

Exploring the Role of Distributed Leadership Among Senior Leaders in Two Converted Academies

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Exploring the Role of Distributed Leadership Among Senior Leaders in Two Converted Academies

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Institute of Research in Education

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Abstract

Over the past nineteen years, many schools previously in Local Authority control in England have 'converted' to become academies. This study explored the role of distributed leadership (DL) among the senior leaders in two converted academies (CAs). Literature has shown that DL was a guiding philosophy in school leadership during the New Labour government. The study elicited the attitudes of school heads, heads of departments, heads of year, senior leaders, teachers and school governors towards the leadership approaches in a time of rapid change. It was concerned to understand whether or not there were differences in the models of leadership that were expressed and experienced by these teachers at these CAs. The research aims were in line with the research questions and the study addressed a gap in the knowledge because to date, there have been few detailed studies of academy leadership which have explored the perspectives of teachers and school leaders. The extent to which DL ideas and practices have survived the conversion of LA schools to academies has also been little explored. The study focused on two CAs. It employed a phenomenographic research approach to elicit and report the qualitatively different ways in which teachers experienced leadership at the CAs. A purposeful sample of five leaders from the first case study, and fourteen staff from different levels of leadership in the second case study were chosen to participate in this research.

The findings showed that it was difficult to employ DL in academies which were run like businesses. However, DL was residing in specific people like the deputy head of the second case study who was committed to it and was trying to mediate between the HT and the staff. This means that there were some pockets of DL in these academies which otherwise were run very hierarchically because they adopted a 'new managerial pragmatic approach' due to pressure from the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted. This was a new policy-driven approach to leadership of academies and was one of the major contributions to knowledge. Although the academies were given the autonomy to run their schools, they were accountable to DfE and Ofsted which had some non-negotiable policies. Thus, their new-found

autonomy was overshadowed by the new accountabilities. Furthermore, due to accountabilities to DfE and Ofsted the findings revealed that the HTs were aware of how precarious their jobs were, and as a result, they were reported to have employed top-down leadership styles which included ‘micromanagement’, ‘autocratic leadership’, ‘dictatorship’ and were risk averse in order to turn the school around. As a result of these leadership practices, the findings showed that it affected the teachers due to heavy workloads, and their work life balance was not considered. The study concludes that a lack of understanding of the type of leadership practices employed in academy conversion can lead to weaknesses in academy leadership not being recognised and the role that DL can play being ignored. The thesis argues that returning to DL models and implementing it in CAs may help resolve some of the challenges faced in academies leadership.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CA	Converter
CAs	Converter academies
DfE	Department for Education
DL	Distributed leadership
HOD	Head of department
HODs	Heads of departments
HT	Headteacher
HTs	Headteachers
LA	Local authority
LAs	Local authorities
NAO	National Audit Office
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PM	Performance management
PP	Pupil premium
SAs	Sponsored academies
SLT	Senior leadership team
SSE	School Self-Evaluation

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Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction

The focus of this study is the role of DL amongst senior leaders in converted academy schools (CAs). The objective of the research was to explore to what extent did CAs employ DL in their schools. I should clarify that this study falls in two policy periods, the Coalition government (2010-2015) and the Conservative government from 2015. The Conservative government continued with the converter academy (CA) policy which the Coalition government had started. I collected my data in 2014 during the then Coalition government and the Conservative government took over in 2015. However, because of the continuation of the converter academies policy, there is hardly any difference in this education policy between these two governments. The only significant difference that I noticed is the increase of the Multi Academy Trusts (MAT): by 2017, 73% of academies were run by MATs (West and Wolfe, 2018). This chapter will discuss the background of the study which includes the role of central government and the introduction of CAs. The aims and main objectives of the study will be explained, and the research questions will be spelt out. The outline of all the other chapters will be explained.

1.1 Background

The UK General Election of 2010 brought to an end the three terms of 'New Labour' which had first been led by Tony Blair (1997- 2007) and then by Gordon Brown. In the area of school education, the period had been marked by marketisation, first-generation academies (sponsored academies), the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and its reframing of school leadership. The role of central government in education in England increased under the then Conservative–Liberal Coalition government (2010-2015), whilst that of local authorities (LAs) declined (West, 2015). West observes that these changes to governance have managed to centralise power on the one hand, and to facilitate and sustain markets in school-based and free early education on the other. This is different from Scotland or Wales, according to West, where democratically elected LAs still play a highly significant role in

education provision. One of the key policy areas that was introduced by the then Coalition government was the CAs programme in 2010 and has then been continued by the Conservatives in 2015. Academisation of maintained schools has been at the heart of the Conservative government's education policy, as stated by the National Audit Office (NAO) (2018) since 2010.

Academies are publicly funded independent state schools which are different from maintained schools in the sense that they are independent of LAs and have more freedoms which include setting of staff pay and conditions, and determine their own curriculum (NAO, 2018). It is a requirement, as stated by the NAO, that each academy school must be part of an academy trust; this is a charitable company which controls the school's budget and employs the academy staff. Academy trusts are directly funded by, and accountable to, the DFE, via the Education and Skills Funding Agency (NAO, 2018). According to the NAO, at January 2018, out of the 21,538 state-funded schools in England, 7,472 (35%) were academies. Of these, 6,996 had converted from maintained schools and 476 were free schools (NAO, 2018).

