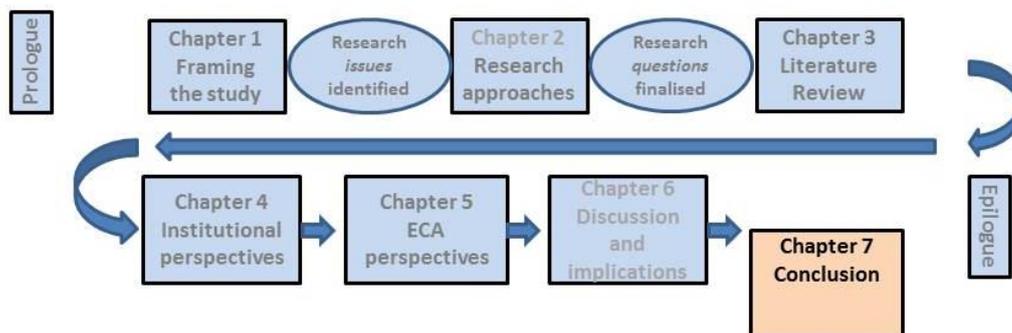
While the framework might appear highly complex and potentially unwieldy in relation to institutional priorities, it seems to me that a limited amount of highly relevant and potentially successful (both from the academic and institutional viewpoint) ELD may result in creating the small number of highly motivated and well prepared AELs which the UoE actually needs. This may need to be (from a resource point of view) at the expense of larger voluntary open access programmes which, I have argued, often fail to motivate or develop enough committed leaders. A challenge which I have alluded to, and which should not be underestimated, is identifying (by the institution and its senior academics) or self-identifying (by the ECAs themselves) 'candidates' early in their careers.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on discussing insights that my study has provided into my three research questions. I have also shown that my research can provide some contextualised theoretical clarification around the contradictory and under-researched agendas identified in chapter three (section 6). I have also exemplified how my research can contribute to the practical challenges around nurturing AEL at UoE.

Chapter seven provides a final summary of my work with a focus on its originality, its strengths and limitations and possible future research projects.

## Chapter 7 Conclusions



### 1.0 Introduction

At the end of my prologue I stated that I believed my study could potentially contribute to three areas: The *theoretical* and the *methodological academic* dialogue around researching AEL and ELD, and the *practitioner* dialogue around how UoE might address issues relating to AEL and ELD. In this chapter I address these claims. I present an overall summary of my study (section 2; Figure 7.1) and I make the case that I have contributed something original to all three dialogues (3, 4 and 5). In addition, I consider the strengths and limitations of my study (6) and I suggest that there are opportunities for potential future research associated with my findings (7).

### 2.0 Summary of findings

My study has used a unique coalescence of pluralistic approaches to theory and methodology to reveal how AEL at UoE is configured and understood. At the outset, I did not necessarily expect to identify any *major* new findings; rather, my approach, through ACR and intensive case study, was designed to add incrementally to existing research, in a context where any new insights would practically support both UoE and its academics.

As a result of this study I have concluded that there is evidence of contemporary academic dissatisfaction with their working lives at UoE. However, this is balanced by a passionate commitment to research, to supporting students and to interacting with disciplinary colleagues. This has been shown to impact in various ways on academics' interest in taking on the AEL roles, which UoE is keen to promote. The tension between the *institutional* view that academic cultures are somewhat 'intransigent' (resulting in

morphostasis), and the *academic* view that institutional cultures have become increasingly 'toxic', has been noted in other research as evidence of why few academics are keen to prioritise leadership (AEL in particular) in their careers. Many researchers have argued that an instrumentalist approach has become the norm (see fig 2.2) for most academics.

In my own research I have found evidence to suggest this is the case. In addition, I have shown that, where academics *do* prioritise AEL, this is incentivised, not so much by career ambitions but by, amongst other things, altruism, collegiality and an identity crisis fuelled by frustration; fear of redundancy and faltering research. My research also illustrates that, at UoE ECAs attitudes and stances towards AEL confirm, at least in part, the ambivalence, and resulting defensive routines, described by other researchers (Figure 3.3). However, my research has identified a range of attitudes and stances which I have captured to create a nuance typology of **reluctant constructs** (Figure 5.9); this suggests greater **attitudinal diversity** than might have been anticipated from the research literature.

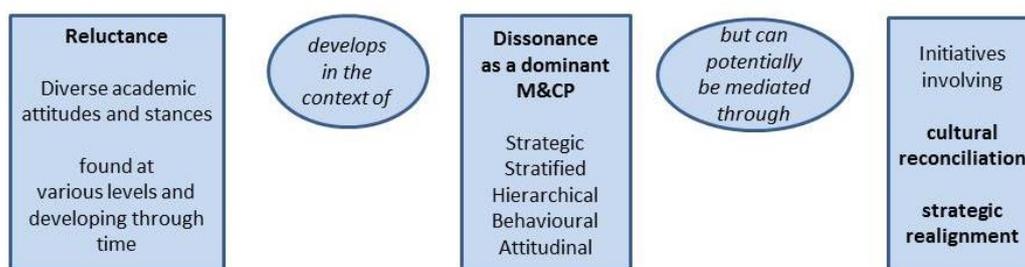
My work confirms that no one key influence explains ECA attitudes to AEL at UoE. Instead, my research aligns with Archer's approach to analytical dualism (chapter two section 4.3.2). I identify constraints and enablements ranging from the structural and strategic, to the social and personal, which combine across levels and trajectories to form a complex configuration of influential M&CPs (see 'Alvesson +' below). This complexity is captured in nine frameworks, which I first introduce in chapter two (Figure 2.3) and develop through my study, culminating in figure 6.2.

Unexpected M&CPs have emerged through my research (reported in chapters four and five), which provide some new insights into the reasons ECAs are often reluctant to consider becoming AELs. Central amongst these is the concept of **dissonance** which operates through structures, strategies, groups and individuals. Dissonance is implicated in my research as both an individual (an agentic position) *and* as a structural M&CP, exemplified in the impact it has on the fractured relationship between UoE and its academics. As Roxa (2014) suggests, when *cultural* mechanisms like dissonance become highly embedded

in an HEI, they can become part of the *structure* of the organization and this becomes a persistent and difficult to dislodge/ dismantle normative characteristic of the university.

The tangible implications of my research for ELD at UoE, have been introduced in chapters four and five and discussed in more detail in chapter six (section 4). The evidence from my research suggests that, from an institutional viewpoint, ameliorating reluctance is not a simple matter of programmatic intervention (ELD), but of deeper cultural and strategic change. Amongst many suggestions, the dominant themes to emerge are those relating to the concepts of **cultural reconciliation** and **strategic realignment** (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1 Summary of key findings**



I now turn in more detail to some original contributions this study makes to theory, practice and methodology.

### 3.0 The theoretical contribution

In chapter three I refer to Tight's suggestion (2004 p.339) that while much HE research is practically focused, it is impossible to report this 'without having some theoretical perspective in mind'. In chapter one I refer to the idea (Bolden et al., 2011 p.100) that theorising can involve looking for 'new forms of truth' and/or 'new ways of understanding'. My theoretical approach has largely been focused on identifying new ways of understanding. In chapters two and three I introduced the theoretical frameworks (figures 2.3 and 3.6) within which my research would progress, and here I return to these to claim evidence of some original outcomes from my research.

Firstly, through the systematic development of frameworks based on Alvesson's **multiple cultural configuration approach** (chapter three section 5) I have

been able to show that a range of different M&CPs do influence academic attitudes at UoE. However, my research goes ‘beyond Alvesson’ (I shall call this ‘Alvesson +’), to incorporate important material-structural entities, which a purely cultural perspective ignores. For example, figures 3.3, 4.4 and 5.13 all introduce important structural influences, which are identified through interviews as significant for ECAs, SALs and ELs at UoE. With the exception of Trowler’s major study (1998 p.29) of academic responses to a major new initiative in one HEI, and some of Bolden’s work on leadership (Bolden et al., 2015), I do not believe that the multiple cultural configuration approach has been used before in quite this way in HE research.

Secondly, through a focus on Archer’s emergent approach to **reflexivity and internal conversations** (Archer, 1988) I have been able to show significance of individual agency in the development (both through time and at different levels) of a **diverse** typology of reluctance in UoE. Diversity is integral to the analytical outcomes of much ACR research (Archer, 2012; Elder-Vass, 2012a; Maxwell, 2012), and in my analysis I have shown how this is important in moderating perspectives, which over-emphasise ‘avoiding strategies’ and which typify much HE research (Figure 3.2). The emergence of the key constructs of **relative and regretful reluctance** exemplifies this well. With the exception of aspects of O’Byrne’s (2014) work, this is something which I do not believe has been highlighted before.

Finally, when Alvesson+ and Archer’s reflexivity are brought together, the one high level concept which is constantly implicated in my research is **dissonance**<sup>269</sup>. While this is found in the existing literature (Harris & Nolan, 2014; Smith, 2010b), the frequency with which I have identified **various types of dissonance** means that this stands out as a key outcome of my study. In my analysis, dissonance goes beyond the psychological conception of cognitive dissonance. It can be seen<sup>270</sup> as an actual mechanism represented by strategic and stratified dissonance (as Elder Vass suggests), or a real mechanism represented by individuals’ perceptual and attitudinal dissonance (as Archer suggests). When these operate in conjunction with each other in an elaborated

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<sup>269</sup> Behind this lie other important M&CPs such as altruistic protectionism.

<sup>270</sup> There is a fascinating published discussion about these different perspectives (Archer & Elder-Vass, 2012).

framework (Figure 6.2) I have found evidence that suggests that attitudinal morphostasis can operate at the same time as organisational (strategic and structural) morphogenesis. This is an important finding which contradicts Archer's original sequential theory (Figure 2.1), and represents something which contributes to the originality of my research<sup>271</sup>. Dissonance is particularly important given the potential influence it has on the *practical* ways in which ECAs conceptualise AEL (Figure 7.1).

#### 4.0 The practitioner contribution

When addressing the practical contribution of my research, the first thing to consider is whether it addresses what Nixon (2017 p.6-7) calls 'fruitful questions'<sup>272</sup>. By this he means that they are, not only 'grounded in the specificity of the present' connecting with relevant 'dilemmas, tensions and contradictions', but are also informed by 'our particular histories' and 'point a way forward to new opportunities and courses of action'. The questions I ask in my study reflect this view. They are formed in the context of known institutional tensions around AEL, with the aim of finding nurturing opportunities for the future. They are purposefully open, somewhat emergent and involve me as researcher in immersing myself in the 'thick of it, in the middle and muddle of things' (Nixon, 2017 p.7). This perspective is original in the way it is applied in the context of UoE; it has proved critical to the identification of the practical outcomes of this study relating to ELD that might be 'fruitful'.

Secondly, I consider whether my research has identified original ways for nurturing an interest in AEL. To some extent this depends on whether (as above) reluctance is viewed as an agentic quality or as a cultural or even structural M&CP and also, whether it is implicated in either upward and downward causation (Meyer & Lunnay, 2013). I have suggested through my research that these positions are intertwined, that reluctance is conceptually and practically complex, and that this influences the practical suggestions I make (chapter six section 4).

My analysis in chapter six (sections 4.3 and 4.4) discusses the importance of

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<sup>271</sup> Although Archer does discuss this idea (Archer, 1988) when she critiques Habermass's thinking and highlights the relevance of her ideas.

<sup>272</sup> In this essay Nixon draws heavily on the work of Gadamer and reflects his views.

**cultural reconciliation** in addressing reluctance amongst ECAs (this is pre-empted to some extent in chapter three section 4.1.3) This finding is insightful for UoE in that it runs counter to many of the existing strategies adopted to nurturing leadership. The introduction of Grand Challenges (Chapter six section 4.8) presents an original, researched-informed and culturally-sensitive approach, which illustrates the kind of strategy which might be successful in addressing cultural reconciliation by mitigating reluctant stances amongst ECAs at UoE.

I have also identified practical implications of my research relating to the attitudes adopted by senior academics (SALs) in this study. I have highlighted the importance of **contagion** (shared and learned reluctance) (Figure 5.9) for ECAs. These are not simply norms internalised by ECAs in the context of their informal discourse with experienced academics. They are learnt through deliberate strategies<sup>273</sup>, adopted by SALs – normally as a form of **altruistic protectionism**. In this context I conclude that the emphasis that UoE needs to place on nurturing senior leaders is as important as initiatives for nurturing ECAs. The idea that disciplinary mentoring can be counterproductive runs against received wisdom at UoE. However, it is a practical implication of my research findings which needs to be addressed. Once again this involves cultural reconciliation and I believe this is an important and original outcome of my research.

## 5.0 The methodological contribution

My methodological approach is founded on the idea that Flyvbjerg (2006 p.229) succinctly proposes:

from both an understanding- oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur.

This has led me to the view that my research is a form of bricolage (Chapter two section 6), in which selecting aspects of different research approaches and

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<sup>273</sup> As a reminder these operate in a culture where SALs have influential formal leadership roles (academic lead) and informal relationships (often in research teams) with ECAs and, where they have developed the view that contemporary institutional cultures can be hostile to the developmental needs of ECAs.

developing a 'personal enquiry paradigm' (Figure 2.3) is both acceptable and desirable when searching for 'deeper causes'.

I started out (in my prologue) by arguing that a pluralistic approach, when applied in the context of a case study, could be fraught with problems but would allow me to demonstrate methodological originality. In the final analysis, both my methodology and my methods have been pluralistic and have facilitated an emergent approach, which has enhanced the depth of my analysis. The construction of a personal enquiry paradigm combining aspects of ACR, and pragmatism in the context of real world research proved to be a turning point in how I viewed my research; I feel this has added rigour to the way I construct my arguments, and it is this *combination* of approaches that adds originality to my work.

In particular, I would point to retroduction as the process of enquiry which underpins my study. As both an emergent approach to inquiry (Figure 2.6) and a framing device for structuring my thesis (Figure 2.5), retroduction has proved to be intuitively powerful. While it is not an original approach to enquiry, I believe that the way I have used retroductive analysis (in combination with abduction) in my work provides a useful template for others to consider. In this sense it has original features and provides some inspiration for others embarking on HE organisational research.

Finally, however, as a riposte to the claims I have made above, I have also come to believe that 'choosing pluralism' is less original in HE research (Robson, 2011) and leadership research (Reed, 2009) than it might have once been. As I suggested in chapter one (section 3.2), this is a methodologically 'crowded space'.

In relation to methods, I adopt several that could be seen as original, in that I believe that they may have been applied in the context of HE leadership research for the first time in this study.

The first involves the use of the **theoretically informed interview** (Chapter five section 6). I was inspired to try this approach by Kempster & Parry's (2014)

discussion of their research. The idea that (opinionated and well informed) interview participants could be empowered to develop theoretical constructs in co-operation with me as researcher, rather than passively responding to questions, felt ethically 'right'.

The second relates to the use of the **PCR interpretative evaluation technique** (Chapter five section 7) which originated with Hycner (1985). I used it somewhat experimentally and its originality in this context appealed to me (Chapter five section 6.1.4).

Finally, I decided to use the **ICONI approach** (Appendix 14) to explore ECA reflexivity. Once again, this is a technique that is little known and underused (or unused) in HE organisational research. The strengths and limitations of these and other methods are discussed in section 6.1.

## **6.0 Strengths and limitations of the study**

All research has its limitations and, as a naturally critically reflexive academic, I find it easy to identify limitations in my own (and others) work. I therefore present a personal critique of my work while wishing to make it clear that, as piece of academic research, I believe my study is well constructed and rigorous. One of the strengths of my work is how frequently I explain, justify and rationalise my approach throughout the narrative. There are limitations in my study but, paradoxically, most can also be described as strengths. They are the result of conscious and transparent decisions I have made at various stages in my research. I discuss the extent to which these are 'sound' decisions in sections 6.1 and 6.2. The complexity of my study was not altogether anticipated, and this has 'emerged' during the process. I describe how I believe I have mitigated the potential confusion this might cause for readers in section 6.1.4.

### **6.1 Methods**

In this section I discuss my literature review (6.1.1), the design and analysis of interviews (6.1.2), sampling approaches (6.1.3) and approaches to assuring credibility (6.1.4).

### 6.1.1 Scope of literature review

I have taken an inclusive approach to reviewing the research literature and have been careful to identify my selection criteria (Chapter three section 1). I did, however, make a conscious decision to engage with the sociological and organisational literature relating to motivation and identity, which has meant that I de-prioritise psychological perspectives. While I chose to do this for pragmatic reasons (to limit the amount of research literature I was accessing), I am conscious that ultimately my analytical perspective might have benefited from wider reading in the psychology of motivation.

### 6.1.2 Interviews as a dominant method and related coding issues

One of the positive features of my research is that, like most case studies, I use a range of data sources for my empirical work, although the dominance of interviews is apparent (chapter three section 7.1). A strength of my approach is that I purposefully use a range of *different* interview techniques (semi-structured; dialogic; theoretical) for different purposes, but ultimately my analysis is highly interview dependant. I have reflected on whether this is an issue. Goodson and Sykes (2001 p.41) remind us that interview participants are 'multi-self beings' who tell stories in a particular way for a particular purpose and to particular audiences, and I acknowledge that any suggestion that broad generalisation is possible from my interviews needs treating with caution. However, I would argue that the diversity of responses achieved through my interviews is a positive feature of this research, and has enhanced opportunities to explore the nuanced attitudes and stances which have been revealed.

The use of Archer's ICONI questionnaire to inform my interviews with ECAs was carefully selected as an interesting and profitable approach to addressing agentic reflexivity. The technique has been widely tested and statistically validated through Archer's work (Appendix 14) and I have relied on this robust confirmation (Archer, 2003 p.163) to justify using her approach. In my study it is interesting that the approach has proved to be an insufficiently subtle discriminator *between* reflexive types. Despite this, the fact that most of the participants demonstrate *mixed* autonomous and meta-reflexive characteristics has proved useful for my analysis in which I suggest individual ECAs can demonstrate both strategic and subversive stances (Chapter six section 3.1; Appendix 15).

Finally, the analysis of the interviews used a well-tested approach to coding and categorising; One strength of my study is that I took the trouble to involve a second coder to provide a complementary perspective on my interview material. However, like most qualitative researchers (Gilgun, 2011a; Silverman, 2001), I am aware that my interpretation of interviews is partly based on pre-existing personal experiences, and this has the potential to influence my conclusions. This can be seen as an issue. Some researchers suggest that presuppositions about the social world ought to be bracketed out of analysis by suspending taken for granted assumptions (Husserl, 1970). However, I take the view that deep and empathetic engagement with others is a central strength of my work and makes this impossible. In addition, I bring many years of relevant experience to bear on my analysis, and I take the view that being highly aware of this and addressing it openly as I do (e.g. in chapter six section 4) adds value to my research.

### **6.1.3 Selecting participants and sample size**

Perhaps the most common limitation cited in small scale qualitative studies such as mine is the way individuals are identified. While in an ACR study this is not strictly a sampling process (Smith & Elger, 2014), limitations can be seen in my approach to identifying ECA participants. Primarily this relates to the unusual situation I found myself in, where identifying the eligible population of ECAs was not in my control. As a result I cannot be sure of the procedure used and cannot be totally sure that there is not some selection bias involved. However, as I mentioned in chapter five (section 2.1.2), I did communicate with HR administrators to clarify the selection criteria, and the outcome was that I identified a small group who were very happy to engage in interviews. To identify any selection bias firstly, I introduced a demographic survey (Appendix12), which has provided some reassurance (Figure 5.3). The fact that they were (all but two) E&R academics is a potential concern, but I make it very clear that I do not claim that the ECAs are in way a representative sample. Secondly, I have considered whether the credibility of my analysis may be influenced by the possibility that the small number of academics who responded might have ulterior motives; again I tried to address this by asking them to explain their motives (chapter five section 3.2).

In chapters four and five I have suggested that the small numbers of participants<sup>274</sup> in each of my empirical studies can also be seen as an analytical challenge. However, most detailed qualitative studies are based on a small number of informants, and Bryman (2008 p.462) suggests that 10-15 participants is an acceptable number where the research context is narrow in scope and where the identified group is relatively homogeneous as in my research. Goodson and Sykes (2001 p.23) suggest that while numbers of participants will be small for practical reasons, 'adequacy' depends on being able to identify diverse attitudes and understand these. I feel that this has been achieved in my analysis. I make no claim to have used a statistically valid approach to sampling or sample size and, therefore, I have no expectations that my data are representative of the wider population of ECAs at the UoE or beyond. I made this clear from early in my study. Working with a small sample in detail has contributed to the depth of analysis which has been possible; in turn, this has revealed important M&CPs which might have been undetected in a large scale study.

#### **6.1.4 Robust research: adequacy and ethics**

Maxwell (2012 p.27) argues that it is important to consider the 'validity threats' raised by ACR research; he argues that simplicity, adequacy and logical coherence are the important measures of validity in this situation. I am very aware that a challenge for those reading my thesis may be that it is not simple; something I did not anticipate at the start of my research journey. However, it is integral to a study which combines abductive and retroductive modes of reasoning (chapter two section 4.2.1) that it will potentially identify multiple M&CPs as I have done. I have tried to mitigate the complexity by creating compelling diagrammatic summaries and by using extensive signposting to create logical coherence.

Maxwell suggests (2012 p.20) that a robust consideration of 'alternative explanations' is required throughout the ACR research process to explore the credibility of inferences and interpretations. He suggests that every theory should be viewed from a 'believing and doubting perspective' (p.ix). In chapter six I have adopted a critical approach towards interrogating my empirical

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<sup>274</sup> Qualitative researchers avoid the use of terms like sample size preferring to refer to numbers of informants or participants. I have adopted this approach.

research results. I have been careful to suggest that there *are* alternative ways of viewing my observations, and I would argue that my conclusions are well founded in the context within which my research has taken place. However, an important consequence of my findings is that it might now be possible to targeted future investigation on particular variables which have emerged through my exploratory case study (see section 7.1 below).

Maxwell provides a useful framework for ACR researchers, which I reproduced in chapter three (section 9.2). Referring back to this framework, I believe there is evidence in my study that I have addressed these criteria effectively although, as I mentioned in chapter two, not all have equal significance in a localised study<sup>275</sup>. The PCR approach to interpretative evaluation (chapter five section 7; Appendix 17) has its limitations as a quasi-statistical analytical technique. However, its strengths lie in the fact that it introduces a larger group of ECAs, and their responses provide reassuringly complementary perspectives on the original ten participants' views.

Finally, I have confidently claimed throughout my study that I have been careful to adopt the highest ethical standards in my work. I still believe this is the case. I have some concerns that the elite leaders I interviewed are exposed through my analysis in chapter four (section 5). To mitigate this I have given each of them opportunities to read the relevant text and have been careful in my writing to be sensitive to any comments received. I hope that responding in this way has not been detrimental to my analysis but see it as a necessary requirement relating to research ethics.

## **6.2 Methodologies**

In this section I discuss the selection of CR and particularly ACR (section 6.2.1) and the adoption of a case study approach (6.2.2).

### **6.2.1 ACR and pluralism**

While my research approach has been to work within ACR principles I have become increasingly aware of the challenges this involves. Reed (2009 p.443)

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<sup>275</sup> Attempting to externally validate my ECA observations, for example, has presented challenges.

provides a succinct analysis of the four major issues which have been raised in relation to ACR by others, that:

- the emphasis on structures dilutes the status of agency;
- researchers adopt an insensitive 'spectator role';
- it is excessively deterministic; and,
- its processes are too complex.

Archer's approach to ACR (which is a primary influence on my research) has a *balanced emphasis* on structures and agency and an *engaged approach* to working with individuals. I find that these two supposed limitations are not particularly relevant to my own study<sup>276</sup>.

The proposition of *determinism* has to be considered. One reason I selected ACR was that it facilitated a pluralistic approach which recognised that ontologically there is a reality beyond the conceptions of individuals. I believe that my research has drawn on both deterministic and interpretivist thinking in order to come to a holistic understanding of academic attitudes in UoE. My personal view is that this is a strength of my analysis, and the introduction of an external reality is appropriate<sup>277</sup>.

I do accept the proposition of *complexity*, however. The multiple M&CPs which emerge through my work need to be clearly explained and, as I have already suggested in section 6.1.4, this involves extensive signposting and the use of diagrams. A further complexity is the 'exclusive' language of principles and concepts (Appendix 2) used by ACRs. These can be confusing, for anyone with little background knowledge of ACR. In order to make my work more accessible I have chosen to use this terminology sparingly; I believe that this opens up ACR to a wider audience and is a particular strength of my study.

I have reflected over the last five years on whether the choice of ACR was appropriate. I have, at times, questioned whether my research might equally

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<sup>276</sup> This of course may simply result from a 'blinkerred' positionality which I discuss in my prologue.

<sup>277</sup> In looking for reassurance about my adoption of ACR I have found it in Barnett (2014) recent 'philosophical turn' and Brew et al.'s (2017) use of Archer's reflexivity framework. However, in other work (e.g. the authors in McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010), I admire the way they discuss issues and explanations which are similar to mine but without recourse to ACR and its terminology.

well have been pursued using an interpretivist or constructionist approach. Certainly my analysis of interview material has been dominated by interpretivist principles and as McLachlan and Garcia (2015) argue, ACR and interpretivism have a great deal in common in this respect. This issue is also discussed by Bolden et.al (2011 p.171). In asking the question 'Is leadership unknowable?' they reject the ACR approach in favour of a constructionist approach, which recognises the centrality of *individual constructions* of what leadership means.

At times in this study I take a critical stance, and I have considered whether my study might have been usefully framed using a critical social realist approach such as DCR; or a critical ethnographic narrative approach similar to the one adopted by Smyth (cited in Kress, 2017), in his research on HEI leadership. Wheeler (2017 p.46) illustrates how a more critical gaze would have facilitated a greater focus on understanding 'Pathological Organisational Dysfunction' and on being an advocate for effective resistance.

In choosing ACR I have accommodated realist principles which, at the outset, seemed to me to be appropriate. These include double recognition; the inclusion of material causal powers, the accommodation of structure with agency and the concept of actual, real and empirical strata (see Appendix 2). My choice originally arose as a way of accommodating this flexibility (chapter three section 5) and because I was attracted to Archer's analytically dualist approach to structure and agency (chapter two section 4.3.2). Through this approach, I hoped to gain original insights into attitudes towards AEL. As I reach the end of my research journey, I believe that my approach *has* offered an interesting perspective on my research questions; however, it is fascinating to consider, if my study had deployed a different research lens, whether it might have resulted in different conclusions.

In figure 2.2 I suggest that ACR and pragmatism *come together* in my study to provide a personal enquiry paradigm. Although pragmatism has only emerged as explicit in my work in chapter six section 4, I would argue that it has influenced my enquiry process. The iterative approach which has allowed me to collect data, reflect on my observations, frame these and then return to collect more data is informed by both a pragmatist abductive process, where research

uncovers 'explanatory structures with the power to explain identified observations' (Roxa 2014 p.53), and an ACR retroductive process which acknowledges the pre- existence of a possible theory which is explored and evolves through the process of research (Reed 2009)<sup>278</sup>. In combination these processes have provided a robust framework for 'doing' and 'reporting' my research.

### 6.2.2 Case study

As Flyvbjerg, (2006 p.223) suggests, while case study research has been criticised by many theorists as lacking rigour and being incapable of leading to any useful theorisation, this could be said to be true of most social science research:

Social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and has thus in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge. And the case study is especially well suited to produce this knowledge.

As Archer (2012 p.292) suggests, in relation to a similar study to mine also focused in one HEI:

as a theoretico-empirical study, what it does provide is food for further theoretical consideration; for something between unregulated speculation and theoretical propositions warranted by empirical substantiation.

At an early stage in my research I established that ACR researchers see case studies in a particular way (Vincent & Wapshott, 2014 p.155) which facilitates 'causal theorising' and the search for 'novel theories' through retroduction<sup>279</sup>. This was an important influence on my decision to adopt a case study approach.

However, choosing to investigate my own institution as a case study has inevitably been challenging<sup>280</sup>. Researching something that one is very close to creates difficulties relating to interpretation. I have been particularly aware that there are taken-for-granted assumptions and ideas that are broadly shared between me and the leaders I interviewed. There are places where I have

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<sup>278</sup> Although Reed (2009) suggest that both retroduction and abduction are widely used in ACR.

<sup>279</sup> This is different from social constructionism (e.g. Stake's ethnographic thick description – which focuses on complex subjective systems and avoids causal theorising) and empiricism (eg Yin's positivist approach, which tests theoretical postulates deductively).

<sup>280</sup> Some of the positionality and ethical issues associated with this have been discussed earlier.

needed to report on institutional initiatives that I had a role in designing. In addition, critically interpreting documents and dialogue, in a culture that prioritises organisational loyalty and trust, has been particularly challenging. For example, I am aware that I may potentially (and often unwittingly) have occasionally omitting 'backstage' issues or 'taboo' subjects creating 'blackspots' in reporting on my research (Alvesson, 2003 p.181).

What might have provided a viable alternative to my case study approach? Alvesson, (2003 p.172) promotes the use of ethnography as an alternative which might provide a 'strong authority base' from which to come to conclusions about one institution. However, as he suggests, for academics studying other academics 'too much of organizational life is often too familiar'. Ethnographic research also tends to be a lengthy and protracted process and this was not feasible in the time I had to undertake my research.

Another possibility I seriously considered was to use a comparative case study approach (Vincent & Wapshott, 2014). I have collected a considerable amount of data in two comparable institutions in Australia and New Zealand on which I could draw. However, I ultimately decided to use this information sparingly, and in section 7.1 I suggest there is potential for future work in this context.

Like most critically reflexive researchers, I have found it an interesting project to reflect on what might have been done differently. However, on balance, I am satisfied that the selection of a case study approach has proved effective. I am confident about the choice I made.

### **6.3 Risk taking**

I am treating risk taking as a 'special case' in considering my study's strengths and limitations. While taking risks might appear to be a strange thing to do in a PhD thesis, I have come to the opinion that this is not necessarily the case; in fact risk taking is part of the learning process for all researchers and I would like to exemplify this.

As I suggested in my prologue, adopting a pluralistic approach to research can be seen risky but at the same time can lead to revelatory and unexpected

outcomes; this was a risk I was willing to take in creating a personal research paradigm (Figure 2.3). I also took the decision that it was a good idea to trial little known, but potentially fruitful, methods. My use of both the ICONI questionnaire and the PCR activity can be seen as risky in that there was no certainty about what they would contribute to my study; I have not seen these used in either leadership or educational research. The alternative of using very well tried approaches to, in the first case, clarifying individual reflexivity and in the second, triangulating my interview outcomes, was considered but rejected in favour of more 'risky' approaches. What I was trying to avoid is what Nixon (2017 p.4) refers to as 'methodical sterility', in which the method can come to dictate the outcome of research. In retrospect, there were limitations associated with methods I did use (sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.4 above). I am not sure that these have proved to be approaches that others will want to emulate; but this misses the point that research needs to take 'leaps into dark' and experiment with methods which seem to have potential.

A similar argument can be applied to interpretation of research outcomes. In chapter three (section 9.2) I refer to Lipton's book, *'Inference to the best explanation'* (2004) in which he advocates explaining research outcomes from both a 'likely' and a 'lovely' perspective. Likely explanations are 'safe' and can be evidenced transparently through research findings, and I would argue that my study contains plenty of these. Lovely explanations are risky, in that they cannot be directly supported by research findings; they are, therefore, speculative and require a 'brave' leap into the dark. Overall, in adopting an ACR approach my research has tended to veer towards the 'likely'. Ackroyd (2009 p.54) suggest that 'good' ACR research:

is aimed at clarifying the mechanisms which produce outcomes, and to understanding the contingencies that may prevent expected outcomes from occurring, this can yield better explanations of why, and in what circumstances, policies are likely to be effective.

However, in some of my work I chose to be speculative in the knowledge that, if challenged, my research evidence might not be able to transparently justify my thinking. This use of inference beyond what my evidence suggests is most evident in my discussion of the practical implications of my research in chapter six (section 4.8), where I use the Grand Challenges initiative to help clarify what the practical implications of my research might be.

In arguing in favour of risk taking I am suggesting that better explanations can be those in which we can celebrate the surprising and the unexpected, and that these are often an outcome of more risky research.

In conclusion, section 6 has been an opportunity to reflect on the strengths and limitations of my study. While the limitations identified are important, I have argued that they mostly arise from choices I have made. The strengths which I have revealed suggest that, on balance, there is little evidence that these issues have undermined the credibility of my overall analysis and conclusions.

## **7.0 Potential future directions of research**

In concluding this chapter I would like to briefly suggest that my study has opened up opportunities for further research. Knights and Willmott (1999 p.75) present a compelling case that the value of social science research 'reside(s) in its capacity to clarify, and press to their limits, common-sense understandings of everyday life'. In addition, however, they point out that its 'tolerance of *any inconclusive investigations* (my italics) helps keep alive debate'.

While I am not suggesting that my research is inconclusive, I believe that many questions arise which could usefully be taken forward. Questions have emerged from my own work which have highlighted several important M&CPs might be targeted for future investigation. For example, some relate to the contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies I refer to in chapter three (section six). The best example of this is the revelation of the ambiguities and tensions arising from conceptions of management and leadership and the implications of these (Figures 2.4 and 2.5; Locke, 2007). This is more than a conceptual lens as it emerges in my study; rather it is a real mechanism through which the way academics view the 'potential of leadership' is constrained by the 'threat of management'. This would benefit from more research in the context of UoE.

I also suggest (section 6.2.1 above) that additional insights might emerge from investigating a similar set of questions through a different research lens. In order to exemplify some of the ideas I have for future work, I have identified four possible themes in more detail.

## 7.1 Comparative case studies

Undertaking a number of comparable studies in similar institutions (or contrasting HEIs, either within or beyond the UK HE environment) using a standardised research approach could yield evidence of the extent to which my observations are more widely relevant. In selecting an appropriate approach, I would like to see my elaborated framework of complex configurations (Figure 6.2) used more widely. In addition I suggest that Inman's four stage academic career trajectory (2011), which I discuss in chapter three (section 4.2.2), with its particular focus on the three pre-leadership stages of experiment, development and consolidation, would provide a suitable framework for a deeper analysis of ECA attitudes and stances.

## 7.2 Possible selves research

Deeper insights into the way ECAs conceptualise their ongoing academic careers would allow a more nuanced analysis of how they view the potential of AEL in their future careers<sup>281</sup>. I have already collected information about how ECAs see their possible selves as part of this study using 'the wallpaper timeline' (Appendix 13) followed by a face-to face discussion of what ECAs might *expect* to become; *like* to become and are *afraid of* becoming (Appendix 16). These observations could be analysed in the context of UoE (and possibly be replicated elsewhere). This work could be aligned with McAlpine and Amundsen's 'identity trajectory approach' (2016) but with an emphasis on the practical consequences of this research for ELD.

## 7.3 Gender as a context for studying AEL

Several academics have suggested to me over the last few years that my research could beneficially investigate the gendered nature of AEL. I chose not to follow this up despite evidence of interesting gender issues arising through my interviews. In particular this points to the potential exploitation of women in AEL roles, but also to the genuine passion that some (only female academics in my study) show for a future career in AEL. As a contribution to the growing literature around women and leadership in HE, I believe there is work which could usefully be done in this area.

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<sup>281</sup> Possible selves research is a methodology taken from psychology and used for understanding how individuals conceptualise their futures. It has been applied widely in US research (Markus & Nurius, 1986) in recently in UK HE contexts (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011).

## 7.4 Supporting disciplinary TEF

The imminent arrival on the HE scene in the UK of a 'disciplinary TEF' led by a metric driven process potentially opens up research opportunities around the need for a greater focus on the role of early career education leaders. The reward of a 'gold rating' can be an argument that AEL is 'already working' in institutions like UoE (McRae, 2017) but where succession planning is a concern for the university, as it is in recruiting and nurturing AELs at UoE, TEF provides a moment in time when cultural reconciliation and strategic change can be taken forward with hopes of some success. Research which tracks these processes could make a valuable contribution to the wider research literature on addressing academic reluctance to lead.

Any of these topics would certainly be of interest to me and, to this end; I plan to continue to disseminate my ideas more widely once I have completed my thesis. I also hope that this will create wider interest amongst others in the HE research community.

## 8.0 Final conclusion

This study has taken as its 'stage' the interests of one institution and its academic community. Through a greater understanding of the attitudes and stances of ECAs (research question one), and the M&CPs that influence these (research question two), I have been able to address the practical application of my research to the nurturing of ECAs as future AELs (research question three). While this is contingent and contextualised research and the implications relate to one institution I would like to think there are insights in this study that can be drawn on by others.

In focusing on the reluctance of ECAs to lead in the area of education, I make the claim that this is real world research, and that it addresses issues that really matter. They matter to the institution, as it charts a course through the changing national context provided by the TEF; they matter to academic groups, as they find effective ways to enhance the quality of student experiences in a pressurised working context, and they matter to individuals, who are charting their academic careers for the future.

They also matter to others beyond UoE. Recently, the League of European Research Universities published a high profile report on education in RIUs (Fung, Besters-Dilger & van der Vaart, 2017). In their press release they focus on the need to support and celebrate educational leadership<sup>282</sup>:

University leaders at all levels should ensure that educational leaders have stimulating opportunities for development and for creative collaboration with their peers, and that they are rewarded highly for their contribution.

But how might this happen? Looking forward I suggest that the issues discussed in this study reveal that there are difficult questions to address from an *institutional perspective*. Can the entrenched institution-wide attitudes and stances of the past be put to one side so that AEL might be seen as a motivating future career opportunity for ECAs? How might the constraints and enablements identified in my study best be addressed? Is there institutional willingness to facilitate this? Will the 'ratcheting up' of political pressure on education (as opposed to, or alongside, research) create a new context in which HEIs will be forced to change some of the ways they operate and what are the implications for AEL? However, these questions are formed from the perspective of the institution and my research has suggested that this is not enough. They need to be placed side by side with others which adopt a *personal academic perspective*. Can academics find freedom and autonomy to progress their careers in the way they wish? Why would academics wish to become involved in AEL? Are there ways in which academics can work differently to ameliorate the pressures they feel under, and which result in many being reluctant to engage with AEL roles? What might act as motivational enablers and how does my study point the way forward for those who do wish to engage with AEL?

Perhaps it is only where these two perspectives are brought into better alignment, and reconciled, that some progress will be made towards addressing the practical issues around reluctance to lead. Helping one institution to move in this direction has been the fascinating focus of my research.

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<sup>282</sup> <http://www.leru.org/index.php/public/news/excellent-education-in-research-rich-universities-new-possibilities-for-europe-today/>



## Epilogue

In my prologue I discussed what motivated me to start researching for a PhD as I was nearing retirement. In some ways I do not think I was entirely honest. I could probably have achieved much of what is reported in my study by doing some small scale research and publishing the outcomes in several papers and internal reports. I could certainly have got to the practical applications of my research earlier, and been 'out there' enjoying running workshops before now.

I now realize it was not simply a matter of 'giving something back', or altruistically searching out innovative solutions to an institutional problem, that really mattered. My motivation was more personal and somewhat deeper. It had always been an intention (subliminal at times) to rekindle my academic career and to pick up on my research career trajectory when it became feasible (I had started a PhD at Cambridge in 1972 which, for various reasons, I decided to abandon). I was attracted by the idea of distancing myself once again from managerial responsibilities; leaving behind what one academic colleague has suggested is the 'dark side' of academia. I had also seen other colleagues dive into deep 'dog walking' retirement, and I knew that was not what I wanted to do.

I have not found reasons to doubt my choice of topic and I still believe that AEL is an important challenge for HE. Almost every week something is published which supports my concern that AEL is increasingly important, but that this is not necessarily well recognised. I feel I have made a useful contribution to both the practical and theoretical aspects of understanding AEL and I hope others will see it that way as well. At times the journey has been very intellectually stimulating – I have enjoyed trying to balance 'likely and lovely' interpretations of what I have found (Lipton, 2004) and interacting with academics in other parts of Europe, who have given freely of their time to discuss ideas with me and to act as critical friends. I have found some wonderful metaphors in the research literature which, if I was still actively engaged in development work, I could use in my teaching. Coming across explanations of academic complacency in the face of rapid and unprecedented organizational change

through the metaphor of the 'boiled frog'<sup>283</sup> was a particular recent highlight (Macdonald, 2016; Martin, 2016).

Two things that stand out in my experience of undertaking a PhD are discussed below. One is the challenge relating to taking five years to complete the project; the other relates to how completely my perspective has changed in the course of my research. These are linked to the challenges I identified in my prologue as the 'practical challenge' and the 'research approach' challenge.

### **The challenge of a thesis that is five years in the making**

I would like to describe three ways in which taking five years, from developing my first ideas to submitting my thesis, has been an interesting challenge.

Firstly, there is the perennial concern that someone else might answer the research questions before you get there. Early on, I developed a tendency to metaphorically 'look over my shoulder' to find out who else was doing similar work, in the hope that any original observations I might make would not be pre-empted. There *has* been evidence that the issues I am interested in are increasingly being addressed by others (as is obvious from the publications I have referred to). But, is this a cause for concern and is my work really as original as I hoped it would be when I wrote my prologue? I now look at this in a different way. As I suggested in my conclusion, I see my work as offering a small and incremental contribution to a field where there is a community of scholars working to address the same general concerns, and this in itself is motivating rather than disheartening. Engaging with this community of like-minded researchers reduces the loneliness of research, and increases the possibility that the contribution I make might have an impact.

Secondly, I have been facing recent dilemmas associated with disseminating my research findings *before* they are tested through examination or publication. I have been persuaded to give workshops and research seminars at several HEIs, including UoE, where the practical aspects of my work have caught the interest of colleagues. One workshop activity I have devised, using quotations from ECAs involved in my study, has been particularly successful. I am

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<sup>283</sup> I introduced this in chapter six section 3.3.

delighted to think my 'real world' research is already proving useful, and I am not particularly concerned that there are ethical issues involved in the early dissemination of my ideas. In fact, I believe this is part of the research process. What this does mean however, is this written thesis is not something I am about to reveal to an 'unsuspecting' academic community. From as early as 2013, I had started to share some early conclusions with UoE colleagues, who have the power and opportunity to introduce initiatives and reforms, and by 2016 I had recognised that these were starting to have an impact.

Thirdly, the complex process of balancing of research and the rest of life is heightened when the journey is extended and there are no effective deadlines. In the last five years both my sons have married, I have become a grandmother three times and I have looked after, and then lost, both my parents. I have been on six amazing holidays in far-away places. In this context, research is a stop-start affair, messy and non-linear. For some this would be intolerable. I remember discussing this with Carol O'Byrne, for whom it was a cause of great frustration (O'Byrne, 2014). However, like Rettig<sup>284</sup> I have found the complex non-linearity associated with a 'writercopter approach' (one where you might start writing somewhere in the middle, and when the going gets tough, or something disturbs your focus, you lift off and later drop down somewhere else) stimulating and challenging. It is also reminiscent of the way I have always had to multi-task in my senior leadership roles and, as a result, I was not fazed, but was somewhat exhilarated by the process.

In conclusion, as a *personal* project allowing me to transition from academic life into deeper retirement, taking plenty of time has suited me and from a personal and lifestyle viewpoint this felt inevitable. The possible negative effects of this have, as I have argued above, been counterbalanced by others which are more positive.

### **The challenging shift from a real world to a theoretical informed approach**

My journey started with the claim in my prologue that my intention was to undertake real world research; it was to be pragmatic and de-emphasise methodology to make the research highly accessible to practitioners.

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<sup>284</sup> <http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/posting.php?ID=1226&search=rettig>

Jonathan Gosling, my first supervisor, argued very early on, when he read my prologue, – ‘forget trying to give something back to HE and your institution – go for giving something to HE research’. I didn’t agree then, and I still do not agree completely, but the balance has changed for me. My emphasis has shifted to a much stronger theoretical focus, and I am now pleased that I have been able to demonstrate (chapter seven) that the originality in my research lies not just in *what* I explored but also in *how* I did the work. I reflect here on why this might have happened.

As my research developed I became more interested in identifying the M&CPs which underpin real world problems, in the belief that any solutions, if underpinned by theoretical research, might have greater potential impact. This shift in interest has, in part, related to my retirement and the fact that I have become increasingly distanced from day-to- day ‘policy problems which need solving’. It has also been influenced by my increasing engagement with a community of researchers (online, in the literature and personally) whose enthusiasm for methodological discourse provided some inspiration.

As my research has proceeded, I admit that it has been the *research approach itself* which has increasingly interested me. While I have had no difficulty in explaining or justifying this shift in emphasis, I suspect it has implications. I think that if I were to start out again, knowing what I do now, I might take a different approach, and might come to different conclusions. For example, I have recently been thinking about Alvesson's suggestions (2003 p.188-190) about using self-ethnography and wondering whether this might have been an interesting way to approach my study. While he alludes to this as ‘a risky project’, he offers it as an ‘interesting alternative to other approaches’ if (and, this is what particularly attracts me) you are ‘the right kind of researcher’:

(with) the right kind of background and experiences in order to intellectually “look through” one’s own workplace culture, it is also a good idea to think about the politics involved. I guess that three issues matter here: one is the tolerance and openness of people at the workplace (the victims), a second is one’s own position – a prestigious, tenured researcher has more leeway – and the third relates to the extent one constructs oneself in terms of integrity and inner-directness. Self-ethnography is not for the mainstream, organizational (wo)man, eager to conform to workplace norms and to be very loyal.

The fact that this approach attracts me today shows just how far I have moved from the 'institutional conformist' I was, to the questioning and critical researcher I have become. I have changed in terms of my understanding of the context I worked in for many years, my own critical skills and my researcher-identity.

### **Catching the wave**

I want to ask briefly whether my research results are emerging at a critical moment, when they can make a difference more widely than I could ever have imagined five years ago.

I suspect the arrival of the TEF is something that will change institutional priorities in much the same way that, at least temporarily, they were changed by the QAA subject reviews of the 1990s. Whether institutions have the AELs in place, and know what the challenges are for academics who take on these roles, is doubtful. Ladyshewsky & Jones' research (2007), alongside my own research, points to this being a major challenge. In this context, I hope my research *will* prove very useful; that it will 'catch the wave' and that research-informed approaches to nurturing AEL to support the TEF will become widespread. There are two ways to look at this. My research is too late – the dimensions of TEF have been set, AEL is not on the TEF agenda, and therefore my research cannot contribute much. Alternatively, my research 'catches the wave', and potentially makes a contribution to how HEIs generally take AEL forward in a national context which is unlikely to go away. I really do believe that the second of these is possible.

### **And finally**

Several years ago, at the start of my research journey, I found this quote, a summary of Einstein's theoretical approach (Einstein & Infeld, 1966 p.31), and decided to store it away to use in my epilogue as it appeared to *encapsulate my thinking so perfectly*:

'In our endeavour to understand reality we are somewhat like a man trying to understand the mechanism of a closed watch. He sees the face and the moving hands, even hears it ticking, but he has no way of opening the case. If he is ingenious, he may form some picture of

a mechanism, which could be responsible for all the things he observes, but he may never be quite sure his picture is the only one which could explain his observations. He will never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism, and he cannot even imagine the possibility of the meaning of such a comparison’.

I am still ending with this quote but for a very different reason; it now makes me feel very uncomfortable, and I know it does not reflect the researcher that I have become. Just consider—the un-nuanced endeavour to understand *reality*; the uncritical use of ‘*man*’; the assumption of *closed systems*; the aim of finding a *singular* mechanism -something which is responsible for *all* things we observe; the search for a *right picture* and the inability to construct a picture through which *possible meanings* are revealed.

How different this is from the way I have come to see the world. And how well this illustrates the journey I have been on – how could I have been so uncritical? I have certainly developed critical ways of viewing just about everything and this has come to influence my ways of thinking in all aspects on my life. I seem to have transitioned beyond yearning for what Young (2001) describes as the simple ‘comfort zones of the past’, to a place where I am stimulated by feeling constantly challenged.

Perhaps the greatest personal outcome of my research journey is that I have achieved an ambition which I have held for many years. For young researchers a PhD is career forming, but for me it is more about self-fulfilment. I recently heard an explorer, David Lemon<sup>285</sup>, talking about the challenge of a solitary trek along the full length of the Zambesi River. He finished by saying

I have understood that it is not important that people know about one’s achievements. It is nice when they do, but the greatest acknowledgement needs to be from oneself. I allow myself to accept that I have done well.

I feel this is exactly where I have got to on my journey. I do hope others also feel I have done well.

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<sup>285</sup> <https://www.wiredforadventure.co.uk/interview-david-lemon-zambezi-walk/>

# Appendices



## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Is academic leadership a priority in UK policies?

This appendix reports on a small desk study I have undertaken and updated constantly during the course of my research. It addresses whether UK HE policy:

- prioritises academic leadership (AL) and specifically academic educational leadership (AEL);
- influences institutional strategies and academic attitudes.

#### Sources

For the desk study sources were:

- a detailed analysis of HE policy since the 1960s (Hilli, 2017);
- a special edition of *Higher Education Quarterly* (2014) in which Watson and others review twelve national level inquiries and government policies relating to HE between the 1960s and the present day;
- Shattock's (2013) analysis of the impact of UK government policy on HE leadership, management and governance;
- a range of research articles (referred to in chapter one section 2.2 & 2.3).

These suggest that the focus of UK government policy is on:

- the **changing role and function of HEIs** including, most recently, the enhanced emphasis on students as customers;
- the shifting **balance between government control and institutional/ personal autonomy**.