Other key policy areas that were introduced under the Coalition government were pupil premium (PP), which is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils (defined as pupils who are eligible for pupil premium including pupils who have been in LA care for one day or more and pupils who have left LA care because of one of the following: adoption; a special guardianship order; a child arrangements order, DfE: 2015:8) and close the gap between them and their peers; and the introduction of free part-time early education (all 3 to 4-year-olds in England can get 570 hours of free early education per year) (West, 2015). These policies have seen schools in England going through a radical transformation since 2010 (West and Bailey, 2013; DfE, 2010).

West and Bailey (2015) argue that the processes of layering and policy revision, together with austerity measures (economic measures put in place by government to reduce public expenditure in response to the financial crash of 2008-2009) arising from the economic

recession (a significant decline in economic activity like trade and industry and it can go for months; there is a fall in Gross Domestic Product) which started in 2008, have brought a significant change which paved way for private companies to take over and run secondary schools in place of LAs. According to ATL, the education union, (2015) due to austerity measures, schools experienced some budgetary cuts, and the effects were large class sizes, higher teacher pupil ratio, reduction of teachers' pay and pension, job losses due to redundancy, introduction of Performance Related Pay which also reduces pay, school closures, acceleration of amalgamation of schools and wide-spread curriculum cuts. Further education/school collaboration decreased, and reduction of different school clubs and extra-curricular activities.

The introduction of CAs in 2010 under the Coalition government brought with it a shift in styles of school leadership. Previously, during the New Labour government (1997-2010), distributed leadership became a central element of school leadership (Bolden 2007) and a guiding philosophy, under the guidance of the NCSL. Distributed leadership encouraged school leaders to move from the hierarchical models of leadership to wider distributed, dispersed and shared networks (Harris 2008) (discussed in detail in chapter 2). With the introduction of converted academies, academy leaders are under pressure to raise attainment, extending a trend that had already begun with the sponsored academies introduced under the New Labour government, in order to transform schools deemed to be failing by the Schools Inspectorate, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (Wrigley and Kalambouka, 2012).

In summary, there are some contradictions in the educational policies that were introduced by the then Coalition government. The government removed the decentralisation of schools through the local authorities and the role of central government increased, which contradicts with the autonomy of academy schools. The academies are said to be autonomous and yet they are accountable to central government and other designated bodies like Ofsted. Central government made schools to understand that they have freedom, and yet they are competing

with other schools through league tables and parent choice. The next section will discuss the study rationale.

1.2 Study rationale

The motivational factor that drove me to choose my study topic was the DL research that I conducted during my Masters' degree from 2008 to 2010. I carried out this research at one of the academies which is currently under study, although it was under the New Labour government and was part of a local authority and had a different school leadership. The main findings of my Masters' research showed that the school understood the concept of DL to some extent, although the headteacher was held accountable and was in control of the school. Soon after my Masters research, I witnessed the same school being converted into an academy under the Coalition government, and this motivated me to carry out further studies of leadership at that school, but in a different set up. This school had an enrolment of about 600 students and the school was in receipt of pupil premium for about 50 pupils in 2014 when I interviewed the staff as part of my doctorial study. The other motivational factor was the attempt to create new knowledge and to bring new insights about the role of distributed leadership in academy leadership in newly CAs. Previously, this academy school under study had a long serving headteacher who was at the time promoted to a higher post by the local authority in 2003. From 2003, there was a leadership crisis and the two remaining deputy heads led the school for one and a half years.

The school recruited another headteacher in 2005 who came and appointed his new deputy and assistant headteacher. There was a big staff turnover when this new head joined the school. At that time, I felt that I was ready to assume a middle leadership role, but unfortunately, I failed. Instead, the headteacher appointed a lot of newly qualified teachers into middle leadership positions. The head and his deputy led the school for five years and they were forced to resign by the governors in 2010. When they left, there was again a leadership crisis and the two assistant headteachers led the school for a year. In 2011 another headteacher

was appointed and the first thing that he did was to convert the school into an academy in the same year. He restructured the middle leadership by joining other departments and expanding some. I managed to get into the middle leadership team in 2011 because our department was divided into two. However, this headteacher did not last; he resigned in 2012, then the deputy and assistant head took over as the interim leaders. After two terms, a new headteacher was appointed in 2013 and she restructured the middle leadership by joining two or more departments into one. She laid the blame on expenditure cuts that were introduced by the then Coalition government, described by West and Bailey (2013) and ATL the education union (2015). This resulted in a lot of middle leaders losing their posts including myself. I was disappointed because I thought CAs had more funding than LA schools. I had come a long way in order to get this post, and I really wanted to make a difference in my department (to be discussed in the insider-researcher section in chapter 3). This background prompted me to carry out this study.