Only in Shattock's analysis is **policy related to leadership** discussed although policy relating to management structures is mentioned peripherally in other sources. As a result, I have revisited key policies to establish whether they do in reality address HE leadership either explicitly or implicitly (see table below).

#### UK Higher Education policies: evidence of HE leadership as an agenda

Pre 2003	Primary focus	Reference to HE leadership?
Robbins report (1963)	Focussed on the expansion of HE to more students.	No specific reference to leadership.
Jarratt report (1985) (Steering Group on University Efficiency) Education Reform Act (HMSO, 1988)	Universities were expected to become corporate enterprises embracing strategic planning and efficient internal structures processes.	Placed explicit emphasis on authoritarian leadership by a chief executive and senior management team.

Further and Higher Education Act (HMSO, 1992)	Focused on enhanced provision and funding of HE and the expansion of University sector (Polytechnics awarded University status).	Not a focus of this legislation but implicitly leadership in HEIs was influenced by the diffusion of cultural norms prevailing in polytechnics.
Dearing Report, (1997) (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education)  1998 -Teaching and Higher Education Act (HMSO, 1992)	Focused on improving standards and quality of teaching alongside a proposal for introducing student fees.  Dearing introduced the idea that HE teaching should be professionalised but only as a voluntary process.  Student fees and a new system of loans introduced.	HEFCE took up the Dearing recommendations and set up two funded agencies which were expected to take a national lead in accrediting teaching and enhancing teaching quality (these were later combined into the Higher Education Academy).  No direct reference to educational leadership was made in the brief given to these agencies but Dearing's proposed initiatives to radically change the nature of the HE curriculum and student learning experiences and HEFCE's requirement that learning and teaching strategies should be produced in order for HEIs to qualify for additional teaching related funding implied the need for transformative leadership.
<b>2003 -2010</b>		
2003 Higher Education White Paper 'The Future of Higher Education' (Department for Education and Skills, 2003)  2004 The Higher Education Act (HMSO, 2004)	Advocated compulsory training and accreditation for higher education teachers  Labour government Act emphasised high quality teaching for students, fair access/widening participation and new funding arrangements in support of these.  First intimations that the government believed there was a 'leadership deficit' in HE culture.	The hint that political agenda was swinging towards compulsory accreditation of teachers in HE led many HEIs to formalise their accreditation processes for HE teacher training. The UK Professional Standards framework followed this paper and ultimately this has included criteria which relate to AEL  Led to HEFCE including academic leadership as a priority in its annual strategic plans for the first time. Investment in leadership followed with the setting up of the <b>Leadership Foundation for Higher Education</b> which has since thrived and has become self-funding.
2010 Independent Review of Higher	The focus was on funding arrangements	Little impact on education or leadership activity.

Education Funding and Student Finances (The Browne Review) (Browne, 2010)		
<b>Since 2010</b>		
2011 Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System (The Willetts Review)(Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011)  2011 Higher Education Act (HMSO, 2011)	<p>Focused on students as consumers and discussed high level influences which might support students by correcting the perceived 'imbalance of activity' between research and teaching in academia.</p> <p>Relied on the market (variable fees) as a force for improving teaching and on transparency of information to make sure stakeholders make informed choices.</p>	While educational leadership is not explicitly referred to there is an implicit sense that leadership is implicated in the low level prioritisation of teaching in academic lives.
2015 Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice Green Paper (Johnson) (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2015)	<p>Reinforced the 2011 agenda but for the first time teaching excellence is the primary focus of proposed legislation.</p> <p>Introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as a strategic device aimed at influencing HEIs to prioritise teaching and learning through funding differentials.</p>	<p>Before the HE bill went to Parliament the first stage of the TEF had been implemented.</p> <p>The impact on HEIs has been to put greater effort into meeting the criteria for the highest level (gold) TEF standard. This has involved incentivising academic and professional educational leadership activity in some HEIs.</p>

The 1985 Jarratt report was central to defining the **structural changes** which HEIs were expected to introduce following the 1998 Education Reform Act. Parker and Jary (1995) suggest that Jarratt's critique of HEIs as overly elitist and managerial structures and processes as slow to respond to external changes was valid at the time making the political pressure for institutional change inescapable. HEIs needed to respond constructively to the call for greater efficiency and effectiveness or be marginalised. Henkel (2002) suggests this was in reality an evolutionary process, which was already underway in many HEIs prior to the Jarratt report, rather than a sudden transformation. Political influences on HEIs which first arose in the 1980s gradually became more widespread in the 1990s. These included a somewhat outdated bureaucratised focus on quality and accountability which came to permeate HE structures (Parker and Jary, 1995). This was particularly evident after the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act led to alternative models of leadership and

management being introduced; these were often derived from the example set by the polytechnics which were typically led as corporate enterprises prior to becoming Universities. While individual institutions have had a degree of autonomy about how external policy requirements are implemented, since the early 1990s there has in reality been a high degree of standardisation in how HEI organisational cultures operate and these have been remarkably persistent. Typically a formal hierarchical structure led by a VC, acting as chief executive and supported by a senior management team consisting of elite academics and senior professional managers, continues to be ubiquitous in UK HEIs.

Dearing's (1997) focus on the requirement for HEIs to address **the nature and quality of student experiences** in the face of plans to introduce fees raised the level of political involvement in what might be taught and how academics were supported to teach. Dearing encouraged the setting up of two national agencies, the Institute for Learning and Teaching and the Learning and Teaching Subject Network, (subsequently merged into the Higher Education Academy) to support the quality of teaching. However, while the mission statements of all three agencies implicitly required highly skilled and effective leadership, specific references to leadership quality and leadership development of any kind is almost totally absent from their strategies.

However, it was as a result of the Dearing recommendations that HEFCE (1999) required HEIs to produce learning and teaching strategies; only through doing this would they qualify for additional Teaching Quality Enhancement Funds. Following this, and as a direct result of this national intervention, Wareing and Elvidge (2007) describe an escalation in institutional strategic planning for learning and teaching. Monitoring of activity at this time (HEFCE, 2003) showed a rapid increase in the number of learning and teaching strategies that were being drafted and from personal experience I know that a somewhat unplanned outcome of this process was that it led to a rapid increase in the number of senior academic and professional educational leadership roles in HEIs. In most institutions these senior leadership roles were mirrored at faculty and departmental level creating a hierarchical structure of educational leadership positions which is now common to most UK HEIs (Knight & Trowler, 2001). This trend was mirrored in other countries, including New Zealand and

Australia, where similar roles proliferated in the early 2000s. The need to 'bring on' education leaders to ensure the creation, delivery and monitoring of these strategies has also been reflected in institutional HR strategies; role incentives were first introduced at this time in many institutions when it became apparent that there was a low level of academic interest in taking on AEL responsibilities.

In the 2003/4 white paper 'The Future of Higher Education' and subsequent legislation there are the first intimations of political concern about a deficit in relation to **contemporary HE leadership cultures** (Scott, 2011) and arguably, the most important direct national developments relating to AL date from this period. The setting up by the HEFCE of a national organisation was, as Middlehurst (2013 p.280) suggests, a turning point in explicit recognition of the need for effective HE leadership. This was:

the establishment of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) from 2003 to provide a dedicated service of support and advice on leadership, governance and management for all of the UK's universities and colleges of higher education.

The LFHE has become recognised by its stakeholders as an effective and well regarded agency. In its most recent strategy document the LFHE (2014) has set out an ambitious set of targets which reflect its perceived priorities for leadership in the current UK HE landscape. These targets will to be implemented through the provision of programmes, research and consultancy. However, in this document there is no assessment of the particular areas of leadership which the Foundation considers problematic or where priorities might need to fall. As a customer-orientated service provider reliant on funds from an ostensibly resource-poor sector it might be unrealistic to expect the LFHE to make narrowly defined judgements about priorities which may explain this deficiency in the document. However, from my point of view, this means it is difficult to ascertain whether AEL is seen as a priority. An analysis of the programmes it currently offers shows a somewhat generic approach to leadership particularly emphasising individuals with senior positions in organisations or those at transitional moments in their careers. One national programme does focus on changing the learning landscape through the leadership of Technology Enhanced Learning, but apart from this AEL has not been identified explicitly in the Foundation's recurrent programmes. For several

years it has offered a programme (Leading Teaching Teams) which runs occasionally and only if it is commissioned by individual institutions; this has included bespoke consultancy on 'leading the student experience'. As a sign that this might be changing, a more recent initiative has been the introduction of a 'Leading Transformation in Learning and Teaching Leadership Programme' (jointly marketed and run with the HEA). This has enjoyed a measure of success over the last three years<sup>286</sup>

In addition the DfES 2003 white paper indirectly led to AEL being addressed through the introduction of the UK Professional Standards Framework, a nationally recognized framework for benchmarking success within HE teaching and learning support (introduced in 2006). While this initially led to a two tier fellowship award in which AEL was not a criteria, the subsequent extension to a four tier teaching fellowship scheme has provided criteria which can often best be met through engaging with AEL roles.

Since 2003 government policy has become more strident with reference to the student experience through the promotion of the **student as consumer ideology**. National policies since at least the early 1990s have prioritised research but this has gradually changed. Recent policy has articulated concerns about how HEIs (and their academics) focus their attention dominantly on their research agendas<sup>287</sup>; and these have been increasingly portrayed as detrimental to education priorities. Interventions have been recommended as an antidote to this. For example, in an attempt to professionalise and raise the status of teaching the Higher Education White Paper (DfES, 2003) proposed compulsory training for higher education teaching staff; however, ultimately this was not legislated for in the Higher Education Act (HMSO, 2004). This has partially and rather slowly been spontaneously implemented by institutions, reflecting the difficulties governments have in influencing higher education policy in this area.

More recently, the political importance imperative to create **equivalence**

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<sup>286</sup> Evidence for this was provided in a personal conversation with one of the programme leaders on 11/03/2015.

<sup>287</sup> This is somewhat ironic as the one of the primary drivers for this behaviour has been the government funding regimes and the accountability introduced through the REF.

**between research and teaching** was clearly stated in the government's 2011 White Paper (BIS, 2011 p.5) where it was argued that the changes advocated will, indirectly through market forces

'lead to higher education institutions concentrating on high quality teaching and staff earning promotion for teaching ability rather than research alone'.

There has been some evidence that this political rhetoric was viewed with cynicism within academia; evidence for this can be seen in the post-2014 REF actions of many universities where increasingly focus has been on heightening their research related priorities (Morgan, 2015). However, research undertaken on behalf of the HEA (HEA, 2013) shows that nationally a policy focus on promotion in relation to teaching (and through this, I would argue, on AEL) has become significant in many high level institutional strategies.

In a further development, the recent government green paper (BIS, 2015) has taken a highly explicit stance towards teaching as a priority. Through the introduction of the **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)** financial downward pressure will be exerted on HEIs to prioritise teaching. The implications for AEL are not made clear in the green paper; however, anecdotal evidence is starting to emerge that HEIs are addressing the leadership implications of this agenda.

### **Summary**

Watson and other authors in the special edition of the *Higher Education Quarterly* (2014) argue that governmental policy over the last few decades has created significant changes in direction for HEIs; they suggest that this has often been at the whim of individual ministers and sometimes with only the slightest reference to research data. In identifying three time period (pre 2003; 2003-2010; post 2010) I have indicated that successive governmental reviews and related policies at least as far back as Robbins (1963) have emphasised the importance of providing increasing numbers of students with ever better quality experiences. However, it is in the more recent period that reporting through rigorous external quality assurance has become significant and more emphasis has been put by HEIs on centralised monitoring of these processes to ensure successful outcomes. However, the connection between these trends and the need for sound institutional leadership of teaching and learning seem not to have been made externally. On balance, I find myself agreeing with

Watson (2014 p.144) that national policy on academic leadership has largely been implicit and that this as far as institutions are concerned is how they like it to be:

The silence in the story is the absence of helpful higher education self-study and evidence-based institutional leadership. The academic community in the UK has always been more ready to tell a self-serving truth to power than the truth to itself.

There is some explicit evidence that *AL* is recognised as important by government agencies (the LFHE in particular) but I have found no references to the significance of AEL or how this might be incentivised. In asking why this might be the case, I have concluded that this is partly driven by government funding policy where the emphasis has been on providing education funding as a 'given' i.e. it has been the baseline for funding allocated in relation to student numbers (input-based); while competitive additional funding has been available only for research (output-based). This has incentivised HEIs to compete for research funds and prioritise research work which attracts this funding. The QAA has to some extent acted as a counterbalance to this trend; it has been noticeable during my career that when review teams are about to visit an institution there is a spate of intense AEL activity; but most of the time it could be characterised as 'bubbling along beneath the surface'.

However, political reforms can have an influence on individual attitudes (Henkel, 2000) to AEL. A generation of academics has grown up in HEIs where external incentives and disincentives have influenced the behaviour of their institutions. They have forged their identities within a research incentivised environment (HEA, 2009) and one outcome has been that across the UK this has marginalised career aspirations relating to education and AEL (Wareing, 2004).

In conclusion, it seems that AEL is *not* explicitly identified as a priority in UK national policies. In relation to the government agencies, while the LFHE is generally felt to serve the sector well, AEL has not been one of its priorities. However, HE institutions and their academics are highly sensitised to the potential impact of external policies and agencies on their working lives and this influences their strategies (Shattock 2013 p.226). Therefore, the impact of external drivers is of some importance for my study and in several places I refer back to this desk study as a source of information.

## Appendix 2 Critical realism: Terminology and principles

CR terminology and principles are widely discussed and described in the CR literature and in compiling this appendix I have drawn in particular on

- Clark (2008) in the *SAGE encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods*;
- Edwards et al. (2014); Elder-Vass (2012); Maxwell (2012) and Pawson, (2006)
- a very useful article by Reed (2009).

In bringing these terms together, and explaining them in some detail, my aim has been to ensure readers who are not familiar with CR principles have a reference point when reading my thesis.

Terminology	Understanding the concept	Application in my research
<b>Double recognition</b>	CR permits the co-existence of the two major philosophical positions. CR researchers accept an objective view of the world (accepting that an external social reality exists) while also incorporating a relativist dimension into their understanding of the world (all discourse must be taken at face value) acknowledging the competing values and politically laden interests at work in way people and groups articulate their understandings of that reality. O'Mahoney & Vincent (2014 p.3) refer to this as ' <b>double recognition</b> '.	As I have already suggested I position myself within a world view that accepts the externalisation of social reality and allows flexibility in thinking about <i>contextualised</i> explanations relating to academic attitudes to EL in a way that a social constructionist approach would not normally permit.
<b>Mechanisms and causal powers (M&amp;CPs)</b>	This is an umbrella term used by some CR researchers (in particular Elder Vass, 2012 and Vincent & Wapshott, 2014) to capture the emergent properties (causal powers) which are possessed by (material or non material) entities and the underlying contributing influences (mechanisms) through which these M&CPs are produced.	I use the term extensively throughout my research as short hand for the influences on academic attitudes and stances relating to AEL and ELD.
<b>Levels and laminated systems</b>	These two concepts are central to Bhasker's approach to CR (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014 p.6). Entities (the material events/ organizations or immaterial elements such as ideas/mechanisms which interact in any system) are organized hierarchically into levels. These include Bhaskar's seven levels of scale (D. Scott & Bhaskar, 2006) ranging from the sub level (motives and consciousness) to the global level. They can also refer to social, cultural and economic	Levels which are relevant to my analysis include the micro (local academic), meso (institutional) and macro (external) For me this means exploring how academic attitudes to AEL will have roots in many levels of open academic (and beyond) systems (Figure

<p><b>Upward and downward causation</b></p>	<p>levels. At each level entities can be understood as <b>causal</b> in their impact. The causal properties of entities in open and emergent systems at one level will normally be implicated at other levels and in combination may be greater than the sum of the lower levels (hence the idea of <i>lamination</i>).</p> <p>These terms are used by (Elder-Vass, 2012b) to indicate the <i>direction</i> in which M&amp;CPs may be influential. In upward causation the causal powers of the parts interact to affect the whole in downward causation transformations in the higher levels of the organisation affect the parts below (Vincent &amp; Wapshott, 2014). This principle links to structure and agency below.</p>	<p>5.7). Later in my research I refer to '<b>multiply nested contexts</b>' to capture this principle (Figure 6.2).</p> <p>Exploring the direction of causation is important in an HEI in order to avoid oversimplifying the possible M&amp;CPs at work. In particular it allow emphasis on the active agency of academics which is central to Archer's work (4.3).</p>
<p><b>Structure and agency</b></p>	<p>These are not strictly CR concepts; the relative role of each and the way they interrelate is widely debated in social research. CRs take the view that structure and agency are <b>analytically distinct</b> but 'interact and combine in complex ways to generate the dynamics that have the potential to transform social situations' (Reed, 2009 p.432). The extent to which this potential is possessed, exercised or actualized (is effective) varies but is central to the idea of active agency (O'Mahoney &amp; Vincent, 2014). This principle is important in Archer's work which I discuss in more detail in section 4.3</p>	<p>The relative significance of structure and agency emerges throughout my empirical research (Figure 4.4 &amp; 6.2). Key to this is the importance of multiple configurations of structural, socio-cultural and agentic M&amp;CPs which interact in academic contexts.</p>
<p><b>Stratification (or depth ontology)</b></p>	<p>Unlike positivism for which only the observable is 'real' and constructionism for which only discourse is acceptable as explanation, CR identifies three strata: a. the <b>empirical</b> (human perceptions and experiences) ; the <b>actual</b> (the events/entities which actually occur/exist in space and time) and c. the <b>real</b> (mechanisms and structures which generate the actual/empirical and are not observable or measurable directly) (Reed, 2009 p.432). This search for deeper meaning is challenging methodologically but CRs would argue that without it the understanding we have is partial.</p>	<p>In my research this means that the (empirical) preferences of academics and (actual) observable characteristics of the institution will not provide a complete and sufficient understanding of the underlying M&amp;CPs which might influence attitudes and stances These can only be accessed by looking beyond the immediate context to the real M&amp;CPs which may underpin attitudes and stances.</p>

## **Divergence in CR research**

In using these terms CRs have increasingly diverged in both their philosophical approaches and the methodologies they espouse. Two significant branches of CR have emerged. This short summary highlights the differences and positions my thesis in the applied CR branch.

### **Emancipatory CR**

One branch, led by Bhaskar, has taken a 'critical turn' generally described as 'dialectical CR' (DCR). This has evolved into a branch of critical emancipatory and ethical/spiritual enquiry<sup>288</sup> (Bhaskar & Norrie, 1998) with a particular focus on the importance of power and hegemony in social explanation. DCR aims to explore and explain structures and mechanisms, not to identify patterns but to separate the real from the actual from the empirical (see stratification above). If it is accepted that social structures pre-exist and influence human activities, *critical* explanation and exploration are important in understanding these. Hence DCRs emphasise radical and critical thinking with the intention of creating action and change. For O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) this suggests that CRs should identify the means whereby 'recalcitrant structures' might be transformed into 'congenial structures' and this, for example, links to the idea of the *strength* of causal powers. They argue that, where counteracting powers are weak, mechanisms are more likely to act as anticipated by those who possess the power. For example, In relation to the emancipatory and critical turn in CR, Bolden et al. (2011) argue, that in leadership research the contextual importance of *power* in organizations is increasingly emphasised; as it is 'embedded in the material, structural, bureaucratic and cultural elements of an organization, and has a constraining and enabling influence on the abilities of leaders to pursue their goals and the ability of followers to accept or resist these goals'. (p.97)

### **Applied CR**

The second branch of CR research has been influenced by a pragmatic 'turn' associated closely with the emergence of what has been called Applied Critical Realism (ACR) largely within management and organizational studies.

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<sup>288</sup> Elder-Vass (p.11) suggests that many CRs are sceptical of this 'turn' in Bhaskar's work.

Examples of ACR in action are found in Joseph Maxwell's *A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research* (2012), Paul Edwards et al's significant compilation of examples of ACR (2014) and various publications associated with Ray Pawson (Pawson, 2006).

This thinking has had a considerable impact on ACR research design (Chapter two section 6) but it can also be seen to have a methodological and philosophical dimension. Primarily, this has been to provide a 'layman's interpretation' (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014 p.2) of the basic conceptual tenants of CR as one way of providing an essential 'philosophical scaffolding' for those who have an interest in CR as research methodology. Access to the profound and somewhat impenetrable 'thickets of jargon' (p.2) used by CR philosophers, particularly by reference to specific pieces of CR research is one (welcome) outcome of the ACR movement. The approach adopted has generally been to describe and explain a piece of substantive research with reference to CR terminology and principles. In many cases the philosophical principles simply emerge in the process of reporting on the research (Kempster & Parry, 2014; Marks & O'Mahoney, 2014; Sims-Shouten & Riley, 2014; Vincent & Wapshott, 2014); this provides an antidote to the highly theoretical treatment of CR typically found in the work of Bhaskar and other key DCR proponents.

Taking Maxwell's (2012) work as an example, he writes in simple and relatively jargon free terms about several of the CR principles described above, including double recognition, holistic causality and stratification. He takes the point of view that CR is pragmatic in its approach and theoretically eclectic, arguing that theories about the real world cannot 'claim to be a complete, accurate representation of any phenomena ... we should view every theory from both the "believing" and "doubting" perspectives'.(p.ix).

The work of Ray Pawson has been particularly influential (Pawson, 2002; 2003). Whilst he might not identify himself as an ACR, he adopts a practical and applied approach to CR that serves his purpose of theorising *evaluation research* particularly well. Pawson takes the purpose of CR research to be an exploration of *actions and mechanisms* operating in *particular contexts and structures*, which may potentially help to interpret *outcomes* (he describes that

as the CSM =O model). He argues that this generalised model works in situations of non-linear *and* complex causation. He aligns his views on causal analysis with the CR viewpoint that *social structures* consist of 'relatively enduring products' and are interrelated with *human actions* in an iterative way. Pawson (2006) has distanced himself from the dialectical turn in CR arguing that in the attempt to close the systems being investigated the essence of the realist approach is lost. In some ways Pawson represents the post positivist wing of CR and is most comfortable in aligning his thinking with some of the traditional facets of scientific empirical study such as 'clear conceptualization and hypothesis-making, the usage of critical comparisons, the discovery of empirical patterns and the monitoring of their scope and extent' (n.p.)

ACRs consider that the *critical* in CR refers to something that scientists apply to each other, and this competitive cross-validation is the means by which they get closer to the truth (Pawson, 2006). The vision is of a community of researchers in 'constant, focused disputation, attending to each other's arguments and illustrations, mutually monitoring and keeping each other honest' until some 'working consensus emerged'. Most ACRs, in their search for credible research outcomes, would accept this concept of criticality.



### Appendix 3 Empirical data sources (chronologically reported)

Source of data	Type of data*	Where?	When?	Numbers involved	Initial purpose (where relevant)	Purpose in my thesis
Semi structured interviews with executive academics and senior managers (ELs) with institutional responsibilities.	Ethnographic	University of Exeter	2012-13 Followed up in 2016-17	7 people but 8 interviews	Research for EEDD034 essay	Data for thesis chapter four (section 5)
Semi structured interviews with early career academics (ECAs).	Ethnographic	University of Exeter	Summer 2013	5	Research for EEDD034 essay	Pilot for thesis referred to in chapter five
Questionnaire involving emerging leaders who attended an LD programme.	Ethnographic	University of Exeter	Summer 2014	30	Evaluation of leadership development programme for University	Contextual information for chapter four in Appendix 8 (online survey)
Semi structured interviews with academic leaders (SALs) in formal roles in Colleges.	Ethnographic	University of Exeter	Summer 2014	15	Commissioned evaluation/research for UoE	Data for thesis chapter four (section 6)
Dialogic interviews with ECAs in first five years of their careers.	Ethnographic	University of Exeter	Autumn 2015	10	n/a	Data collected specifically for chapter five
UoE policy and strategy documents.	Structural Textual	University of Exeter	2014	n/a	Background research for evaluation study	Data collated for chapter four (section 4)
UoE website			2017		Personal research for EdD thesis	Updated for chapter four
Recently published research about UoE.	Historical	Various	2015-17	n/a		Data collated for chapter four (section 3.2/3.3)

\*The type of data is based on the classification used by Reed (2009 p.440) in his overview of empirical evidence used in critical realist research. Four categories: Ethnographic, structural, textual and historical are described as typically represented in CR research. Ethnographic is not used in a context which suggests the research has involved an ethnographic methodology.



## Appendix 4 University of Exeter policies and strategies

In this appendix extracts taken from UoE policies and strategies have been annotated to identify where they emphasize a) ambition, competitiveness and positionality (in yellow), b) collaborative approaches (in green) and c) education leadership (in blue).

### Document 1 University of Exeter Corporate Strategy (2016-2021)<sup>289</sup>

The current corporate strategy describes the UoE mission, vision and key values (see box 1) and identifies six key supporting strategies (the sovereign strategies including the education strategy) and four facilitating strategies (including the people strategy) which ensure that the right conditions are in place to achieve UoE's aims.

#### Box 1 Extract from University Corporate Strategy 2016-2021

##### Our Mission

We **make the exceptional happen** by challenging traditional thinking and defying conventional boundaries.

##### Our Vision

Our driving ambition is **to be a global 100 research leader** and create graduates of distinction within a community of the most talented and creative minds.

##### Our Values

Alongside great success comes responsibility and at Exeter we have developed a core set of **values, which are central to everything we do**. These values are important to us because they define who we are and **are shared by our students, colleagues, graduates, stakeholders and supporters**. We use our values to set strategy and to guide us in making day-to-day decisions. Our values are:

##### Ambition

**Ambition** has driven us to where we are today, and will **help us to sustain a position within the global 100**.

##### Collaboration

We work at our best in **active collaboration** between students, colleagues and external partners.

##### Challenge

We relish challenge and **reach for the previously unachievable**.

##### Community

We **support and inspire each other** to be the best that we can be.

##### Impact

Making the exceptional happen requires disruptive thinking, fresh ways of working and solutions with impact.

##### Rigour

We strive to reach the **highest standards** of scholarship and service.

<sup>289</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/vision>

The (sovereign) education strategy (Box 2) and the (supporting) people strategy (Box 3) are the two which are of particular interest in my research; each has its high level goals and targets articulated in the corporate strategy.

## **Box 2 Delivering an internationally excellent education**

We want our graduates to **stand out from the crowd** and be among the best in the world. That's why at Exeter it's a person's ability that matters most, not their family circumstances or their background.

We are creating an internationally excellent education, which gives our talented students the ability to go on to make a difference in the world. To become **graduates of real distinction** we must stretch, challenge and engage with our students. Our education is characterised by the **partnership we have with our students** in developing their own learning and helping them to become agents of change. We are working hard to create programmes which instill a life-long love of learning, stimulate creativity, a worldwide outlook, leadership, the ability to work with others, analytical skills, resilience and imagination.

We plan to increase the opportunities for students to learn alongside top academics, carry out research and take part in work experience around the world.

The experience our students gain while studying at Exeter doesn't end on graduation day but continues throughout their lives through our excellent graduate career and social networks.

We will achieve this by:

- **Partnering with students** across and between our vibrant campuses, including working closely with the Students' Guild and FXU;
- Delivering outstanding interdisciplinary courses, with leading academic and industry partners;
- Instilling a passion for learning in our students, through more opportunities to work alongside our top academics;
- Increasing opportunities for overseas study and work and a curriculum with a global outlook;
- Promoting social mobility by encouraging diversity, where ability and potential are valued.
- Helping all students pursue their intellectual, sporting and cultural passions;
- Creating new opportunities for postgraduate study via the Exeter Doctoral College, which will **give our students a competitive advantage**;
- Embracing the digital transformation of education to complement face-to-face learning through online learning.

We'll know if we've succeeded by:

- **Consistently achieving the highest classification within the Teaching Excellence Framework;**
- Ranking in the **UK top 10 for undergraduate student satisfaction**, plus scoring above average Russell Group results for postgraduate taught experience;
- A **top 10 UK ranking for how successful our graduates are at securing graduate level jobs or further study and attaining a sector-leading position in terms of graduate earnings**;
- Growing our international student population to 25 per cent of the total. Making sure a fifth of 2020 graduates took part in at least one international opportunity;
- Achieving our Fair Access Targets, which helps talented students come to Exeter, irrespective of their background;
- Increasing postgraduate student numbers with a bigger proportion of taught students;
- Increasing the amount of **shared research between students and academics** which appears in industry-recognised publications.

### Box 3 Supporting our people to make the exceptional happen

We believe that we are capable of **making exceptional things happen**. To achieve this we have to attract, develop and retain outstanding individuals from all around the globe. We know that in order to achieve our aims more effectively **our community must be diverse and representative. We must work together as one group, unified by our shared values.** Promoting the wellbeing of all is also crucial. We are committed to supporting both our students and colleagues in order that they may realise their full potential. If we wish to make the exceptional happen **we must bring together all of our collective talents and energy within a positive environment.**

We will achieve this by:

- Creating a broad international **environment of students and colleagues that allows and encourages the sharing** and creation of brilliant ideas;
- Encouraging **continuous improvement** which gives students and colleagues the ability to realise opportunities, forge ahead with change and make the exceptional happen;
- Providing the facilities, spaces and resources to create **the best** educational experience for our students and work environment for our colleagues;
- Recognising the importance of wellbeing, and promoting the talents of our people. We already have over 250 thriving student societies and sports clubs, plus an active programme of activities for staff across our campuses;
- Enabling all of our colleagues to flourish by creating opportunities for career development. This will be done through externally accredited programmes and a range of internal learning opportunities, such as those championed by the Exeter Academic programme;
- **Developing our senior team as Global Leaders of the future;**
- Continuing to create **a culture which promotes equal opportunities and values diversity, so that everyone can achieve their potential;**
- Embedding a **positive, supportive culture** at the heart of our environment, which changes with the times and helps us to provide the right services for colleagues and students.

We'll know if we've succeeded by:

- Achieving more Athena SWAN awards and equality charter marks across all applicable departments, and progression towards at least one gold award;
- Increasingly positive feedback from colleagues, which will be monitored through the employee engagement survey;
- **Ranking in the top 10 in the UK for student satisfaction and a higher than average score within the Russell Group for postgraduates' taught and research experience.**

In relation to leadership the plan suggests very little. I have highlighted the only reference to leadership development (for the senior team) in blue.

### Document 2 University of Exeter Education Strategy (2009/10-2015)

The 2009/10 strategy (Box4) prioritized leadership amongst its strategic aims and indicated how the targets would be operationalized on an annual basis. I ought to clarify that these two strategies coincide with the time I was heavily

involved in their production. Prioritising institutional and local educational leadership development was a key element of my personal responsibilities.

#### **Box 4 Extracts from education strategy 2009/10**

*A key challenge we face, as a research intensive university, is to ensure that our academic staff are able to produce excellent research and provide excellent teaching. We will continue to look at ways to reduce the burden of administration and regulatory compliance, while ensuring that we maintain robust systems to safeguard academic standards. But we must look at new ways to exploit the complementarity of research and teaching, for the benefit of staff and students alike. Schools will feature at the heart of the new proposals.* (note this pre dated the reorganisation of Schools into Colleges)

#### **P17 Development plan**

*Develop and sustain highly effective and committed leadership in education at central, School and subject levels*  
*Identify & develop education leaders committed to excellence in teaching in a research intensive environment*

In 2009/10, we will:

- *Develop an enhanced role for Directors of Education, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities for School and subject performance on key education metrics*
- *Implement and expand the seminar series on Inspiring Leadership in Education to include international speakers and visiting faculty*
- *Develop and sustain highly professional staff committed to delivering excellent teaching in a research intensive environment*
- *Ensure that criteria for probation, annual performance review and promotion fully recognise the importance and value of teaching and provide appropriate rewards for excellent teaching*

Ensure that all staff involved in teaching receive appropriate, timely and effective training and development programmes

In 2009/10, we will:

- *Review, integrate & enhance PCAP/LTHE programmes and ensure sustainable funding streams to support these programmes*
- *Develop & introduce a high quality & distinctive teaching training programme for PhD students, especially international students*
- *Encourage & enable all relevant staff to obtain professional accreditation for teaching (HEA Fellow and Associate Fellow schemes)*
- *Develop educational excellence criteria for probation, promotion and reward*
- *review the framework of support for the identification, development and success of staff who will take educational leadership roles’.*

It is noticeable that the 2010 strategy refers to educational leadership as a priority but in describing developmental activity there is no explicit mention of leadership development.

### **Document 3. University of Exeter Education Strategy 2014-2020<sup>290</sup>**

<sup>290</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/vision/educationstrategy/> This strategy was at first aimed at the period up to 2017 but was later incorporated into the current corporate strategy.

The current education strategy (Box 5) includes a set of strategic aims, supporting objectives and targets. The revision of these is described as a 'live' developmental process and the annual review of progress is a joint responsibility of the colleges and a central professional unit.

#### **Box 5 Our Strategic Aims and Objectives: Shaping the Exeter Experience**

The strategic aims and supporting objectives detailed below will ensure the University succeeds in creating an exceptional experience for all Exeter students.

##### **Aim One: Academically-able students from across the world empowered as engaged learners and agents of change**

- I. To attract **the most academically-able applicants** to Exeter, from the UK and across the world*
- II. To increase levels of proactive student engagement with their academic studies*
- III. To **inspire students to lead change**, in the University and community, both globally and locally*

##### **Aim Two: Excellent opportunity for high quality placements and internships and the development of employability attribute**

- I. To measure and improve the employability attributes of all students through course, extra-curricular and out-of-term-time activities*
- II. To provide the opportunity for every student to gain a placement or internship*

##### **Aim Three: Research-inspired, inquiry-led learning and discovery**

- I. To enable every student **to learn with the creators of world-leading research***
- II. To extend the opportunities for students to discover and learn in innovative ways through their own research and inquiry in each year of study*
- III. To improve the research environment by enhancing the quality of support and facilities for postgraduate students and research*

##### **Aim Four: International learning, research and work experiences**

- I. To significantly increase opportunities for students to study, research or work with a university, employer or voluntary body in another country*
- II. To provide international perspectives in all programmes and a multi-cultural experience for all students*
- III. To grow the numbers of international staff and students in our academic community*

##### **Aim Five: First class face-to-face educational experiences enhanced with a variety of technologies**

- I. To ensure all students are taught and supported by **the very best educators**, providing inspiring, challenging and innovative learning*
- II. To make available **the best learning spaces and technologies***
- III. To equip students and staff with the ability to use technologies effectively for learning and student success*

##### **Aim Six: Multi-disciplinary learning that tackles contemporary global challenges**

- I. To make learning from more than one discipline a feature of all programmes*
- II. To provide all students with the opportunity to explore the relevance of different disciplines to contemporary challenges facing the world*

It is notable that there has been a shift in emphasis from the earlier strategy and that none of the five strategic aims mention educational leadership. In the targets, although there is frequent reference to *students* developing leadership skills, there are only two references to staff educational leadership:

- Every discipline has at least one educator recognised as a national leader for learning and teaching<sup>291</sup> and more than 75% of staff who teach exceed national standards for learning and teaching<sup>292</sup>
- Review the framework of support for the identification, development and success of staff who will take educational leadership roles, to ensure that the quality of educational leadership at all levels of the University remains high

Unlike the earlier strategy the emphasis on development is clarified here; implicit in the clarification is the assumption that the quality of leadership is already high and the support needs to be for those who are emergent leaders.

#### **Document 4 TEF briefing January 2017**

The UoE is addressing how the education strategy might be revised to reflect the Government's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). This new assessment system, introduced by the Government to monitor, assess and reward the highest quality of teaching in HE, aims to:

- Better inform students about the quality of teaching at an institution so they can use this information when making a choice about what and where to study.
- Recognise and reward excellent teaching and raise esteem for teaching.
- Raise teaching standards across the Higher Education sector, including in universities, further education colleges and alternative providers.

The outcomes will be based on three TEF criteria (teaching quality, learning environment and student outcomes and learning gain) benchmarked against data from the National Student Survey (NSS), the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education [DLHE] survey and student progression data. UoE was rating Gold in July 2017.

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<sup>291</sup> 'Recognised national leader' refers to those educators demonstrating they meet the requirements of descriptor 4 of the UK PSF.

<sup>292</sup> The proportion meeting descriptor 2 of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Learning and Teaching.

### Box 6 Education strategy: Teaching Excellence Framework

Achieving a Gold TEF rating is important to the University in terms of demonstrating our reputation for, and commitment to, delivering an excellent educational experience. It is also important as being awarded a Gold rating would enable us to increase student fees, year on year, in line with inflation (estimated to be 2.8% for 2017/18) subject to continuing TEF success. This is vital to the sustainability of the University because we have long argued that in order to continue providing the best quality education and student experience, and to compete on a global stage, we need the resource to invest in our teaching facilities, in our outstanding colleagues, and in our campuses. In the current academic year, the £9,000 tuition fee in England is only worth around £8,200 in real terms compared to its value in 2012, and is falling in real terms each year. Only by linking the fee to inflation will we be able to provide the levels of investment we need to continue to deliver the world-class education our students deserve and expect.

Therefore, at a time when our institutions face significant cost pressures, the TEF presents us with an opportunity to further invest in our students, while at the same time being recognised for the outstanding teaching we provide.

### Document 5. People (Human Resources) Strategy 2016-2021

The People Strategy<sup>293</sup> was revised and published in March 2017 and provides a up to date picture of the extent to which education and leadership are reflected in priorities for 'attracting and developing a talented and diverse workforce'.

### Box 7 People Strategy 2016-2020

We must attract, develop and retain outstanding individuals from around the globe and work together as one group, unified by our shared values. Our People strategy outlines six interconnected themes which together will help to secure our position as a high-performing global institution and enhance the global reputation of the University internally and externally as a good employer.

**Recruitment** – We strive to build a diverse and inclusive workforce by attracting and on-boarding talented staff from across the world.

**Career Paths** – Exeter is a place to launch and build distinguished careers.

**Leadership and Development** – Exeter is a place people can fulfil their potential and ambitions.

**Recognition and Reward** – We create a high performance culture, rewarding people and their performance fairly.

**Positive Working Environment** – Exeter is a great place to work.

**Our HR Services** – HR Services are professional, forward looking, innovative, customer service focused and efficient.

Three of these themes (career paths, leadership and development and recognition and reward) are of interest in my research. In the section on career paths (Box 8) there is reference to the development and learning opportunities for new staff and for those at different stages of their career. There is an

<sup>293</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/abouthr/strategy/>

emphasis on supporting academic leaders and developing new leaders. This may be a direct response to the statement in the current education strategy but there is no mention of education specifically in either the career paths or the leadership and development theme (Box 9).

#### **Box 8 Career paths**

##### **What we want to achieve:**

##### **Fair, flexible and dynamic career paths**

*Alongside the development and learning opportunities for new staff, we will define career pathways for all academics and professional services staff. Development plans will explore opportunities for career paths for professional services.*

##### **Structured development frameworks**

*We are working to create a range of development opportunities available to academic and professional services staff at every stage of their career.*

##### **Supporting academic leadership**

*We are working with our academic leaders to clearly define academic leadership and management roles and ensure that there is a structure, development and performance criteria associated with these roles together with opportunities to develop new and existing leaders.*

##### **Barrier-free careers for female academics**

*We want to lead the way in providing equal opportunities. We aim to support our female academics at all career stages, increasing opportunities for female academic networking and demonstrating our commitment to reducing the Gender Pay Gap.*

##### **How we will do this:**

- *Individual career pathways defined for all academics*
- *Clearer structures for development and promotion.*
- *Workforce and development plans will identify career paths for professional services staff.*
- *Commitment to female academic careers and the reduction in Gender Pay Gap by 2020.*

##### **How will this benefit our staff?**

- *There will be improved opportunities for staff to develop skills which will help advance people's careers and contribute to the University's strategic goals.*
- *The University will experience an increase in the engagement of talented candidates by providing more enriching roles alongside the opportunity to develop careers.*
- *By providing an improved PDR process, flexible career pathways and improved development opportunities, employees and their managers will have more meaningful conversations about their work and development which will align their aspirations with the business needs of the University.*
- *All personal data will be held in one place, input once and used many times, reducing the administrative burden on individuals and line managers.*

#### **Box 9 Leadership and Development**

##### **What we want to achieve**

##### **Skills to thrive in the global education environment**

*We are updating training and development opportunities to reflect the broad skills required of our academics. In addition to our 'Global Leaders' programme, we will offer training in stakeholder networking and growing industry partnerships at both individual and college level.*

##### **Give academic leaders the confidence and support to excel**

*A new Heads of Discipline development programme will launch in 2017, alongside the development of new opportunities for other leadership roles.*

##### **Key management training**

*We will offer management training for academic roles and professional services staff alongside*

*continuous development throughout careers.*

**Continuous development for professional services staff**

*We will continue to work with heads of service to develop career frameworks and development pathways for every professional service.*

**Consistent standards**

*We will work across all academic development work areas (including the Doctoral College) to agree a unified development strategy and clear transparent processes and standards.*

**Meaningful conversations about performance**

*In 2017/18, we will launch the 'ePDR', giving people access to personal performance data.*

**How we will do this:**

*Global leadership skills training and by 2018 increased global relationships and partnerships.*

*Develop new leadership and management training for academic leaders.*

*Work with all academic development and education stakeholders to establish a clear set deliverables from our service.*

*Provide additional development opportunities for academics and develop modular online and blended learning.*

*Develop an ePDR system and process.*

*Develop a coaching and mentoring strategy.*

**How will this benefit our staff?**

*Academic colleagues will be able to clearly identify learning and development opportunities available to them at all stages of their career.*

*There will be more opportunities for our academic colleagues to develop as academic managers without any detrimental effect on their academic careers.*

*By providing better access to performance information, managers and employees will experience improved conversations about performance and development.*

**Box 10 Recognition and Reward**

**What we want to achieve:**

**Matching contribution with rewards**

*Introduction of a new electronic PDR system to improve the PDR processes linked to individual performance across the University in 2017/2018.*

**Maximising our people potential**

*By using performance data and systems more effectively, we will ensure we support staff to succeed in achieving their potential.*

**Retaining talent**

*We are developing incentives, including the level of facilities, opportunities and benefits we can offer to retain academics who are pivotal to the success of our Research Excellence Framework. More broadly, we want to develop a suite of rewards we can offer across all job families when there is a retention issue.*

**How we will do this:**

*Review and update all reward initiatives to ensure they meet the principles of the Reward Strategy.*

*Succession plans in place.*

*Plans in place for developing talent and managing those who are performing exceptionally.*

*Improved access and utilisation of performance data as part of PDR and management processes.*

*Positive solutions to help manage economic and political turbulence.*

**How will this benefit our staff?**

- *Decision-making processes around reward linked to high performance will be quicker, more objective and more transparent.*
- *Our staff will be supported to succeed by appropriate reward initiatives linked to their continued development.*

In relation to recognition and reward it is noticeable that there is a process for developing talent and managing people who are performing exceptionally; this

is not linked to any particular staff group. However, the retention of staff is only described as a target for academics who are pivotal to the REF. In some ways this is reflected in the most developed strategy for academics which combines career progression with recognition and reward, The Exeter Academic.

### **Document 6. The Exeter Academic**

This process describes in detail how, through meeting a range of criteria, academic careers progress at UoE from probation to full professor. There is a tendency to separate the careers of researchers and those specialising in education (notice the 'or' in the introduction to the strategy in box 11 and the separation of the criteria into two sets, E&R academics (Box 11-13)<sup>294</sup> and E&S academics (Box 14)<sup>295</sup>. It is also important to note that the early emphasis in planning and developing the strategy has been on the E&R roles.

Three sets of criteria and related requirements for progression are described at each stage of the career ladder. These are education, research and impact and academic citizenship. In boxes 11-14 I have only included the education criteria even though the philosophy of the Exeter academic is that these are a holistic package. Although my study is interested primarily in those criteria which impact on ECAs (at the lecturer end of the scale), I have included the subsequent levels as they potentially impact on the future career trajectories of ECAs and the views they express (in chapter 6) about their 'possible selves'. At all levels the underlying criteria are incorporated and the additional criteria are added.

#### **Box 11 The Exeter Academic**

Our academic staff, whether Education and Research or Education and Scholarship specialists, must have the opportunity to be at the absolute cutting edge of their discipline, *or (my italics) at the forefront of innovation and quality in learning and teaching.*

The Exeter Academic is important for all academics here and those considering joining us. It will ensure that criteria and processes are clearer for progression. It will offer greater levels of investment in academic careers including Academic Management training and help to build individual global profiles and provide core academic development as well as tailored individual opportunities. The criteria for progression and promotion highlight the elements we value most highly: the ability to educate with rigour and in ways inspired by our research, to advance knowledge and discovery, to translate research into impact, sometimes commercial impact, and to be collegiate and collaborative.

<sup>294</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/exeteracademic/yourcareer/educationandresearch/>

<sup>295</sup> <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/exeteracademic/yourcareer/educationandscholarship/>

### **Box 12 Education expectations for probation and progression to senior lecturer**

**For your appointment to be confirmed and your period of probation to be completed satisfactorily, you will be expected to:**

- gain Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy by successfully completing the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP) programme during the probationary period;
- demonstrate effective contribution to teaching, evidenced by (inter alia) good student feedback, good module evaluation and formal peer observations/reviews;
- increase teaching commitments over the probation period to a level similar to other staff in the discipline;
- hold an active role in requisite design, review and QA processes;
- perform the role of personal tutor;
- demonstrate capacity to be a sole or joint module leader (or equivalent level of responsibility in your College) for either a complex team-taught module or several individual modules.
- mentor staff (eg Postgraduate Teaching Assistants) as assigned;
- develop capacity for innovative teaching (eg. Digital Learning) and approaches to student support and guidance;

### **Education expectations for Progression to Senior Lecturer**

**To achieve progression to Senior Lecturer - in addition to continuing to meet the Education requirements for confirmation of appointment - you will be expected to:**

- demonstrate engagement in continuing professional development related to teaching, learning, assessment and as appropriate related academic or professional practice.
- lead innovative, research-led and (wherever appropriate) inter-disciplinary teaching.
- support and promote high quality learning, evidenced by (inter alia) student achievement and external examiners' reports.
- demonstrate achievement in promoting student satisfaction, evidenced by (inter alia) good module evaluation or nomination for Students' Guild Teaching Awards.
- demonstrate successful promotion and support of student engagement, evidenced by (inter alia) mentoring and supporting development of Students as Change Agents and other similar initiatives.
- assume the role of module leader and demonstrate educational leadership beyond the module level, for example, programme leadership, admissions officer, senior tutor role.

It is recognised that you may not have the opportunity to undertake all of the examples given above. Your academic manager will discuss the appropriate expectations with you.

### **Box 13 Education expectations for progression to Associate Professor and Professor**

#### **Education expectations for progression to Associate Professor**

You will be expected to make a significant contribution to the leadership and management of the development of teaching and learning strategies and academic standards for the College and subject area. The following examples are intended to provide an indication the range of evidence that may be taken into account

- evidence of outstanding teaching in your field potentially at national level;
- lead University wide initiatives related to Education and Scholarship (eg developing market led PGT programmes that are attractive internationally)
- lead cross-College activities to enhance the broader student experience;
- collaborate in University wide initiatives to enhance Student Support;
- take a leading role in University procedures relating to student support and disciplinary processes;
- lead external accreditation by professional bodies;

- take a major role in creating and implementing policy related to quality and standards;
- be the primary author of **internationally recognised learning resources**;
- develop professional courses with the NHS or other professional bodies;
- National Teaching Fellow Status (or application for this as evidenced by University selection process and award of University Teaching Fellowship in recognition of quality of application);
- Award of HEA Senior Fellowship via our ASPIRE programme.

#### **Education expectations for progression to Professor**

To achieve progression to **Professor** you will be expected to demonstrate:

- evidence of leading and delivering challenging and innovative learning activities/teaching materials and/or of evaluating their impact on student learning
- experience of introducing innovative changes to new programme development, degree curricula and a significant contribution to the skills/knowledge base in relation to teaching and learning within the institution and/or discipline
- evidence of leadership in teaching such as Fellowship of the HEA at Senior or Principal level, or equivalent evidence such as recognition by a learned society

#### **Box 14 Expectations of leadership in promotion criteria for E & S academics**

**Associate lecturer to lecturer** Evidence of educational leadership

- in designing, planning and co-ordinating whole modules or areas of learning.
- on aspects of a scholarly project
- on aspects of a quality review or accreditation process

**Lecturer to senior lecturer** Evidence of educational leadership

- in major new teaching learning and assessment design/developments at programme/module level
- in being recognised as the leader on a specific area of student support
- in taking the role of academic lead
- in being well respected for leadership of a significant curriculum area
- in taking a significant leadership role in developing and implementing projects to enhance the student experience in line with the education strategy.
- In organising and leading on outreach, recruitment and networking events

At this level the academic would be expected to have or be close to being an SFHEA.

**Senior lecturer to associate professor** Evidence of educational leadership

- for substantive new strategies for a programme/ discipline and elements of college level activity including taking overall responsibility for review and accreditation events and QA process for the discipline
- for significant design and development of the overall curriculum
- in taking on a stage co-ordination or programme leadership role for complex student issues
- in developing of substantive aspects of student support across the college
- in acting as an academic lead and supporting, managing and leading more junior staff.
- in relationship to administration (eg admissions) and committees
- as an excellent manager of a unit or area of activity eg Director of Education, UG studies or PG studies
- in relation to gaining external funding for education projects
- lead on national disciplinary networks and external relations

At this level the academic would be expected to have or be close to being an PFHEA.

**Associate professor to professor** Evidence of educational leadership

- for several major discipline/college activities and some university-wide activity
- across the university for student support and QA activity
- through being recognised nationally as a leading educator in the field
- in designing and dissemination major projects internally and (inter)nationally
- in representing the university nationally and internationally

At this level the academic would be expected successfully apply for external awards such as the NTFS.

## Appendix 5 Elite leaders: Consent form and interview schedule

This interview consent form and the associated semi-structured interview schedule were approved by the Graduate School of Education ethics committee on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013. (Appendix 10).

### Consent Form

#### Aims and purpose of the project

One challenge for Universities worldwide is to nurture the leaders of the future. I am interviewing senior staff with responsibilities for leadership policy and the personal development of academic colleagues to establish their views on approaches to nurturing academic leaders at the University of Exeter and current leadership development programmes.

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I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project. I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations
- if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

(Signature of participant )

(Printed name of participant)

(Date)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher 01752 839256.

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact: Sue Burkill [sueburkill@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:sueburkill@exeter.ac.uk)

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Revised Jan 2016

## **The interview schedule**

Elite leaders were asked to set the strategic institutional context for preparing academic staff to take educational leadership roles.

### **Part one: Meanings**

Questions to determine what the respondents consider educational leadership to be.

1. Can you clarify what you believe is meant by the term 'educational leadership' at the University? How important is this to the university? To HE in general?

### **Part two: Identifying and sustaining leadership and leaders**

Questions to determine how respondents believe this is strategically supported.

2. This is a question about processes of leadership. What policies and strategies have been put in place which specifically relate to **leadership** in education? Can you reflect on how successful these have been and what the challenges are?
3. This is a question about people. What are the particular challenges faced in identifying and sustaining educational **leaders**?

### **Part three: Development and training**

Questions to determine what respondents consider they have done or might do to develop educational leaders.

4. What has been the policy for **developing and training** education leaders? What actions have been taken? How well has this succeeded?
5. What else might be done to bring on a new generation of educational leaders? What sort of development and training might be offered in the future?

### **Part Four: More in depth questions about leadership styles:**

6. Styles and theories of leadership –do these help us understand the educational leadership activity in universities?
7. If not discussed yet suggest that the approach may be one of 'distributed leadership' – is educational leadership bottom up or delegated down? Is this a strategic approach or does it happen by chance?

In 2016/17 supplementary questions were asked under each heading which reflected recent developments in UoE strategies. In particular specific questions about the Exeter academic were introduced in section 2.

## Appendix 6 Senior academic leaders: Interview schedule

See Appendix 5 for shared consent form and Appendix 10 for ethics approval.

### **Part one: University strategic priorities for academic leadership succession planning**

The **first part** of the interview considers the needs of your area and of the University of Exeter more generally. The purpose is to find out what you, as a senior academic leader, think is going well, what you are concerned about and how these concerns might best be addressed.

- What is going well? (section 2)
- What are your current concerns about succession planning for academic leadership? (section 3)
- To what extent are these reflected in your strategic priorities? What are the critical leadership and management roles you wish to focus on? (section 4)
- Could you tell me what your views are about current in-house leadership development initiatives and the extent to which they are serving your strategic priorities? (section 5.1)
- What kinds of leadership development initiatives would you like to see taking place in the future at Exeter? (section 5.2)
- **Do you think that there is a special requirement relating to the development of leaders in education (as opposed to research) and if so, why is this the case and what is required? (section 5.2.4)**
- Who should be driving all these initiatives (for example at what level in the University should they be designed and implemented)? Or might they be external? (section 6)

### **Part two: Your own development as an academic leader**

The **second part** of this interview considers your own career development. The purpose is to find out what has led to you becoming a successful academic leader and to establish whether aspects of this experience could be useful to other potential academics leaders in their career planning.

Looking back over your career so far

- **During your (academic) career what has influenced and motivated you towards taking on a leadership role? (section 8.1.1)**
- Do you think any of these motivational influences are transferable to your colleagues? (section 8.1.1)
- Are there any approaches you *personally* prefer to leadership development? What institutional training or experience has helped you most? (section 8.1.2)

Looking forward to your future career

- Thinking forward, what would you expect or like to see happening in your own career and how might this be best supported? (8.1.3)

### **Other comments**

Is there anything else you'd like to mention which would be helpful in relation to emerging policy and practice in this area?



## Appendix 7 Senior academic leader project proposal March 2014

This evaluation project proposal is included here as an introduction to how and why the information I draw on in chapter four section six came to be collected. The proposal was accepted in May 2014 and the research took place in July – September 2014. The report was completed in November 2014 and a summary of the results of the project are presented in Appendix 8.

### **Educational leadership strategy and leadership development at the UoE**

#### **Context**

One challenge for Universities worldwide is to nurture leaders of education for the future. Research<sup>296</sup> suggests it is difficult to identify future education leaders and make sure they are willing, capable and prepared for their future roles.

What we do know is that:

- there is antipathy to taking on leadership in education, particularly in research intensive Universities.
- there *are* examples of successful strategies to address this issue but Universities are seldom aware of how successful their strategies are due to a lack of rigorous evaluation.
- given that there is insufficient readily available evidence, University strategic decision makers find it difficult to decide how this situation might be best addressed.

#### **Proposal overview**

A project is proposed which would contribute to emerging strategic thinking about how best to improve educational leadership at Exeter. The project would:

- evaluate the impact of the University's leadership development initiatives (both current and in the recent past) on educational leadership.
- gather 'narratives' from the University's Senior Academic Leaders on their views and expectations around strategic educational leadership.

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<sup>296</sup> The research behind this proposal forms part of the work I have started to undertake for my University of Exeter Educational Doctorate. The outcomes of the proposed evaluation would be complemented by my own research which focuses on understanding the attitudes of 'early years' academics to preparing to take on future leadership roles in education.

- synthesise information on successful educational leadership initiatives in other HEIs.
- propose an integrated strategy based on the data gathered which would address the University's requirements going forward.

### **Timeliness: why now?**

There have been initiatives in the past to address educational leadership challenges (e.g. I was involved in the 'Inspiring Education Leaders' programme). Current initiatives, and in particular the 'Leading Academics' programme, piloted last year with the College of Humanities and the 'Academic Leadership Development Programme' recently launched with other Colleges, are indications of the seriousness with which Exeter views leadership development.

The educational leadership challenges we face at Exeter are a focus of current concern across college and institutional strategies (particularly for education and human resources). There is recent strategic activity taking place around this agenda; a talent management scheme for the university is currently under discussion and work is underway to address academic career structures for example. While these strategic discussions are occurring it is critical that robust information relating to 'what works?' gets to the right people and groups in a timely fashion.

### **Outline of the evaluation project**

If this project goes ahead there will need to be detailed discussions about the exact requirements with key stakeholders. The suggested timescales are indicative only and the final project timeline would be negotiated with the stakeholders on the basis of the work plan agreed.

Initial discussions suggest the following core activities:

1. A comprehensive evaluation of leadership initiatives offered within the University<sup>297</sup>.

*To be undertaken between May 2014 and September 2014. A preliminary report would be available in October 2014.*

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<sup>297</sup> The methodology would have to be discussed but would broadly the four levels of impact defined in Kirkpatrick's evaluation methodology (1998)

2. In depth interviews to be held with senior University strategic managers and leaders to determine their strategic priorities, the extent to which they believe current initiatives address their concerns and their views on alternative approaches to leadership development.

*To be undertaken between July 2014 and October 2014*

3. Research undertaken to provide a synthesis of leadership development activity being undertaken in other Universities in the UK and beyond.

*To be undertaken between July 2014 and October 2014*

An interim report on all three strands to be available by November 2014.

### **Ownership: key stakeholders**

The project would be owned jointly by Director of Human Resources and the DVC (Education). This proposal follows discussions with these senior leaders.

### **Contributors**

In order to undertake this project it would be necessary to involve University staff (for example the Market Research team) and external consultants (those currently facilitating leadership training programmes for the University) in undertaking data collection and analysis. I would hope to be actively involved in the evaluation design, the senior staff interviews and the research synthesis.

### **Funding**

The proposal would need to be funded from the budget set aside for leadership development activity at the University. This would require support from the Director of HR and the Head of Staff Development. The exact details of the funding would need to be scoped out within the detailed project plan.

### **March 2014**

(Project proposal edited January 2017 to remove names)



## Appendix 8 Academic leadership and leadership development report

### **A report prepared for HR services University of Exeter**

This appendix contains **the summary** only of the report made to the UoE (see the project proposal in Appendix 7). This extract forms a very small part of the full report which is available to examiners on request but is withheld as it includes sensitive material which belongs to the UoE.

### **Summary**

The University of Exeter sees talent management, succession planning and academic leadership development as increasingly important strategic priorities and it is recognised that a research-informed approach to identifying appropriate strategies, structures and processes is required.

This report describes internal research undertaken in July to September 2014 with senior academic leaders and leadership development programme participants. The result is a descriptive account of their rich and varied viewpoints captured at a particular time in the University's development. The research shows that participating academics are united in their commitment to the idea of identifying and nurturing future leaders. There are differences in approach which suggests that the best way to do this is going to be difficult to agree on and any scheme suggested should be sensitive to academic values. While some see a role for rational planning processes others see informal approaches as more effective. Other broad conclusions for strategic planning are that:

- the definition of academic leadership should not be too narrow; it should relate to a broadly defined set of formal and informal academic roles.
- the processes used to identify and develop leaders should be holistic and inclusive.

The research suggests that current academic leaders at Exeter face personal and professional challenges in implementing policy and strategy in this area. This conclusion aligns with other research (Harris and Nolan 2014 p.4) which suggests that, within higher education contexts, struggles between structural control and individual agency are central to academic leadership discourse. In detail the research shows that:

1. There are almost no formal policies/strategies around succession planning incorporated into strategic plans in colleges<sup>298</sup> and departments; and if they do exist there is little awareness amongst the participants about what these strategies suggest should be happening (section 4.0).
2. There is often academic resistance to taking on leadership/ management roles<sup>299</sup> (section 3.2.2) which suggests that any proposed initiatives should be responsive to the many causal factors and preferences which have been identified through this research.
3. These attitudes may be changing but this in itself raises the issue of how to identify and nurture academic leaders without raising expectations which may not be realized for many of them (section 3.2.1).
4. Recent in- house leadership development programmes have been well received (Appendix 2; section 5.1 & 7.0) but most academics consulted in this research favour a range of more informal processes (sections 5.2.3, 7.0 and 8.1.2) which typically involve 'collegial encounters'.
5. Many suggest that the use of external advisors should be encouraged and a budget made available for colleges to bring in appropriate support.
6. Structural and cultural change is the key to encouraging academic interest in leadership roles. Incentives to take on leadership roles mostly come from a feeling of 'tribal loyalty' or 'community responsibility' (sections 3.2.2); they need to be couched in appropriate (academic) language (section 3.2.4) and addressed, at least in part, at the department or discipline level (section 6.0).
7. Clearer promotion criteria which acknowledge the importance of leadership activity are needed (sections 3.2.3, 7.0 and 8).
8. Practical measures, which recognize how taking on a formal leadership role restricts research opportunities and inhibit career pathways, should be incorporated in a 'role package' to encourage future leaders. These include:
  - a. contractual arrangements which build in research time (3.2.3);

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<sup>298</sup> Throughout this report I use the term Colleges to refer to all six academic units at the University of Exeter: CEMPS, CSSIS, CLES; CHUMS; BS and UEMS.

<sup>299</sup> In this report the emphasis is on leadership even though management is widely and synonymously used as a term to describe leading activity (see, for example, the academic profile descriptions used widely in UK HEIs (Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff, 2004)

- b. more administrative support for leaders;
- c. the appointment of research fellows to work in leaders' research teams while they are in post (sections 3.2.3 and 8.0): and,
- d. A well-defined 'exit strategy'.

It is suggested that, the views of academics expressed in this report might usefully be addressed in the University's emerging Succession Planning and Talent Management strategy.



## Appendix 9 Mechanisms & causal powers (Chapter four)

This table summarises the M&CPs which have emerged through a process of reviewing documents (chapter four section 4) and repeated careful listening and partial transcription of interviews (sections 5 & 6). The high level categories reflect the headings used in figure 3.1.

Theme	Mechanisms and causal powers (M&CPs)	Evidence of impact of M&CPs
UoE organisational working cultures	<p><b>Cultural shift</b> from a ‘<b>low ranking backwater</b>’ with a collegial culture to an ‘<b>outperforming corporate-enterprise culture</b>’.</p> <p><b>Research prioritised over teaching.</b></p> <p>Emergence of a powerful community of elite leaders or mega-actors operating as <b>adroit leaders.</b></p>	<p>Successful position of UoE in UK HE environment but at the expense of education which is undervalued. Mega-actors have clear views on the importance of AEL roles in UoE.</p> <p><b>Intolerance of underperformance.</b></p> <p>Increasing levels of <b>stress.</b></p> <p><b>Departmental autonomy declines.</b></p>
Institutional perspectives Leadership structures hierarchies and strategies	<p><b>Structure and hierarchy</b></p> <p><b>Nested hierarchies</b> of strategic responsibilities and <b>formally defined leadership roles</b> replace <b>professorial fiefdoms.</b> A ‘<b>very particular</b>’ mixed model of leadership responsibilities: <b>Top down authority relations</b> But also <b>Downward delegation with devolved and distributed AEL.</b></p> <p><b>Strategies</b></p> <p>High level strategies sometimes <b>well aligned</b> with each other and sometimes poorly aligned demonstrating <b>strategic dissonance.</b> <b>Asynchronous strategic planning process</b></p>	<p>Feeling of increasing <b>responsibility without power</b> and of being ‘<b>micromanaged</b>’.</p> <p>but also</p> <p>feeling of increased <b>clarity around responsibilities.</b></p> <p>Poor communication of strategies - senior academic leaders show <b>limited awareness of strategies.</b></p> <p><b>Academic uncertainty</b> about ownership of strategies and delegated leadership powers.</p> <p>Confusion over significance of AEL. It is sometimes viewed as integral to a ‘<b>holistic</b>’ academic role and sometimes <b>differentiated.</b> Perceived as an <b>operational role.</b></p> <p>Confusion over <b>variation</b> in degree of alignment from year to year.</p>
Institutional perspectives Promotion reward and recognition	<p><b>Divisive job families</b> <b>Imbalanced promotion criteria</b> <b>Short term contracts</b></p> <p><b>PDR process</b></p>	<p>Awareness that AEL is defined most comprehensively in E&amp;S job family and less in E&amp;R job family and belief that promotion opportunities are linked to this.</p> <p>PDR perceived as both a positive</p>

	<p><b>The Exeter Academic:</b> a purposefully designed UoE structural and strategic <b>approach to academic career pathways and progression.</b></p> <p>It links promotion to external criteria e.g. 'achievement of or working towards' HEA fellowships.</p>	<p>opportunity and a source of pressure to meet untenable targets.</p> <p>Greater awareness that evidence of AEL is required at all stages of all academics' careers through explicitly defined</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>role descriptions</b></li> <li>• <b>promotion criteria</b></li> </ul> <p><b>financial rewards and incentives</b></p>
<p><b>Institutional perspectives</b> Nurturing AEL: Support and development</p>	<p>Emphasis is on <b>formal and target driven centrally provided</b> leadership development opportunities.</p> <p>Almost no explicit emphasis on <b>informal, collegial or spontaneous emergent approaches.</b></p> <p>Lack of <b>'sponsored' ELD opportunities</b> for AEL.</p>	<p>Resistance to this type of development. Lack of academic 'take up' related to perceptions of programmes as poorly aligned with their immediate needs. Lack of college/departmental leadership development is disincentive to take on roles.</p>
<p><b>Agentive perspectives</b> Personal, social and disciplinary identities</p>	<p><b>Perceived deterioration in the quality of academic working life and academic morale.</b></p> <p>Perceived <b>credibility and identity</b> issues in relation to AEL roles. <b>Tribal loyalty</b> and sense of <b>community responsibility lead to altruistic protectionism.</b></p> <p><b>Academic leadership and management roles interrelated: Time allocation and nature of tasks</b> are issues.</p>	<p>Varied amounts of academic <b>acculturation, compliance and/or disinterest in relation to the institutional culture.</b></p> <p><b>Reputational damage.</b></p> <p>Rise of <b>instrumentalism</b> in relation to roles and <b>disengagement</b> from institutional norms.</p> <p><b>Roles unpopular and recruitment challenges</b> arise relating to AEL as academics adopt <b>moralistic or survival strategies.</b></p>
<p><b>The role of rhetoric and communication in institutional strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Rhetorical gloss</b> - Various <b>consensual and oppositional</b> linguistic devices which are evident in strategies and elite leaders/SALs strategic thinking. <b>Embodied rhetoric</b> as part of group identity. <b>Empty rhetoric</b> where strategic priorities are not carried through in action.</p> <p><b>Diluted messages</b> – poor communication and articulation of high level strategy e.g. <b>AEL an understated priority.</b></p>	<p>Some <b>academics react negatively</b> to rhetorical element in written strategies and institutional thinking.</p> <p><b>Academic cynicism</b> e.g. where promotion panels fail to prioritise criteria found in promotion strategies.</p> <p><b>A professional-academic divide.</b> The use of <b>'professional speak'</b> (e.g. the managerialist language of competence and capability in HR documents) has become a <b>barrier to understanding.</b></p> <p>Also a barrier to <b>academic engagement</b> e.g. accepting roles and support for their development.</p>

## Appendix 10 Ethics and consent form approval



**Graduate School of Education**

**Certificate of ethical research approval**

**MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses**

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications> and view the School's Policy online.

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**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).  
**DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

---

**Your name:** Susan Burkill

**Your student no:** 610067953

**Return address for this certificate:** [REDACTED]

**Degree/Programme of Study:** EdD (1<sup>st</sup> November 2015 change of programme to PhD – see attached letter)

**Project Supervisor(s):** Carol Evans

**Your email address:** sue.burkill@exeter.ac.uk

**Tel:** 01752 839256

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**I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

**I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.**

**Signed:** Sue Burkill

**Originally approved March 2013**

**Minor revisions 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014 and 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015**

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# Certificate of ethical research approval

## TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT:

**Original:** Rhetoric and reality: Academic Leadership Development in Research Intensive Universities

**Revised:** Reluctant leaders? Educational leadership in a Research Intensive University  
**(Agreed title change and change of programme: 15<sup>th</sup> November 2015)**

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## 1. Brief description of your research project:

One challenge for Universities worldwide is to nurture the leaders of the future. At a time when there is policy rhetoric emphasizing the importance of succession planning for leadership in HEIs it is important to know the attitudes of both early stage academics and senior staff towards taking on academic leadership roles and on how best to nurture their potential as leaders. In collecting empirical data to address this issue, my plan is to focus on the University of Exeter as a case study and this requires me to interview academic staff and review institutional policy documents.

The data collected for the project through interviewing early stage academics is my main focus and this is where my primary research interest lies. However, it is important to note that the project will run alongside a University funded investigation/evaluation of

- senior academic leaders views and aspirations and
- the quality and impact of recent leadership development programmes run by the University.

As some of this data may be reported in my project I am requesting ethical clearance for this work.

My intention is to work with accountability and credibility pursuing the truth while respecting individual's rights and values. While I have tried to anticipate issues which may arise and have devised an ethical approach to achieve this, I am aware that situations may arise to which I need to respond flexibly and for which further ethical clearance may be needed.

## 2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

An online questionnaire is being sent to all participants in two recent academic leadership programmes run by the University (n=c.40).

I am interviewing c.20 early stage academics (defined as those who are in the probationary period or have just completed it) at the University of Exeter whose career trajectories may lead to leadership roles. The interviews will establish their views on becoming leaders and how they can best be prepared for future leadership opportunities. Participants will be drawn, using a stratified sampling frame to ensure disciplinary coverage, from the cohort of academics who have recently completed the accredited Professional Certificate in Academic Practice programme and who have been recruited to the university from post-doctoral (or equivalent) positions. Focusing on this group will reduce the range of contextual variables I encounter in the research.

I am interviewing 13 senior staff with responsibilities for leadership policy and the personal development of academic colleagues. The interviews will establish their views on current leadership development programmes and on alternative approaches to nurturing academic leaders at the University of Exeter. The participants are being selected using purposive sampling and have been identified in conjunction with the project stakeholders.

**3. Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:**

**Informed consent:**

I have attached four consent forms for approval.

While the online survey is anonymous and does not require individuals to sign a consent form, participants will be informed in the preamble that their responses may be used in a small scale research project. They will also be offered the opportunity to talk to the researcher and, if they wish to do this and therefore reveal their identities, a consent form (Form 3 attached) would be used.

**Anonymity and confidentiality:**

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations as described in the BERA 2011 guidelines). In order to protect the anonymity of each participant, pseudonyms will be used and any distinguishing details removed to ensure that participants cannot be identified. While every effort will be made to do so, it may be difficult to disguise the identification of senior managers but as this research is taking place with their support (and within the context of a project sponsored by the University) I do not envisage this as major problem. The University name will be anonymised in any published papers or publically available reports which result from this work.

**4. Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

**Online survey**

A survey has been devised (see attached) which uses a five point attitudinal scale for some responses and open questions for others. Some basic descriptive quantitative data will be derived from the scalar questions and will relate to the demographic variables which are included in the survey; the rest of the analysis will be qualitative adopting a thematic approach. The survey has been structured in order to provide data relating to several themes which are assumed to be of relevance to the investigation.

Personal interviews and interpretive qualitative analysis underpin the rest of the empirical element of this project:

**Senior academic interviews**

45 minute semi-structured interviews will be used; the questions have been discussed with the University stakeholders and have been piloted with two senior managers as part of a previous project for which I received ethical clearance in August 2013. Interviews will be taped and notes taken. Data will be extracted using 'close listening' techniques (which were piloted in the same piece of work) and the data will be analysed thematically.

### **Early year academic interviews**

I am intending to use a rather different approach to data collection with early years' academics employing non-directive, in-depth, reflexive techniques associated with dialogic interviewing.

Transcription will be used (but possibly selectively) and I shall use Nvivo to process the interview data. Transcribed data will be included in the thesis as appropriate.

Participants are not considered to be at risk from any of these data collection and analysis approaches but they will be informed that they are free to withdraw from the research process at any stage in the data collection process. Early years academics will be sent transcribed information to allow them to comment on or rethink their responses and all participants may withdraw their interview data after the interview if they wish to (see consent form).

### **5. Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project - e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires.**

Data generated by the study will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of the project. All electronic data will be held securely in password protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be held in locked cabinets at the interviewer's home.

### **6. Special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.**

All interviews will take place in the University in locations selected by the interviewees which should minimise any need for special arrangements.

### **7. Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

As the evaluation I am involved in for the University is sponsored by senior managers this could lead to an asymmetrical hegemonic relationship which is potentially oppressive and requires sensitive handling. The assumption that I am an autonomous researcher, free to make decisions may be undermined unless clear boundaries are agreed with sponsors. I have already made this clear in the proposal I have made to the University.

Shaping the evaluation report, while concurrently writing up my research may involve conflicts of interest; it will require fine judgement in order to retain integrity and honesty in presentation and dissemination. This raises the issue of insider involvement – essentially I am closely involved as a researcher *and* evaluator. My power to influence the future direction of institutional activity provides a potential source of conflict. While I *could* take steps to distance myself from participants, I am aware that complete researcher neutrality is, in any case, unachievable in most contexts. The role of a participant researcher is well documented and strategies for minimising potential conflicts of interest will inform my work.

Finally, I shall avoid plagiarism and misrepresentation and, as in most real world research, I need to keep careful note of where others have contributed to the empirical work and acknowledge this openly.

**This form should now be printed out**, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to

countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

**N.B.** You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

**This project has been approved for the period: July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 until: July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017**

**By** (above mentioned supervisor's signature): C.A. Evans (form signed)

***N.B. To Supervisor:** Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

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**GSE unique approval reference no: D/13/14/36**

**Signed: Phil Durrant (form signed)**  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

**date: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

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**SIGNED HARD COPY AVAILABLE IF REQUIRED BY EXAMINERS.**



## Appendix 11 Pilot study for ECA research design

This appendix describes the small pilot study mentioned in chapter five section 2.1. In undertaking a pilot study I was influenced by advice from Kempster & Parry (2014). In designing their study they piloted three interview approaches before adopting an approach which seemed to help participants move beyond surface attitudes to deeper revelations.

My pilot study (reported fully in Burkill, 2013) involved undertaking interviews with three ECAs working on an specific education innovation to investigate the extent to which they were enthused by this work to take up formal educational leadership roles in the future. The study gave me an opportunity to pilot my research design. Data were collected through 'encounters' with participants (Cohen et al. 2007 p.267) using semi-structured interviews based on a 'checklist of topics to be covered and a default wording and order for the questions' (Robson 2011, p.280). I also modified the questions as the interviews proceeded and added unplanned questions using 'probing' techniques (p.283).

One element of the interview involved deliberately piloting a theoretically informed approach to interviewing participants (Pawson, 1996). I developed an interview schedule which incorporated a short questionnaire using a 6 point rating scale (Oppenheim, 1996) which encapsulated academic leadership characteristics derived from previous research (Ladyshevsky & Jones, 2007). I recorded the interviews and concurrently made notes. I did not transcribe the interviews but used repeated careful listening alongside my own notes as the basis for analysis (Gray 2004) to derive themes from my research questions; this involved a search for 'tendencies' in my data (Gray 2004, p.323) although, in reality, the semi-structured interview design did mean I had already anticipated and to some extent 'pre-coded' the categories I anticipated would emerge (Bryman, 2008 p.233). One of the persistent themes emerging from this research was the varying degree of reluctance shown by the three ECAs towards AEL roles and this has influenced my current research and the interviews held with ECAs for chapter five.

This pilot gave me insights into the limitations of the selected research design.

The semi-structured and theorised approach I used in pilot interviews tended to overly constrain the responses of the participants. The introduction of a 'quantitative' questionnaire led to theoretical anticipation at the beginning of the interview. I felt that this influenced participants' subsequent thinking and their confidence to express their own views; as a result it was difficult to identify the deeper mechanisms which may have influenced their attitudes. My somewhat selective categorising and analysis of the data tended to under-value the diverse attitudes expressed. No attempt was made to theorise from the analysis beyond making a commentary on the commonalities which emerged from the interview data. These self-critical and reflective insights have contributed to the research design I ultimately adopted for chapter five of my thesis (see section 2.2; Appendix 12).

## Appendix 12 ECA research: design and data collection

This appendix elaborates on the ACR research design approach I have summarised briefly in chapter five (section 2.1.1). It has similarities with several other ACRs approaches but particularly aligns with the approach adopted by Kempster and Parry's (2012 p.96) in their research into leadership learning in organizations. I believe this approach is unusual enough to make it necessary to provide this extra explanatory detail. The three stages were:

1. Initial pre-meeting 'warm up' engagements via -mail including a request to complete a consent form and a short questionnaire<sup>300</sup> and to construct a diagrammatic representation of their career trajectories as a tool for prompting discussion<sup>301</sup>. I explained in the e-mail that the interview process would be a bit like the 'life scientifique' on Radio 4; i.e. a strong discursive element where both of us are involved in discussion and debate.

### 2. Interview

A **brief introduction** allowed me to introduce myself and my research, establish why they volunteered to be interviewed and explain the interview process. I also probed what they had said in their questionnaires about their roles and their understanding of EL in universities.

The **first part** of the interview adopted an open dialogic process (Archer 2003) involving flexible and often unpredictable conversations about the participants past, present and future career trajectories. This was devised with reference to advice from Goodson & Sykes (2001) and involved encouraging participants to reflect on specific events and motivations, probing inconsistencies where appropriate and searching for critical career moments. This part of the interview aimed to reveal the way ECAs see AEL in relation to their careers with an emphasis on their 'internal conversations' (Archer 2003 p.62) and how they 'interpret the present, reflect on the past and imagine the future' (Åkerlind & McAlpine, 2010 p.163). It also allowed me to probe into the agential and

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<sup>300</sup> See Appendix 10 for the consent form and 13 for the interview schedule.

<sup>301</sup> They were provided with a 'slice' of wall paper on which they could 'capture' their career trajectories and I provided an example based on my career to help them understand the approach.

structural powers and tendencies (Archer 2003) which have been influential in their thinking and in forming their personal stances and socio-cultural identities as ECAs<sup>302</sup>. By starting with an open discussion in which I avoided taking an underlying position I was facilitating an abductive approach to analysis.

The **second part** of interview involved shared theory building around the idea of 'reluctance to lead'. I 'theorised' this part of the interview taking as a starting point the idea that the 'subject matter of the interview is the researcher's theory rather than the informant's thoughts and deeds' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997 p.164)<sup>303</sup>. Participants were invited to act as co-producers of knowledge (Kreiner & Mouritsen, 2005). My intention was to invoke ideas which may not otherwise have occurred to the participants by asking questions such as 'Is this true? What is going on here? Why have these ideas emerged? What is behind the assertions made? What do you think we should be discussing to explain this? Do you have any theories we could discuss?' This created, what Silverman (2001) calls, 'researcher provoked data' (p.110). By theorising the interview I was facilitating a retroductive approach to analysis.

The **third part** of interview involved asking participants to share their ideas about how ECAs might be supported to nurture their interest in educational leadership. At times I introduced ideas which I wanted to hear their opinions about largely drawn from the literature or my own experiences<sup>304</sup>. This was designed to allow me to analyse their practical proposals in support of introducing evidence- informed institutional practices into chapter six (section 4).

3 Post interview. One week after the interview participants were sent an ICONI questionnaire to complete (Appendix 14). Following Archer (2003; 2007) this was designed to give me an opportunity to distinguish different types of participants on the basis of their modes of personal reflexivity.

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<sup>302</sup> Without steer the interviewing I was inevitably alert to ideas which I've come across in the literature relating to public and personal identity formation (McAlpine & Åkerlind, 2010b) and the tensions between a sense of agency and structural conditioning (Mathieson, 2011). I draw on Maxwell's ideas (2012) about **searching for diversity**.

<sup>303</sup> This adopted a very different approach from my pilot study (Appendix 11) where shared ownership of theory building was not included as a technique.

<sup>304</sup> Drawn from Lovasz et al. (2014); Bolden et al. (2015); Coates and Goedegebuure (2012) and Marshall (2008).

## Appendix 13 Pre interview questionnaire

Name:	Researcher code

College:	Discipline:	Formal role: L / SL / other Research/Teaching Teaching/Scholarship

Length of time you have worked in HE since completing your own studies?	Length of time you have worked as a lecturer in any HEI?
Have you worked outside HE since completing your PG studies? If so for how long? What were you doing (very brief summary)?	Length of time you have worked at Exeter as a lecturer?

Academic qualifications?	Professional teaching qualifications? HEA fellowship?	Completed PCAP (or equivalent) and, if so, date?

Current probationary status at Exeter

What led you to volunteer to take part in this research project?

**PTO**

**It would help me if I had some factual details of how you describe your current role.**

Brief word picture of current role (including, for example, the balance of time between research/teaching/administration/ outreach activity)

**I am particularly interested in your career trajectory in HE.**

You will have received a role of wallpaper from me in the post! This can be used to capture a time line of your career to date – you can add dates and comments which take you up to the present time. I am hoping we can add details during the interview and extend the diagram into the future.

**We shall be discussing academic attitudes to educational leadership.**

It is important to me to know what you believe is meant by the term ‘educational leadership’ in HE and particularly what it means to you as an academic member of staff at Exeter. I’d like to have an idea of this before we get involved in a discussion about it.

**END**

## Appendix 14 Explanation of ICONI method and results

Goodson and Sykes (2001 p.62) suggest that life stories<sup>305</sup> are narrated as an 'inner dialogue' – 'a reflexive project of ourselves'. However, little is said about how reflexive projects<sup>306</sup> may differ. Archer (2003) calls these projects the 'inner conversation' and takes the view that as active agents we have a tendency to adopt one of several reflexive modes and, given the opportunity in open and dialogic conversations, these become apparent in how interviewees describe their life stories. Furthermore, as described in chapter three (Figure 3.2) her research (Archer, 2003 p.163) has led to the identification of four reflexive modes - communicative (C); autonomous (A); meta-reflexive (M) and fractured (F) and she suggest that the first three of these lead to the adoption of particular stances – evasive, strategic and subversive respectively. She argues that individuals will *respond to* social and organisational constraints or enablements and potentially *influence* their social and cultural contexts by adopting one of these stances.

Therefore, in CR research knowing about an individual's dominant mode of reflexivity is important as it will potentially help explain what Archer describes as differentiated mechanisms. She describes (Archer, 2007a) the very rigorous process of development and refinement (using statistical techniques) through which she created an 'internal conversation instrument' (ICONI) to measure the reflexive strategies of individuals. Once the interviews were complete my participants were asked to complete an ICONI questionnaire based on the belief that their responses would be partially couched in terms which reflect their inner conversations (Archer 2003)<sup>307</sup>.

Applying Archer's methods (2003 p.163) I have been able to explore some of the agential variability in my ten interviews and elaborate on Archer's thinking relating to meta-reflexives given that eight out of ten of my participants fell into this category.

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<sup>305</sup> Goodson and Sykes (2001) differentiate between life stories as related by the informant and life histories as interpreted and contextualised by the researcher.

<sup>306</sup> Reflexivity is the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (objective social and cultural) contexts

<sup>307</sup> Brew, Boud, Lucas, & Crawford (2017) have recently undertaken a study using Archer's approach but **without** using the ICONI tool. I comment on this in chapter seven.

**The ICONI questionnaire (copyright Archer 2010).**

Reflexive mode (C, A, M or F) added by me and not visible to participants.

- 1. I do daydream about winning the lottery. \*

**C**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 2. I think about work a great deal, even when I am away from it. \*

**A**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 3. I dwell long and hard on moral questions. \*

**M**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 4. I blot difficulties out of my mind, rather than trying to think them through. \*

**F**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 5. My only reason for wanting to work is to be able to pay for the things that matter to me. \*

**C**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 6. Being decisive does not come easily to me. \*

**A**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 7. I try to live up to an ideal, even if it costs me a lot to do so. \*

**M**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 8. When I consider my problems, I just get overwhelmed by emotion. \*

**F**            **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**    **6**    **7**

Strongly Disagree         Strongly Agree

- 9. So long as I know those I care about are OK, nothing else really matters to me at all. \*

<b>C</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

- 10. I just dither, because nothing I do can really make a difference to how things turn out. \*

<b>F</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

- 11. I'm dissatisfied with myself and my way of life - both could be better than they are. \*

<b>A</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

- 12. I know that I should play an active role in reducing social injustice. \*

<b>M</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

- 13. I feel helpless and powerless to deal with my problems, however hard I try to sort them out. \*

<b>F</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree						

The ICONI approach I adopted is Archer's revised version (2007 Methodological Appendix) but the actual questionnaire was sourced from Wilson (<http://form.jotform.co/form/40117265603850>) and used with his permission as Archer does not publish the ICONI in her books.

Without describing the ICONI development process in detail<sup>308</sup> it is important to note that Archer compares this instrument to others used widely by social psychologists but which she claims are no more reliable, lack the emphasis on distinctive modes of reflexivity and are somewhat more complex to administer. Others who have used the ICONI scale have suggested that there are shortcomings. For example, I retain the seven point scale which Archer used in

<sup>308</sup> A detailed description of the development and statistical validation of the ICONI is found in Archer (2007; Methodological Appendix).

her analysis although there is some debate in the literature about whether the use of a four point scale might be more appropriate, addressing the problem associated with having a middle point which can be selected by ‘fence sitters’ (Sackmann, Bartl, Jonda, Kopycka, and Rademacher, 2015 p.231). Another aspect of the ICONI which has been of concern is the uneven number of items for each mode of reflexivity – the allocation of 4 items to fractured reflexivity might have the tendency to overemphasise this as a reflexive mode. Again, I have retained the original thirteen items and my results (below) do not immediately suggest this was an issue.

My approach to categorising individuals was based on Archer’s approach as described in Sackmann et al. (2015 p.230). Using a simple mean of the results in each mode and then identifying any mean which exceeded 4; the actual assignment to a mode of reflexivity is to the highest result over 4. The calculations and the outcomes of this process for the ten participants are shown below and are reproduced in chapter five (section 3.4).

#### ICONI results for ten participants

Name	Communicative	Average	Autonomous	Average	Meta reflexive	Average	Fractured	Average
Deidre A	126	3.00	755	5.67	565	5.33	2265	3.75
Pat M	314	2.67	644	4.67	456	5.00	2533	3.25
Wendy C	666	6.00	634	4.33	663	5.00	5525	4.25
Winnie M	425	3.67	522	3.00	566	5.67	2312	2.00
Brian M	2 1 4	2.33	721	3.33	57 2	4.67	2211	1.50
Sharon A/M	224	2.67	736	5.33	646	5.33	3323	2.75
Frank M	524	3.67	642	4.00	655	5.33	3212	2.00
Fred M	724	4.33	746	5.67	766	6.33	2656	4.75
John M	226	3.33	634	4.33	626	4.67	2322	2.25
Keith M	523	3.33	645	5.00	655	5.33	1335	3.00

In all cases the participants have a score of over 4 for the meta-reflexive mode and in eight of the ten this is the highest score. In one case there is a tied result and rather than trying to further analyse this through data manipulation to select a single reflexive mode (the method used by Sackmann et al., 2015), I took the view that this in itself is interesting information which I can use in my analysis. The outcomes of the ICONI process can be used by researchers in at least two contexts. Firstly, Archer (2007) used the ICONI as a basis for identifying a sample of participants for interview; her requirement was to ensure that different types of reflexives were evenly represented in the sample (2007). Secondly, taking the lead from O'Byrne (e-mail communication Oct 13<sup>th</sup> 2015) it is possible to envisage use the ICONI as a post- interview device for helping with the interpretation of results. It is this approach that I use in this chapter. However, I avoid the assumption that in some way modes of reflexivity are an independent variable in the analysis of participant's responses and in this way I follow Archer (2007 p.329) in avoiding the deterministic use of the typology to explain motivations; rather I see them as an enriching and enabling contextual characteristic within which I can make tentative suggestions about the diversity of attitudes to AEL.



## Appendix 15 Ten narrative summaries

These ten narrative summaries are presented in detail in this appendix with a rationale for the method used to create them. They are used in chapter five (section 3.4). I adopted the term narrative summary based on Maxwell's (2012 p.118-123) discussion of 'connecting strategies' as an approach to data analysis. These narratives were created initially by summarising each interview; each summary was very detailed and incorporated a considerable numbers of quotes. I aimed to retain the integrity of, and contingency in, each participant's story. This partially followed the life story approach proposed by Goodson and Sykes (2001) and I aimed to adopt what Hycner (1985 p.281) describes a bracketing approach<sup>309</sup>. From these summaries I made 'analytical abridgements' (Miller, 1991 quoted in Maxwell 2012 p.121) of the narratives; this involved reorganizing the data to achieve concise accounts incorporating those quotes which seemed particularly germane to my study of ECA attitudes to AEL. My aim in doing this was to focus on 'units of relevant meaning' (Hycner 1985 p.284)<sup>310</sup> within the very rich and detailed interviews.

These abridged summaries are presented below. I refer to these as the 'sense of the whole' (Hycner 1985 p.281) drawing partially on meanings I had gleaned when listening to the interviews and personal impressionistic summaries I had written immediately after each interview. It is important to realise, therefore, that these summaries, while based largely on my attempts to accurately relate what I heard from the participants, also include some interpretative comments where I felt this might help deepen the analysis.

Taking a lead from Åkerlind and McAlpine (2010 p.156-157) the narratives focus on both the roles played (the public face of academic practice) and on the individual's more personal intentions and hopes and attitudes (the personal face of academic practice). The final section of each narrative addresses the reflexive style of the participant as I have interpreted it (Appendix 14).

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<sup>309</sup> Bracketing involves suspending as much as possible of the researcher's interpretation in order to try to really understand what the person meant. It acknowledges that objectivity is neither achievable or desirable but that there is a need for self-awareness by the researcher of their own possible expectations of what might participants might mean.

<sup>310</sup> Hycner describes these as anything which responds to or illuminates the research focus.

## Brian

Brian is less than two years into his first lectureship having held three post graduate research fellowships before taking up the post. All his experience prior to the post at Exeter had been in other European countries. He believes that his E&R contract suggests that he should split time fairly evenly between research and teaching with some administrative responsibilities. However he also suggests *'all those contracts are very vague. I'm essentially required to do anything that is asked of me'*. He felt that at the time of the interview he spent the majority of his time teaching and supervising students.

His career trajectory had been typical of a young academic finding (research) opportunities where they occur to build towards a permanent lecturing post. His experiences in four different countries had happened somewhat opportunistically but he was able to draw on these as a comparative framework for his current experiences. Brian claimed he had little conception of the meaning of AEL and was generally antagonistic to leadership. *'I don't particularly like the term leadership, I don't really understand who you are a leader of, but – that's me not fully understanding the, the terminology'*. However, he did settle on a personal conception of AEL as meaning proficiency in teaching. He felt that *'those who are in principle in charge of how we are supposed to teach'*, both at College and University level, lacked understanding of the diversity of ways teaching can be done well and the practical implication of their decisions for the quality of teaching. He did not believe academics were instinctively against taking AEL roles which involved curriculum innovation. Rather he felt reluctance originated from the lack of agency they feel about engaging in the process *'So it's not that people are reluctant, I mean, I'm reluctant if I have to change the curriculum the way that somebody else wants me to change the curriculum, but I'm not necessarily reluctant if we are going to rewrite the curriculum'*. He suggested that academics develop strong resistance where their academic freedom is threatened *'I will decide and be sure if you are not- if you don't agree, we can discuss, but I'm not going to accept an order'*

His view of his future was in part short term; to complete his academic probation and professional training. However he had a clear view of his desired long-term trajectory which involved becoming a world leader (it seemed that he saw this as an informal esteem-based leadership position) in his subject and moving up the academic career ladder to become a professor. However, in discussing his future he was adamant that he did not wish to become an administrator or manager at any cost. He linked these roles with formal leadership in the current university structures. *'No, absolutely, no. You never know if you will change your mind ten years in the future but right now, definitely not. Also because I didn't do a – if I wanted an administrative career I could have done something with a much higher salary, to be honest. The reason that I'm doing an academic career is because I like to do science'*.

Brian was one of the ECAs who had indicated that the reason he volunteered to be interviewed was that he was dissatisfied with the University structures and, as some of the quotations above illustrate, this soon became the dominant discourse of the interview. I could feel the pent up frustration and anger about, what he described as, a lack of communication (particularly the willingness to listen) within the institution and sense of a loss of autonomy for individuals. He clearly felt dissatisfied and disempowered by the context in which he works. He purposefully and robustly used powerful language and analogies to explain his position and these suggested that he felt constrained by the University's structural and cultural contexts. It was clear that he believed he was talking for most academics and that the position he adopted would be widely held by others.

His ICONI results suggest he is strongly meta-reflexive; in fact the only item which scored at the high end of the scale was *'I try to live up to an ideal even if it costs me a lot to do so'*. This is not at all surprising as he demonstrated a strong **idealistic** set of values which drive his ambitions and his negative views of the academic context he is working in. As with most MRs his career has demonstrated **contextual discontinuity**. Whether this was because he was unhappy with the contexts he worked in or it was simply the inevitable consequence of taking on temporary posts at the beginning of an ECA career is not clear. He also adopts a typical MR approach to realising his personal projects and to the future. Although he had previously articulated an ambition to be a world leading scientist, he does not believe that this should be achieved to the detriment of his wider ideals and is willing to step back or sideways although he knows that there are structural forces which will influence his career trajectory. *'I'm not a particularly, er,*

*fanatic about fast careers or anything. There are way too many people who are obsessed by being, er, getting a very quick career and getting recognised very quickly and getting, er, I think it's a very stressful way of living and I don't really like that. I would highly prefer to stay a bit more on the back row but being an honest, good scientist instead of aiming to get on the newspapers and things like that, I don't really care about becoming famous, I want to stay a good scientist, that's actually everything. You need to do a career because it's how the system works, you're not allowed to stay where you are, you're always pushed forward. So I guess that slowly I will, probably, climb up the ladder, but I'm not in any rush to be fully honest'.*

There are several examples of the difficulties he has in **dovetailing** his idealist views with the structural and socio/cultural norms of the institution. *'It's a rule that maybe made some sort of sense in the mind of people making it, but then once you try to put in the reality of how things work it doesn't make any sense'.* He is cynical and dismissive of the institution's strategic and operational planning and demonstrated a detailed knowledge of this and why he felt it was *'bad'*.

Finally, Brian was the most subversive of the participants. He talks about the huge range of expectations placed on ECAs during probation and the impossibility of achieving these – so *'you have to cut whatever you can'*. He has no fear of challenging top down bureaucratic decisions which are incompatible with his personal views/projects and forcefully articulates these in relation to decisions he has been required to implement (and on occasions has refused to do so). He suggests that if his view is not listened to *'I will fight the decision and next time the things will arrive I will start not filling. So we'll just resist the decision and it's quite easy to make the bureaucratic machine to clog up, it's not very difficult, and we all know how to do it. So, it's, er, the University rely a lot on our goodwill to do a lot of things, because we do a lot of things that we are legally not bound to do. We could say no if we wanted and we still say yes because we feel like we need to make things work, but that's goodwill, we are not required to do that. I can easily make life hell for a lot of people'*.

## **Fred**

Fred was three years into his first lecturing post having held several research posts after completing his PhD. He had applied for the post at Exeter just as his research post was going to run out and he was surprised to have got the job *'that was a massive step up'*. He described the current role as an E&R post in which research should take up about half his time but he was finding that teaching and administration dominated his time.

He entered academic life as a mature student having worked in a manual job during his early years. His past academic career had involved a research assistantship after his UG degree and a series of short term post-doctoral research fellow contracts in a research institute. There was little evidence that he had strategically planned this career trajectory and he seemed to be surprised that these posts had been offered to him by people who got in touch through networks of contacts. He reiterated several times that he had not had opportunities to undertake any leadership roles during his career so far but he did see himself as self-leading; something he had found it hard to learn how to do. These unplanned and insecure attitudes were also reflected in his views about the future. He had short term aspirations around completing his probation which required him to successfully apply for research grants but beyond that there was uncertainty *'I'm not really sure, I'm kind of a bit not quite clear on where I'm going in the future'*. A number of options were discussed including a role in education leadership or educational development and a dual post based both within and outside academia. He talked about *'just doing some different things, 'cause I just get – I've got a low attention span, so I just get bored. You know, when you've taught stuff over a couple of years it can tend to get a bit stale and, you know, it's nice to mix things up by doing different things'*. He would like to work within an organisation supporting disadvantaged children building on some work he did in his postdoctoral post and had made some unsuccessful moves in this direction. *'And it frustrates me really, 'cause I think I've got a lot to offer in that area and it really annoys me'*

He saw AEL as an interesting career opportunity going forward although his career to date had not involved any (formal) AEL responsibilities. This aspiration originated in his belief that his own past had provided him with experiences which meant he was well positioned to help students *'I think I've got a lot to contribute from my background and, definitely, I think that's one*

*of the strengths I've got, I can relate to people from outside of academia and I'm quite open minded on different ways of learning and things like that'. However, he suggested that promotion in AEL brings on a lot more work which he is reluctant to take on as he doesn't really believe that the top of University hierarchies are tuned into making sure education is a priority.*

The approach he adopted suggested an inherent lack of confidence which he related to his socio-economic background. *'I don't come from an academic background so I can tend to have not much confidence in some areas'. He had progressed by working closely with a small group of colleagues who he felt comfortable with and he could trust; however, at the same time he had developed a deep distrust of authority and hierarchical power. 'it is a rigid hierarchy, you know, these establishments have been consolidated over a few hundred years and they're gender based and they're class based, you know, they are, definitely. There's no two ways about it. Which is why I find it difficult sometimes 'cause, um, I don't like the hierarchy, I don't think there should be hierarchies or if they are they should be benefit everyone, not just the few people at the top'. He contrasted his own background with that of other Exeter academics and it seemed that he felt that he did not fit in and this would influence his career possibilities. In the later stages of the interview he used some forceful language indicating that his reluctance to take on AEL roles arose because he rejected the dominant culture in the university and actually did not really want to align himself with some of the managerial approaches he had witnessed. 'there's quite a... nasty kind of manager... mind set where there's been some bullying and things like that, and some of the people here you know they're just out for themselves, you know, and they manage people just to make themselves look better... I couldn't treat people like that, like some of the people here do, it just doesn't agree with how I believe you treat people'.*

His ICONI score suggests that he is highly meta-reflexive although he scored highly on all four reflexive modes. He scored more strongly on the fractured items than any of the other participants. His idealism underpins his attitude to future career opportunities and like many MRs he does not show particular ambitions in relation to his academic career *'I don't particularly want to be a professor or any of that stuff, I'm not really interested at all but I came into this all those years ago because I wanted to do something and put a bit of meaning into my life and hopefully the lives of others as well, you know, do some good things, really, rather than kind of saying 'Oh I've published all these and I've done this and that'. He finds it difficult to dovetail his ultimate concerns with the institutional structures and the sense is that he has experienced and will continue to experience contextual discontinuity looking for other ways of fulfilling his personal ideals. While he expresses opinions which are highly subversive this is kind of passive subversion; there is little evidence that this is actively translated into action within the institution (unlike Brian).*

## **John**

John is in the fourth year of his career as an E&R lecturer and joined the university as he was finishing his PhD. Prior to his PhD he had been lecturing in a RIU overseas for one year. He splits his time fairly equally between research (40%) and teaching (40%) with administration taking up the balance of his time.

His past career was not typical of my group of ECA (although there are similarities with Fred). He had abandoned his first attempt at a UG degree before working outside academia in several manual and blue collar jobs before his second enrolment on a UG degree. He had worked for a year in a professional role after this and before returning to academic life. This made him one of the older interview participants. His overwhelming priority in terms of the immediate future was to complete his probation which meant publishing two papers and submitting a major grant application. Beyond this he had aspirations to become a world leader in his research area, be involved in great debates in society and ultimately be a professor *'researching the things that really matter'.*

He had experienced leadership (including what he called autonomous working or self-leadership) roles in several of his jobs prior to becoming an academic. However, he saw the roles he had held in academia as administrative. He saw AEL as being about supporting students directly rather than taking a lead in university strategy. Reluctance to take on AEL from his personal point of view derived from the fact that he felt he had invested a lot of energy in

curriculum design and teaching and this had resulted in his career being put in jeopardy. He did not wish to repeat this mistake. Reluctance in others may partly derive from their attitudes to their own importance (he described these as their egos). He felt that some self-important academics believe they are 'great thinkers' which he sees as a kind of arrogance *'in general I find the ones that, you know, their own hype doesn't really match the reality are the ones that are more likely to see themselves as researchers rather – and have very little responsibility to teach'*. Not all behave like this.

The approach he adopted was dominated by the fears he has relating to completing the targets he has been set for his probation on time. He resents the fact that the department has recently tightened up on probation criteria and did not recognize the broader contributions made. *'And maybe now my eyes have been opened to the fact that maybe I should be more, um, what's the word I'm looking for, not selfish, but more mercenary about it and actually think more in terms of my own career rather than just what I can offer the university. Look after myself first and foremost, and then the University second. Which goes, as you can see, you know, from my values, it goes against the grain'*.

His ICONI result suggest that he is an MR (although his score was low this was true of all his scores). His idealism was central to the interview and is clearly driven by a set of intellectual and social values which he is passionate to share and he hopes (but is not confident) will lead ultimately to a very successful academic career. He describes himself as having *'a strong will to have control over my own destiny, yeah, definitely, yeah. I definitely knew what I wanted to do and I knew that there would be battles to be had in terms of getting it my way'*. However he also says there has been a lot of 'chance' in how he has found jobs. He always sets himself high goals and typically achieves these but knows that paths to achieving his goals might have to change.

His uncompromising attitude to several institutions he has worked in or observed is reflected in the number of moves he has made (contextual discontinuity) and his difficulties in dovetailing his ultimate concerns with their socio-cultural and structural contexts. In particular, he described how he left academia because he didn't like the dissertation topic he had been given and then left a job because he *'disliked the culture of the place –and became very disillusioned'*. *'my loyalty to this institution has been shaken quite a bit as a result of this, and whereas, you know, maybe two years ago I would have said yeah, no, I definitely want to stay here, now even if things go well for me here I'm less attached to the place'*. However, he is also drawn to actions which will ensure financial and family security and is somewhat unhappy about the compromises he feels he is forced to make.

He presented a subversive - a very honest, negative and forceful - view of academia and of the way it impacts on his personal projects. This means that while he is keen to make an impact on his own terms, in relation to his work he is somewhat immune to the constraints and enablements which might support his achieving this. Importantly he draws his identity from working with a small number of colleagues in different countries who he considers to be his mentors and the reference points for his personal career. From this point of view he has the characteristics of a typical MR.

## **Keith**

Keith is two and a half years into his career as an E&R lecturer at Exeter having held a research associateship and a research fellowship in the previous two and a half years. His current role involves equal amounts of teaching and research but, in addition, the amount of what he calls administration is increasing.

His rather peripatetic past, while typical of the first stages of an ECA career, had been somewhat unplanned as each of the posts he had accepted was disrupted by structural changes and closure of the department/unit he worked in. *'I jumped before I was pushed'*. In looking forward he describes himself as being at a *'turning point'*. His preferred future involved remaining as an academic; in the short term to pass probation and then achieve SL. Ultimately he might like to progress to being a professor but thought this was unlikely. However, he had

the potential skills (from his disciplinary background) to apply for jobs outside academia but had avoided this to date as they would be less well paid and this would impact on his family.

He has taken on the AEL of elements of some modules; has designed a module and recently led a departmental field trip. Leading as a PhD supervisor is important and he sees pastoral care for students as a leadership role. He saw AEL within the department as a mentorship role and leaders more generally as representing the best interests of a group; fostering group cohesion. Individual leaders need to be approachable and inclusive but also decisive and set clear directions. He is concerned about a trend he has seen for leaders to further their careers at the expense of others. As a result he feels many senior academic leaders have lost their connection with their communities at a lower level. Reluctance to take on AEL roles is linked to the fact that PGRs/EAs are not encouraged to value teaching (despite the BISS rhetoric on this little investment into AEL is made at the institutional level) and see no esteem associated with AEL. As a result the people who take on the roles are often coerced into doing them *'people really are dragged kicking and screaming into them. And some of them do a good job, and some of them are frankly awful'*. This is ironic given that most academics are good at performing as *'neoliberal citizens'*, will follow the institutional line and try to exceed institutional targets. His attitude suggested that he was anxious that his post would not become permanent unless he could attract additional grants; something he was not confident about. This anxiety had resurfaced memories of past bouts of depression he had suffered which had led to a career interruption. His somewhat disparaging attitude to how the university and the department are managed and led surfaced several times in his interview and related to his belief that leaders are disconnected from the wider academic community.

His ICONI results suggest that he is meta-reflexive. The contextual discontinuity which underpins his career was not (as is the case with many MRs) a result of an idealistic search for a better situation in which to realise his ideals. In fact his approach seems to have been somewhat pragmatic – and involved networking with colleagues and attempting to open up opportunities. However successfully being appointed to his current post was unexpected and is seen as a very exciting opportunity to realise his academic ambitions. However, his current concerns are typical of an MR faced with dovetailing a preferred career in academia with its uncertainties and alternatives which might impact negatively on his family and his own interests. The combination of his own anxiety with a general disenchantment with institutional culture has resulted in him experiencing strongly the conflicting priorities between projects (which many academics grapple with) and the difficulty of dovetailing institutional priorities with his own. He felt his background (in a left wing teaching family) was important as an underpinning mechanism for his somewhat subversive attitude to academia and how it is managed. He was articulate about the mismatch between institutional expectations and reality. *'it just seems bonkers to think that, you know, people who have applied to the ESRC are somehow magically going to be able to bring in, um, you know, all of us are going to be able to bring in the 200K that we're supposed to'*.

## **Frank**

Frank was more than three years into his lecturing career at Exeter having previously held a research fellowship and temporary lectureship at two other HEIs. He is the only one of the participants to have completed his probation and become a senior lecturer. He was on sabbatical leave when we met but normally his time is dominated by teaching, supervision and assessment during term time and research in the student vacations. He has some administrative responsibilities.

Interestingly he started by describing how his career aspirations can be traced back to his childhood and how the choices he has made since then have involved several critical moments when he made decisions (choice of an Arts rather than a Science degree for example). In some ways his career follows the 'classic' picture of a successful young academic although his background (neither parent had been educated to A level standard) is perhaps unusual. His aspirations are uncluttered by doubt. He expects to follow the academic pathway to professorship either at Exeter or at another UK University. He saw this as combining both teaching and research and would not wish to lose the variety this entails.

His attitudes to leadership had been formed in his first university (UG and PG) where he had had opportunities to lead in the student union and through this in institutional governance. He

was aware of how HE leadership approaches differed, how power was distributed and decisions made. This was not typical of the participants I interviewed. In his time at Exeter he has been in charge of PGR for the department and has led on external relations with the research council and with the doctoral training centre. He saw these roles as combining leadership and management activity in aspects of research and education. In terms of EL he had been module convener and had redesigned aspects of both UG and M level courses. He saw curriculum development as an important part of AEL. *'I'm interested in teaching, I like teaching and I want things to work well, to work better, and actually, from when I first arrived here I was slightly wanting to revise things'*. Personally, he suggests that he has a slight reluctance to lead which he attributes to the *'great British reserve'* but he believes it is important to contribute, at least at departmental level. *'You know, there are things to be done to make sure everything works and we need to do them... and in some sense take turns doing them...there is a bit of a sense that if you're being paid more than you should probably, you know, accept that you're doing these things'*. He recognises that many of his colleagues do not take this view and would avoid roles where they deal with the student experience and other departmental business which they don't see as central to academic identity. Their reluctance stems from the rejection by many of the shift to marketization/business models in universities and the loss of control by universities. This is particularly the case when they have worked for a long time in HE and have experienced the loss of autonomy this brings. *'I think you will find quite a lot of academics... generally, who don't like their university and talk about what 'the university' does and that they are in opposition to it'*.

The approach he adopted to his working context was very balanced, self-confident and community oriented. His fairly altruistic and selfless attitude may have derived from his relatively stress free career pathway and the lack of anxiety in relation to his future. The sense was that he generally identified with the dominant discourses in the academic department and while he took a critical and analytical approach to some of the structures of the modern university he saw these as something to work with and work around in a positive way. However, he does acknowledge that ECA views are shaped by people immediately around them –who may be thirty years or more in their academic careers. He suggests that this can lead to persistence of views about taking on AEL roles amongst ECAs in contemporary university contexts; this can be seen as a kind of learned reluctance which is difficult to dispel.

His ICONI results suggest that he is a meta-reflexive. Typically (while he seems to be progressing very effectively) he suggests that he is somewhat disinterested in career advancement, which would take him away from his ultimate concerns relating to departmental collegiality and working closely with students. However, untypically, he does not have a particularly idealistic view of academic life, which he is finding it hard to achieve. In fact he is quite settled (no evidence of contextual discontinuity) and seems to be able to justify dovetailing his ultimate concerns with institutional (or at least departmental) structures.

He is not a typical MR subversive in the sense that he does not have a *'romantic view'* of his role and is not, unlike some more cynical colleagues, likely *'to grumble about things which I've heard other people perceive as being sort of impositions on their time and on their jobs'*. However, he does have strong and somewhat subversive views about the overall leadership of Universities. He rejects the centralised micro-management and change management business models which are adopted by many HEIs and advocates a search for more appropriate approaches (devolved) models of leadership which align with HE cultures.

## Pat

Pat is three years into her Exeter career as an E&R lecturer having spent two years as a teaching associate elsewhere. Her current role involved substantial amounts of research, publishing and teaching. She is the only participant who has had a formal AEL role. She had chosen to start out as a primary school teacher but this had not been as rewarding as she anticipated and she was keen to return to academia where she completed an MA and PhD prior to taking these posts.

Her career choices were partly influenced by her confidence as a teacher and the fact that she enjoyed teaching. Being in a small department she had quickly taken on informal administrative and educational leadership roles. Both these influences seem to have been important in her

being offered a formal AEL role very early in her career. Her future aspirations involved short term goals including completing probation and promotion to senior lecturer and longer term goals in which she envisaged moving up the traditional academic career trajectory (something she suggested was built into the identity ECAs bring with them from their PhD experience).

She had experienced a range of opportunities to take leadership roles ranging from the freedom to design her own curriculum to being a member of the College governing body during her first post. She was interested in taking on departmental or college leadership roles but did not envisage taking senior university 'administrative' roles. *'That is an incredible commitment', yes, I mean, to be fair, never say never and, um, I think, I mean, there is that sort of valuable opportunity to change things, but it must be said that people just seem very - under an enormous amount of pressure and it just does seem very tiring and yeah ... and I just, I guess that just slightly put me off*'. In relation to what she might do in the College in the future she was undecided *'I think I almost have an even balance of interests between director of research and director of education, but in a sense this (education) is the one where I'm acquiring the experience, as it were, of how the role happens, so I suppose in that sense it would be a logical one to think about in the future'*. Her academic lead seems to have been very careful to ensure she realised the issues and consequences involved in her career choices. However, whilst she acknowledged that the institutional culture prioritises research she did not seem to think her preference for AEL roles was a career issue. Referring to others' views of AEL she suggested that reluctance may be to do with the perceived danger of losing your academic research identity if taking an AEL role.

The approach she adopted was very positive. She suggested that as an ECA she had been transitioned into her academic role with care and support and, that while academia is demanding, she did not feel unduly stressed. She acknowledged that the structures in HEIs impose constraints on academic autonomy but she reflected on whether today's ECAs possibly bring a more realistic view of the way contemporary institutions are managed and the demands they place on staff than the view held by older academics. However, she did feel that reluctance to take on an AEL role could in part relate to taking on responsibility without power and having to *'make decisions that are inevitably going to be unpopular'*. She wondered whether most academics wanted either power or responsibility.

Her ICONI results suggest that she is primarily meta-reflexive but her attitudes do not really reflect Archer's conception of meta-reflexivity; interestingly though her ICONI score for autonomous reflexivity is also high and this may be important. While she has moved several times this seems to be part of the typical trajectory of an ECA rather than the type of contextual discontinuity where she might have been searching for a better situation in which to realise her ideals. In addition, while she has a strong personal identity related to her love of her discipline she is not apparently finding it difficult to harmonize this with the institutional context in which she is placed. Her stance to the institution is definitely not subversive; rather I would describe it as strategic (and therefore perhaps more autonomous) –she is able to find approaches to realising her own (disciplinary) concerns by working within the context she finds herself in and she has not been put off from taking a rather individual stance to her possible future career – she has concluded that there are roles for strong AELs in the future as the national priorities for HEIs change and she is strategically aligning her career ambitions with these while keeping a strategic open mind about other (research related) career opportunities which might arise.

## **Winnie**

Winnie is more than three years into a career as a lecturer having held a research post in a prestigious research centre. She had chosen to apply for an E&S post at Exeter and her current role involved teaching, tutoring, facilitating group work and leading courses. 20% of her time is spent on scholarship, educational research and outreach activities.

Her past career choices and future aspirations have been strategically planned. She had seen the pressures involved in being a research fellow and/or principal investigator so had consciously looked for an education and scholarship role. Her motivations were not totally career related; she had applied for posts which brought her to the south coast and near to old friends and colleagues. She was also very open about looking at future career possibilities

beyond the current academic context or even beyond academia. However, she is passionate about AEL and would like to develop a career in this area.

She had experienced educational leadership opportunities relating to supporting students during her PhD and postgraduate years. She described how these arose because she had identified them herself and was happy to take on roles which senior researchers were keen to shed. Unusually at this stage of an academic career, she had been involved in a national academic organisation working on policy development for the education committee and running events to promote the discipline more widely in schools and society. She labelled this as an organisational rather than leadership experience. Current AEL involved designing and teaching on new modules; responsibility for strands of activity in the degree and for year groups as pastoral mentor. She felt education leaders should be inspiring and encouraging people to innovate; in reality she sees the opposite as it is about managing groups of reluctant staff who have increasing teaching loads. She agreed that many academics are reluctant to take on AEL roles but suggests that the reasons are not as clear as it might seem. Firstly, pressures to perform in research are a key constraint; however, many good researchers take on education roles which involve investment of time and energy and do this very well. The second issue around reluctance is to do with lack of recognition. *'I think teaching is really not recognised as a good thing'*. She describes innovative activities and positive student response as examples ...*'I think a lot of that isn't recognised and that's what slightly irritates me about my position at the moment'*

The approach she adopted suggested a strong sense of active agency about her academic practice. Although she was highly aware of what she saw as the institutional constraints around pursuing an E&S career she did not feel threatened by these and although she thought there would be limited opportunities for promotion in this role she did not seem to resent this. She adopted an analytical and dispassionate stance to these experiences but identified two key concerns – what she wanted most was to be given an indication that her contribution was really appreciated and she believed that the university managerial structures lacked open lines of communication and that this was a problem for her and for others at an early stage in their careers.

Her ICONI results suggest that she is strongly meta-reflexive and this seems to align with her idealistic approach to her career which suggests that she is not simply driven by the possibility of progression through academic success *'I thought –I don't really like living here'*. And she explains her decision to move to an education role as *'seeing what it was like in a really high pressure environment, I thought that's not really what I want to do'*. Her attitude to challenging herself also aligns with a MR idealist pursuing her ultimate concerns *'I want just something a bit more challenging and different, I think, so I'm a bit scared that I'll just stay and not really push myself from this ' . I want to do something a bit more ... there are massive challenges in it, but I want to do something, I think, that pushes me out of my comfort zone again'*. She described one of her preferred career possibilities as an educational leader as *'a career dead end'*. Her stance was in some respects subversive in that she seemed personally 'immune' to the social-cultural norms, enablement and constraints that pervade the institutional career structures while recognising that they are important structural constraints for others.

## Sharon

Sharon had been a lecturer at Exeter for four years progressing from a role as an occasional teacher to an E&S post and finally an E&R post. She was the only participant who had been an undergraduate and postgraduate at Exeter before taking up her post. Her time is spent dominantly on teaching and administration in term times and on research in the university vacations.

Her career trajectory had been fairly strategically planned. Having moved out of academia for one year and considered several options, she soon realised that a career as a lecturer was what she really preferred. *'there was never like one really concrete thing I wanted to do instead'*. Looking forward she had small scale ambitions including passing probation, progressing to senior lecturer and then longer term goals working up the *'really clear transparent'* Exeter framework. To do this she had mapped out a process of grant applications and writing a book

alongside developing a career in AEL. *'the education strand and I would like to be – I want to be in charge of the GTAs and then I'd like to be, you know, if I was going to up that strand I'd want to be, like, Director of Education at some point, like, that's the strand that I'm interested in'*. Alongside this she wished to retain a work-life balance.

AEL opportunities had been important during her PGR training and she had since developed an understanding that AEL will be *'increasingly important...coming to the centre alongside research'*. Her vision for leadership is one where AEL *'fosters authentic and productive relationships between research and teaching'* and she is well aware that this view aligns strategically with the University's strategic approach. However, she would resist management roles where people become *'hated'*- hoping that further into her career institutional *'climates'* might change and she might be able to do things differently. She sees reluctance to take on AEL roles as both personality driven *'the researcher character does not marry with being a good teacher. I think there's that personality conflict that is partly why people don't like it, I think people from different backgrounds can see it as an inconvenience'* and driven by institutional values *'it's just bred out of a system that doesn't privilege teaching... they don't care, they want your publications and your grant. So the system tells you it doesn't have value, so why would you value it?'* She argues that many ECAs are reluctant quite regretfully –they are passionate about teaching and care a lot but the structures *'grind you down'*

The approach she adopted might be described as 'bi-polar' (but not in the clinical sense). On one hand she described herself as a nervous (UG) student and someone who felt that academia (and the university she knew well) was a safe place to be. On the other hand, her approach was increasingly one of an active agent. She demonstrated considerable agency in taking up the concerns of other PGR teaching assistants and negotiating appropriate teaching contracts on their behalf.

Her ICONI results suggest that she has a combined autonomous and meta-reflexive approach. The strategic focus on obtaining a lectureship and continuing her academic career involved a number of steps. This suggests, like many autonomous reflexives that she took an active and disciplined approach to achieving her goals *'I just keep moving through that path that I've now figured out and mapped out and I'll do that to varying degrees'*. She also made it clear that this was to be achieved alongside a balanced life – *'I'm not hugely ambitious in a way that I would like to give up personal life or make big sacrifices like that'*. As I suggest in relation to Deidre's interview, ARs make considerable effort to accommodate, pursuing an ethic of fairness, to ensure that home concerns are not too subordinated while retaining their ultimate concern (work).

However, in some ways she has a meta-reflexive approach. Her idealism which she pursues in the face of institutional constraints reflects this MR idealism *'Cause I feel like it's the strand I know well, and I care about it a lot and I think it's important'*. In some places she adopts a subversive stance which is resonant of a meta-reflexive (see above for her views on leadership roles). She is quite angry about the *'narrowly conceived targets the institution sets for success'* and is disparaging about *'outputs that are narrowly conceived by an institution that wants to get money and put its rankings up'*. This is expressed most vehemently in her attitude to student satisfaction surveys which she argues have no real impact on teaching behaviour. The extent of her disapproval is expressed when she argued that she would refuse to take an AEL role unless there was an opportunity to address these concerns, indicating an 'immunity' to structural enablements which was more dominant here than in other MR interviews.

## **Deidre**

Deidre is was in the fourth year of her lecturing career having been awarded a post at Exeter to encourage her to bring with her a large research grant with a guarantee of a permanent E&R lectureship at the end of five years. She had held post-doctoral posts in two institutions and is a well-respected researcher in her field. Her current role involved mainly research and leading a small research team but she had taken on roles supervising PhD students, supervising/assessing in laboratory sessions and working with undergraduate and postgraduate students in relation to admissions. She suggested that this was something she was expected to do rather than actively and strategically asking for the extra work. However, this had been an

opportunity to broaden her career experience and also to integrate herself more closely into the departmental culture. In retrospect she wished she had negotiated a contract which was a more traditional E&R lectureship. *'I don't mind teaching, not because I particularly wanted to do teaching but it would have just made me a bit more involved with that side of things and a bit more involved with the rest of the department, just to be doing some sort of, um, maybe running a module'*.

In her career trajectory she had been able to make choices as she had made an early impact in her research area with publications and presentations. The sense was of someone who had options and for whom many openings had been available. Her first two choices were made on the basis of institutional excellence and match to her research specialisms; in selecting Exeter she had made a personal choice focused on family and relationships. This was going to be even more relevant as she started a family. She was uncertain about the future partly because she was unclear about Exeter's promotion and career progression structures. However, she had considered a career outside academia and was interested in different career pathways within academia. However, she would avoid teaching only roles which felt led to academics being neglected in the department.

In the pre interview questionnaire she gave a very broad interpretation of AEL – including formal roles ranging from Dean to module leader and informal characteristics of leaders like innovative, reliable and with a proven record in teaching. Interestingly though, throughout the interview she made it clear that she had only a vague idea of what educational leadership entailed although she identified a number of people in the department who she believed carried the majority of responsibilities for AEL and were the *'teaching stars'*. She thought most people were reluctant to take on these roles partly because they wanted to prioritise their research and partly because they believed the University prioritised research in the promotion process. Examples of individuals who were promoted without doing any teaching reinforced this attitude.

The approach she adopted was somewhat hesitant and I felt she was a little outside her comfort zone talking about AEL. She wondered (as I had done) whether it was helpful to interview someone with such a strong research focus<sup>311</sup>. However, she gave interesting insights into the way EL and teaching are viewed by the research community; the University's attitude to AELs was neither approved nor disapproved of. It was more a statement of fact which she felt, for example, made it difficult to appoint E&S staff.

Her ICONI results suggested that she was an autonomous reflexive. Initially it was somewhat surprising to find this out – her uncertainty about her future career options and preferences does not align with the characteristics of ARs as 'people who know what they want and know how to get it'. However, as the only AR participant it was of interest to me to find out whether any AR characteristics were identifiable. It was clear that she was a different type of academic from the others – her lecturing post was unusual; she independently chose to locate at Exeter bringing a substantial grant with her. She had been geographically mobile but not more so than several others. However, that her postdoctoral positions were acquired through personal engagement with academic colleagues suggests a strategic approach to her career. *'as I said, I only applied to quite specific positions with the view that I wasn't going to take **any** position,'*

She does have the individualistic disciplined, self-reliant and self-sufficient characteristics which typify ARs. As examples, her preparation for my interview was detailed and well presented (the only one that was like this); she had published as a single author early in her career and was clearly able to competently run a research team from an early stage in her academic career. Interestingly though, while ARs are thought to come to decisions through personal/inner deliberations she noted in addition the importance of her professional networks in creating opportunities and supporting her in making decisions.

As a highly rated researcher, dovetailing her ultimate concerns with the university's structures and cultural enablements had not (to this point) been difficult. However, the emergence of secondary concerns (family and personal factors) as a co-dominant was interesting. The

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<sup>311</sup> However, it was an opportunity to ensure that the full diversity of lecturing roles was covered by my research.

imminent disruption created by her personal circumstances were factors in her responses although discussions about the plans she had for her maternity leave reflected the fact that she was planning to 'accommodate' these. As Archer suggests ARs make considerable effort (pursuing an ethic of fairness) to ensure that home concerns are not too subordinated while retaining their ultimate concern (work). She seems to be reaching for a sense this accommodation 'I suppose the main difference it is making is just the time, obviously I'll have to take some time off and um, I would like to think that with a family, um, that I would sort of try and have a sort of a fixed schedule, so you would come in at eight or nine and leave at five and not work at the weekends [laughs] but I suppose otherwise I would expect that I would be working as normal from autumn next year and that would be when I would be taking up the lectureship position and, um, and so in terms of progression I think the, um, the main things is to teach a module and um, and ideally bring in more research income'

Interestingly she also had a high MR score and this is reflected in the idealistic views she expresses about the combined research career and departmental support role she hopes to pursue going forward.

## Wendy

Wendy is two years into an E&R lectureship having spent three years as a research fellow at Exeter. Her current role is dominated by research (90%) with some teaching responsibilities supporting other academics.

She had an eleven year research career in one HEI involving several research posts before undertaking her PhD so was the oldest of my participants with the longest experience of HE. She had been involved in some teaching during her research career and had formed a view of what makes a high quality student experience based on observing someone she felt was an excellent role model. Her future career was almost inevitably going to follow a research trajectory and new opportunities were opening up which would facilitate this. However she was interested in teaching 'I'd like to pursue it further, but I think the problem is that there just isn't enough support for it ... it does tend to be the teaching side of things that loses out'.

Her experiences of AEL were not personal but based on how she had seen other people leading course and programmes. She suggested 'I think in the more sort of junior levels of your career you don't really get opportunities for leadership, it's just a question of – more like getting experience and trying to sort of work your way up and getting more qualifications'. However, in describing her own work she implicitly indicated that there had been many opportunities for self-leadership as she was required to work autonomously. She was clear that reluctance to lead in education came from mentors and line managers who advised ambitious ECAs to avoid AEL roles. Also she believed that at institutional level RIUs will try to attract the best researchers and tend not to appoint or support those with an interest in teaching through development or promotion.

Her approach to education suggested that despite her career having been dominated (successfully) by research she had some very strong opinions about teaching and the quality of the student experience in RIUs. She was keen to take on more teaching (and AEL) as a result of her strong views that the experiences of students could be improved. She demonstrated a clear understanding of the structural pressures around the research/teaching divide and had been guided by her academic lead to avoid education related roles which had advertised. This came out on several occasions and was a matter of some regret to her.

Her ICONI score suggest that she is a communicative reflexive. However, it is not easy to identify these characteristics in all her responses. On one hand she frequently demonstrated that she was influenced in her attitudes and decisions by the interactions she has had with other colleagues 'I think he's correct, yeah, I think he's correct in this example in terms of career planning'. Up to this point her career is going well – she seems content with this suggesting that she does adopt a communicative approach. Interestingly, however, she indicated that she would be afraid of getting on a plateau and not progressing; this is not a typical CR attitude.

One the other hand her attitude to the way academics teach was somewhat subversive (even aggressive) and she was ready to challenge this in order to realise her ideals. Typically this would be a meta-reflexive response to pursuing concerns in a context with which she does not feel in harmony. Perhaps the key difference here is that she is projecting her views about education into a hypothetical context and is reflecting on a situation which is not a substantial part of her world – she does not have to live and work in this environment and is expressing an (MR) view at a distance.



## Appendix 16 Mechanisms & causal powers (Chapter five)

Coding frames and definitions used in chapter five for analysing transcribed interviews (section 2.1.3) for two coders who analysed a sample of interview transcripts. Comparable codes are indicated in **yellow**; matched codes and definitions are numbered in **red**.

### Researcher's initial coding frame and code definitions

Thematic coding	Code definitions
Meaning of Educational Leadership 1	Descriptions of what EL means to the participants in the interview. Often as a result of me asking for clarification of the responses given in the pre interview questionnaire.
Past career trajectory 3	How and why participants' careers developed and their reflections on what was important in making choices.
People, places and attitudes which influenced career choice 4	Extent to which the disciplinary allegiance or community influenced decisions.
Disciplinary influences on career decisions 4	Description by participants of what influenced the career choices made beyond the discipline.
Institutional norms and the impact these had 4	The way in which different institutions conceptualise and organise education can have an influence on the experiences the ECA describes.
Influences on ECAs' views of EL in the past	Education Leadership as an aspect of the past experience of the ECA
Career choices related to EL 19	Description by participant of whether career choices made were influenced by EL
Opportunities to lead in pre-lecturing career 2	Examples or evidence that ECA was able to take EL role before becoming a lecturer
Attitudes and feelings about EL in pre lecturing or pre Exeter career 26	Participants feelings about their past experiences of EL
Current career decisions and focus	Descriptions of current careers in general terms with or without reference to EL
Examples of EL in current role 5	Examples given by ECAs of where they are currently, or have been, involved in EL informally or formally.
Influences on EL in current role 5	Influences suggested by participants about the attitudes of ECAs to EL roles
Future 'possible selves' 11	General comments about what the future might hold. The structures below are built around the way I asked the question.
Choices of future 'projects' 11	The future projects described have been categorised below.
Might become 8	Suggestions about what the future might hold; this is sometimes couched in terms of an inevitable trajectory
Like to become 9	Suggestions about what the future might hold which would be particularly desirable to the ECA
Afraid of becoming 10	Suggestions about what the future might hold which would not be desirable to the ECA.
Influences on future possibilities	The things that the ECAs suggested most influenced their possible future careers.
Attitudes to future possibilities 25	Attitudes expressed about the future in general.

Identity statements 21	
Views on the concept of 'reluctance' to lead in education 12	How ECAs respond to my attempts to draw them into discussing theories relating to reluctance to take on EL roles.
Positive attitudes to (teaching) and leading in education 24	Examples which suggest that ECAs have positive attitudes to EL and are not reluctant.
Reasons 24	Reasons ECAs gave for their positive approach.
Nature of the EL role as a disincentive 6	While EL is attractive as a developmental role there are workload issues 27 with it as a day to day administrative role 18
Research commitments as a negative influences 7	ECA examples and statements which suggest that research commitments are the related to reluctance to take on EL.
Reasons 7	Reasons ECAs gave for the negative influence of research.
Communication and disconnection 13 (hierarchies)	Views expressed that reluctance was connected to poor institutional communication and lack of discussion usually described as a result of hierarchical disconnects.
Disempowerment through management approaches, attitudes and interference 18	Issues influencing academic reluctance focused around micro-management of what might be seen by academics as areas of individual or disciplinary autonomy 18 or areas where they feel they might/should have agency.
Collegiality 20	The importance of relationships with (disciplinary) colleagues and how these change when someone takes on a (formal) leadership role.
Reward and recognition 15	ECA views that institutional reward and recognition structures are a factor in the reluctance to take on EL.
Negative views 15	Views about reward and recognition which are negative and how these operate as mechanisms.
Positive views 15	Views about reward and recognition which are positive and how these operate as mechanisms.
Structural forces 16	Extrinsic forces which are attributed to reluctance to take on EL roles including global, national and some institutional forces for change.
Time and priorities 14	The amount of time available for undertaking different academic roles and the way in which these are (de)prioritised
EL as risk taking	The introduction of new processes and curricula can be seen as risky to careers if it does not succeed.
Alternatives to reluctance as attitudes 17	Where reluctance did not seem to be recognised by ECAs as a relevant concept, what was suggested instead.
Nurturing Leaders	ECAs examples of and opinions about the nurturing of leadership (EL) they had experienced or might experience
Approaches to nurturing leaders 22/23	Examples of approaches to nurturing (E)LD described by ECAs
Attitudes to nurturing leaders 22/23	Attitudes to nurturing (E) LD expressed by ECAs
PCAP and (E)LD 12	Direct references made to PCAP and LTHE in relation to (EL)D

## Second analyst's coding frame and code definitions

Thematic coding	Code definitions
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP_1</b>	
<b>Definition 1</b>	Participants definition of educational leadership
Experiences and opportunities	
Teaching	Teaching experience and opportunities
<b>Leadership 2 19</b>	Educational leadership experience and opportunities
<b>Perceived barriers 6</b>	Perceptions of obstacles in the way of successful educational leadership
<b>Available pathways 5</b>	Pathways leading to educational leadership
<b>Taught programmes 12</b>	Any ed. leadership programmes attended by participant e.g. PCAP
<b>Models 5</b>	Examples given of people in educational leadership positions that have influenced them
<b>Expectation of ed. Leadership 5</b>	Expectation that educational leadership is accepted by employed academics
<b>RESEARCH</b>	
Experience and opportunities	Research experience and opportunities
Leadership	Experience of leadership in research
Publications	Research publications attempted or achieved
<b>Precedence 7</b>	Research is expected to take precedence over teaching
<b>PERSONAL FACTORS</b>	
<b>Career trajectory 3</b>	
<b>School or college experience 4</b>	Descriptions of school/ college experience
<b>Undergraduate experience 4</b>	Descriptions of undergraduate experience
<b>Postgraduate experience 4</b>	Descriptions of postgraduate experience
<b>Postdoc experience 4</b>	Descriptions of postdoc experience
<b>Academic employment 4</b>	Descriptions of employment experience
<b>Probation 4</b>	Issues concerning probation years
<b>Decisions 4</b>	Steps taken or possible future steps in career
Individual characteristics – <i>not really a focus of my coding – maybe because I had written the participant narrative summaries prior to coding</i>	
Agency	Evidence of instrumental behaviour and attitude
Confidence	Evidence of confidence
Motivations	
Career	Progress of career as main motivation
Home	Home life as main motivation
Quality of life	Quality of life as main motivation
Social relationships	Social relationships as main motivation
Academic subject	Enthusiasm for academic subject
Willingness to help others	Wanting to help other students learn
Changing lives	Changing the lives of others as main motivation
Changing structures	Having an impact on aspects of the university as main motivation

Respect for others	Wanting to show respect for others as main motivation
Views	
On organisational structure 18	Views about the way the university is organised
On current ethos 18	Views about the current academic ethos
On power structures 18	Views about the way hierarchy operates in the university
FUTURE PATH	
Aspirations 9	Desired future career
Likely trajectory 8	View of likely future career
Possible opportunities 11	Career path options
Feared trajectory 10	Fear of possible future trajectory of career
Other aspirations	Non-academic career aspirations
SOCIAL FACTORS	
Relationship with other academics	
Colleagues 20	Reference to support and interaction with colleagues
Superiors 20	Reference to support and interaction with line managers, supervisors and other senior academics
Relationship with students	Reference to interaction and relationship with students
Perceptions of own social identity 21	View of own social identity
REFLECTIONS ON THEORY	
Theories about reluctance 12	
Increased admin roles 18	Taking on leadership leads to increased burden of administration.
Research commitments 7	Precedence given to research commitments
Confidence	Lack of confidence in teaching role
Competence	Lack of competence to teach in some staff
13 Disconnect in university hierarchy	Insufficient understanding of educational role in upper hierarchies of university
Variations in willingness	Huge variation in willingness of academic staff to take on educational leadership
Financial resources 21	Insufficient financial resources to support educational leadership
Time factors 14	Insufficient time for extra teaching commitments
Lack of recognition 15	Lack of recognition of the value of educational leadership – lack of praise and encouragement
Increased workload 27	More responsibility results in increased workload
HE market forces 16	Universities now run on competitive business lines leading to conflicting criteria
Conflicting demands	More responsibility leads to conflicting demands on individuals
Academic freedom 18	Limits on academic freedom in teaching
Reluctance is not the issue 17	Reluctance to teach is not the prevailing attitude
Solutions 22/23 (conflated in my coding)	
Communication and dialogue	Better communication and dialogue between

	managers and academics
Appropriate training	Appropriate training to enable educational leadership
Academic freedom	Freedom to have control over what they teach
Transparency	Clear pathways to educational leadership
Strategy	Clear university strategy for student recruitment, staffing, teaching curriculum etc.
Recognition	More recognition for the role of educational leadership
Contribution to promotion	Educational roles should contribute more to pathways to promotion
Grants to support leadership	Finance should be available to support educational leadership
Input from external educational leaders	More visits from educational leaders from other establishments to encourage and share expertise
Support from colleagues	More mutual support will enable acceptance of educational leadership
Changes in HE	New advances in HE will lead to more emphasis on teaching role
More opportunities for teaching	More opportunities especially in early career (PhD level) will encourage educational leadership pathway
<b>CRITICAL INCIDENTS</b> (Free node – no child nodes) <u>26</u>	Any important incidents that have influenced attitude to educational leadership

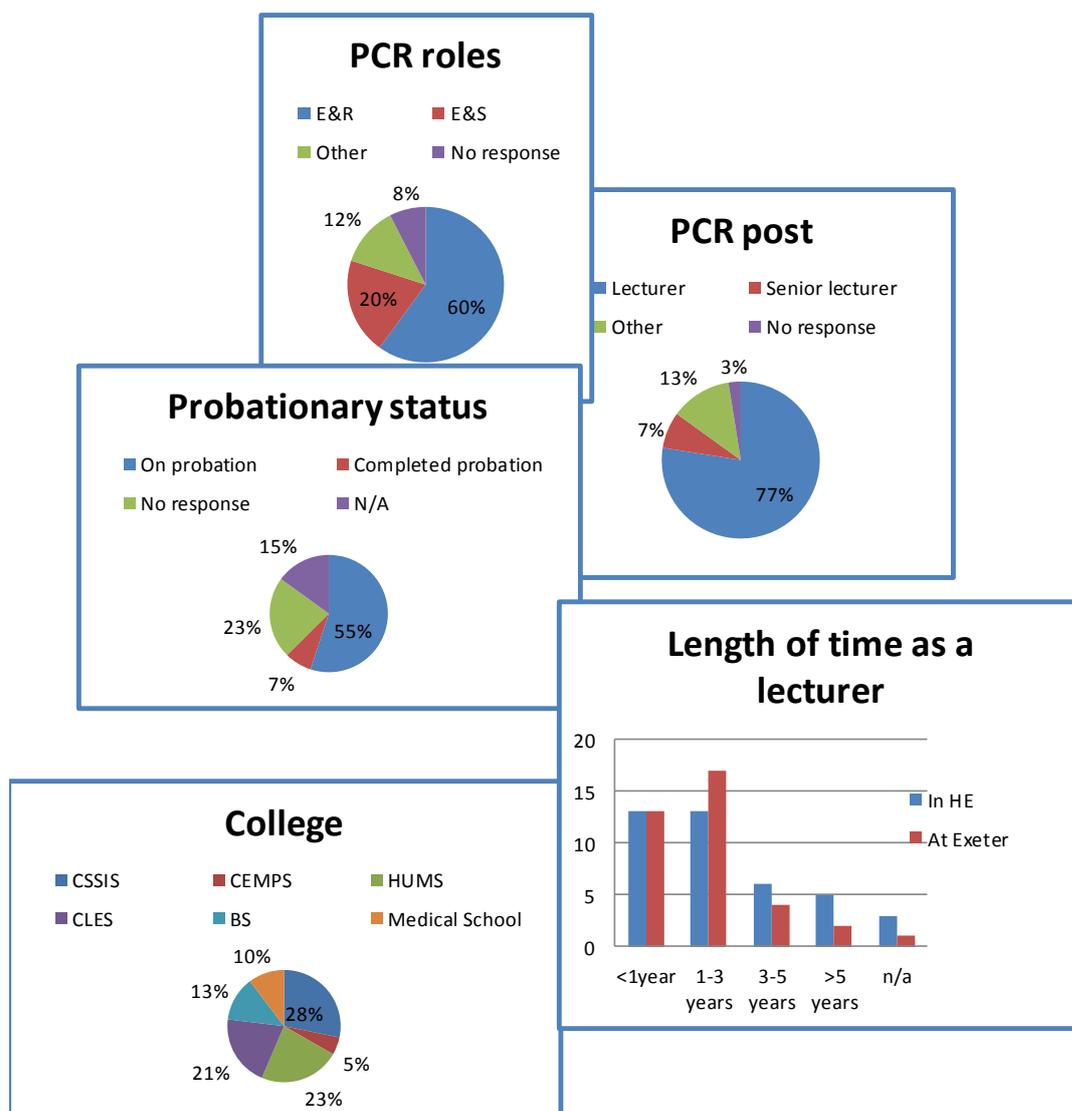


## Appendix 17 Pragmatic common referents evaluation exercise

Forty early career academics involved in a workshop in April 2016 were asked to become pragmatic common referents (PCRs) and help me with my research (see chapter five section 2.2.4 for a rationale for this approach). Consent forms were completed by all PCRs.

### The demographic survey

Initially PCRs completed a demographic survey (included at the end of this appendix) in order that I could check whether they broadly had similar roles and career profiles to the ten participants in my study). Graphical representations of the data presented here (and again with a comparative analysis of demographic characteristics in chapter five and figure 5.10) suggest this is the case.



## The questionnaire

Thirty two quotations were given to PCRs and they were asked to respond and react *as individuals* to the views expressed. Quotations were chosen as illustrative of the constructs of reluctance in figure 5.9 and were distributed in order to avoid clustering in a way which reflected the categories of constructs.

### Extract: Three quotations from the questionnaire to illustrate lay out of questions

	<b>Viewpoints: ECA conceptions of reluctance relating to educational leadership</b>	<b>Y y ? n N</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	'education is not valued to the degree that research is value... it's to do with the status and the fact that it's – the perception is that education is like secondary to the main function of the university'.		
<b>2</b>	'(people) get the impression that all the promotion criteria are associated with research rather than teaching...although the university has tried to put more emphasis on teaching I don't really know whether (their) opinions have changed'.		
<b>3</b>	'I see teaching unfortunately as a bit of an inconvenience'.		

A five point scale was used to allow a semi- quantitative collation of the responses (Cohen et al., 2007) and to facilitate the production of descriptive summaries. An opportunity to comment on the views expressed in each quotation was given. I should stress that this exercise was not designed to yield quantitative data which could be subjected to inferential statistical analysis.

### Questionnaire results

	<b>Viewpoints: ECA conceptions of reluctance relating to educational leadership</b>	<b>Y y ? n N -</b>
<b>1</b>	'education is not valued to the degree that research is value... it's to do with the status and the fact that it's – the perception is that education is like secondary to the main function of the university'.	<b>19 11 3 6 1 1</b>
<b>2</b>	'(people) get the impression that all the promotion criteria are associated with research rather than teaching...although the university has tried to put more emphasis on teaching I don't really know whether (their) opinions have changed'.	<b>20 15 5</b>
<b>3</b>	'I see teaching unfortunately as a bit of an inconvenience'.	<b>1 7 3 8 21</b>
<b>4</b>	(I am worried) 'because I took very seriously the development of my module ..., and perhaps devoted far too much time to that... in terms of being able to tick off the probationary goals'.	<b>8 12 6 10 1 3</b>
<b>5</b>	'the impact that it (EL) has on your working relationships with colleagues is, I think, sometimes fairly substantial...(they) have to make decisions that are inevitably going to be unpopular...(but) those decisions have not, in fact, been made by them really. They are, nonetheless, I think in that position where the	<b>8 1 14 1 1 3</b>

	responsibility for that decision is very much placed on them’.	
<b>6</b>	‘the only thing which scares me is the intensity of the demands of some of these posts. There is no time to research whatsoever and just everything you do is teaching focused’.	<b>15 11 5 9</b>
<b>7</b>	‘actually the politics involved in universities is horrendous, and to this day I can’t understand why. And I think it’s got a lot to do with egos, and therefore it comes down to, you know, um, the way that leadership is done within universities’.	<b>8 14 10 6 1 1</b>
<b>8</b>	‘I’ve been on quite good terms with a few of the people who’ve done these positions. I’ve just seen how incredibly draining it was on them’.	<b>14 16 4 2 2 2</b>
<b>9</b>	‘a lot of academics aren’t really very people persons, are they? So maybe they feel that they’re better in their niche of research writing their grants, doing the thing they’re the best in the world at, rather than having to (do EL and) talk to other people’.	<b>8 14 6 8 4</b>
<b>10</b>	‘I think you will find quite a lot of (senior) academics... who don’t like their university (referring here managerialism and leadership style) and talk about what ‘the university’ does and that they are in opposition to it’.	<b>11 20 7 2</b>
<b>11</b>	‘management controls and metrics... pressurise people and put them under, you know, lead them away from educational leadership to focusing solely on certain things’.	<b>16 14 6 2 2</b>
<b>12</b>	‘I always think of the research and education as being equal aspects, so to me it’s an important role I suppose’.	<b>16 12 4 6 1 1</b>
<b>13</b>	‘the way to progress your career and to get permanence is through research, so that’s the culture’.	<b>18 18 2 2</b>
<b>14</b>	‘my eyes have been opened to the fact that(at this stage of the career) maybe I should be more, um, what’s the word I’m looking for, not selfish, but more mercenary about it and actually think more in terms of my own career rather than just what I can offer the university. Look after myself first and foremost, and then the University second’.	<b>11 10 8 8 3</b>
<b>15</b>	‘I think it is a huge shame in academia that we are expected largely to choose between teaching and research because there’s just not enough time to do both. I’d like to pursue it (EL) further, but I think the problem is that there just isn’t enough support for it... it does tend to be the teaching side of things that loses out’.	<b>16 13 4 6 1</b>
<b>16</b>	‘we are breeding and have been for quite a while, very hyper-individualised academics, who are interested in their individual career and that’s not served by taking on roles in learning and teaching because they’re not recognised by institutions’.	<b>9 1 8 6 5 1 1</b>
<b>17</b>	‘my line manager suggested that I don’t take it (an EL role) because – for the simple reason that it’s time-consuming and it’s also a thankless role and a role that will not help you to progress up the academic ... promotion channel. So I’ve actually been suggested not to take on leadership roles on the teaching side of things’.	<b>5 10 12 10 2 1</b>
<b>18</b>	‘I think there’s that personality conflict (between being and researcher and a good teacher) that is partly why people don’t like it (EL)’.	<b>4 8 6 11 10 1</b>
<b>19</b>	‘I think also just that sense that you are gaining a lot of responsibility with perhaps not much extra power...I think there’s a general scepticism about whether that power (to make changes), in fact, exists’.	<b>5 17 12 6 0 0</b>
<b>20</b>	‘people really are dragged kicking and screaming into them (EL roles). And some of them do a good job, and some of them are frankly awful’.	<b>9 16 9 2 3 1</b>
<b>21</b>	‘I think if we talked up ... learning and teaching ... as much as we talk up the other kinds of academic service, then there would be more esteem associated with it’.	<b>15 15 3 5 1 1</b>

22	'I felt EL fitted better with my interests and my strengths than some of the other admin roles, so... I suppose that possibly did factor into my thinking'.	4	11	15	4	3	1
23	'you get stuck in that rut of – you need this job to stay in the system and to earn money and so keep your head above water, but it's that job that's going to stop you getting any E&R because you don't have time to do the things that you need, to get the CV that you need'.	13	14	7	1	1	2
24	'it's not that I see them (EL administrative roles) as outside the job but I don't want them to be all that the job is... don't want them to take over from research and teaching'.	13	17	4	2	1	3
25	'the system tells you it (EL) doesn't have value, so why would you value it?'	3	9	11	14	1	2
26	'I don't know if I'd ever want to have any kind of leadership, managerial role in the higher levels of a university'.	12	8	3	8	6	2
27	'It might be a reluctance to go down a route (EL) which possibly doesn't work out and then being seen as not providing good leadership or effective leadership or... leadership in the wrong direction, if you like. And then it will obviously be detrimental to their career if it doesn't work out'.	5	13	10	8	1	3
28	' I think perhaps there is a sense that it maybe interferes with someone's academic identity, as it were, that you do lose those (research) aspects'.	6	13	9	8	2	1
29	'quite a lot of it (taking on an EL role) was just to do with the fact that I actually do enjoy teaching and I do think it's important... I quite wanted to be involved in making sure that that... (education) was running smoothly, I suppose'.	8	18	8	4		2
31	'there is such a gender divide in the way ...staff conceive of what teaching is... I find that quite difficult to negotiate as a female academic'.	2	7	18	4	4	5
32	'I really am passionate about the education side of it, but I wouldn't be ... saying yes (to a career in EL) because I see it is going to ... skyrocket my career'.	4	10	15	6		5
33	'the more senior people get the more teaching gets side-lined ...you just get better at being able to take a step back and put less into it because the pay-off isn't (there)... I don't think there's reluctance to care, there's just reluctance because that's the system'.	13	10	9	3	1	4

In order to analyse the data I added up the responses by question and then collated these into the theoretical groupings I had identified in my typology of reluctance in chapter 5 section 6 (Figure 5.9). A summary and the analysis of this exercise is presented in chapter five (section 7 and figure 5.11).

## Pragmatic Common Referents: Pre-session questionnaire

I have provided an **ethics consent form** which I would be grateful if you would sign and return to me along with this questionnaire.

Name (not essential):	Researcher code

College:	Discipline:	Formal role: L / SL / other and E&R/ E&S/ other

Length of time you have worked in HE since completing your own post graduate studies	Length of time you have worked as a lecturer in <b>any</b> HEI
Have you worked outside HE since completing your PG studies? If so for how long? What were you doing (very brief summary)?	Length of time you have worked <b>at Exeter</b> as a lecturer

Your academic qualifications	Your other professional or teaching qualifications?	Current probationary status at Exeter

Brief description of current role (including, for example, the balance of time between research/teaching/administration/ outreach activity)

<b>During the session we shall be considering academic attitudes to educational leadership.</b> Please describe and reflect on what you believe is meant by the term 'educational leadership' in HE



## Reference List

The American Psychological Association version 6 referencing style has been used to create in text references and this reference list. Guidance was obtained from <http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx>. In line with this guidance this is called a reference list rather than a bibliography. Doi numbers and URLs are only quoted if the reference was extracted from an online source.

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