The other academy where I carried my research was in the same area with the first academy and had an enrolment of about 1200. The school had about 100 pupils who were in receipt of PP. PP was a significant factor in these schools because it explained the context in which these schools were working. Both schools were formerly run by the same LA, and they were converted in 2011. Since I was not an insider at this academy, I got a small sample of school leaders who agreed to participate in my research. The other reason for a small sample is that I initially treated it as a pilot study before turning it into a case study because of its rich and in-depth data. However, the number of people who responded did not matter in this phenomenographic study because of the collective voice (to be discussed in chapter 3). The next section will discuss the aims and objectives of the study.

1.3 Aims and main objectives

The major aim of this study was to explore the leadership strategies that were applied at the two CAs. The shift of the NCSL networked learning community style, which was employed

during the New Labour government, to the 2010 autonomous CAs which are run like businesses, was explored. The study explored the diverse experiences of school heads, heads of departments (HODs), heads of year (HOY), Senior Leaders (SLT), teachers and governors towards the leadership approaches in a time of rapid change. It sought to know if there were various leadership models that were expressed and experienced by the staff members of these academies. While there is an extensive literature on DL before 2010, and there have been policy analyses of the move towards academies during the period in question (2010-2015), there is much less research on the ways in which leadership styles and practice have changed as schools convert into academies.

1.4 Research questions

The study seeks to address the following questions:

- Who has the responsibility for leadership at the CAs under study?
- What are the effects of autonomy and accountability on school leadership in the CAs under study?
- What leadership strategies do the HTs use to deal with the demands of their schools, and their roles? How does pragmatism affect CA governance?
- What role does DL play in how leadership is performed at these CAs, and can they be reconciled with the business model in academies?

1.5 Overview of thesis chapters

The thesis has nine chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the literature review whilst chapter 3 explains the methodology. Chapter 4 discusses the study's research design. Findings of academies consultations and reasons for conversion are explained in chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 present the academies data, its interpretation and the identification of a number of key emerging themes. Chapter 8 offers conclusions and discusses the implications for DL in

converted academies and more importantly, also returns to the question of whether, and to what extent, ideas and practices based on DL are still in evidence in the leadership of the schools. Although most of the data was taken from the second academy school, some of it was taken from the first academy because of the commonalities and differences, as well as providing deeper insights into some issues such as the conversion process, role of LA and the HTs' leadership in these academies. The next chapter will discuss the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the 11 of academy schools in England. It discusses the meaning of school leadership. It also discusses DL and how headteachers put it into practice. Academies' business model is explored, and academies' autonomy and accountability. The chapter also discusses the new Ofsted (2019) inspection framework. The effects of change of leadership in schools is discussed. In this study I did a historical review of academies and highlighted what is known about leadership in the new CAs from other research findings.

2.1 Search strategy

I used hand and electronic searching in order to read and familiarise myself with: key issues surrounding the history of academies and different leadership styles; authors; and the terminology used in my research area. I made sure that I was as comprehensive as possible in collecting my literature by using a variety of sources such as books, journals, The Guardian newspaper, political party manifestos and both government and non-governmental reports. This gave me a lot of information, but I needed to reduce this literature in order to focus on the key literature for my study. This resonates with Fink (2014) who expresses that while the internet has got information about most topics, specific addresses that provide required data are needed, for example http://find lit.com... I carried out my internet searches through google and Google Scholar, the University of Bedfordshire's Ebsco host, government and policy websites in order to obtain various literature which include previous and current policy changes.

I also used keyword search terms for the identification of relevant literature as explained by Ely *et al* (2007). I used key search terms like CAs, sponsored academies, leadership in academies, DL, CAs act, autonomy and accountability in academies and City Technology Colleges (CTCs) (secondary schools set up through partnership between the government and business to teach technology and science in inner-city areas). My searches ranged from 1979

when the Conservative government was elected into power to 2019. I also explored the literature around key acts of parliament which were significant such as the new Ofsted (2019) inspection framework. I included the literature that supported my research questions and the themes that were emerging from the data which had relevant definitions. I also included the key authors about DL who were quoted in most of my literature review. I excluded the literature that was too general and did not support the research questions and emerging themes. The Boolean searching approach was used by combining search terms together with AND/OR where few article sources were generated. I used Mendeley and Refworks for reference and journal article storage for further use during my write up.

2.2 The history of academies

As this research focuses on leadership in converter academies, it is important to understand what academies are in the English context and how they developed over time.

2.2.1 City Technology Colleges (CTCs), Grant-maintained schools and technology colleges 1979–1997

Between 1979-1986 the ruling Conservative government introduced a number of educational reforms designed to improve educational standards, increase student attainment and widen educational provision/funding structures in England (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993; West, 2009; Institute for Government, 2012; West and Bailey, 2013). As part of this, City technology colleges (CTCs) were introduced in 1986 after the Conservative Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker proposed the setting up of a pilot network of 20 CTCs, as part of the educational reforms, if the Conservatives were re-elected again (West and Bailey, 2013). These CTCs did not receive their funding from LAs but direct from central government and they were owned by private companies (*Ibid*). The aim of these CTCs was to promote science, technology and business education (Caldwell and Spinks, 2013; Walford, 2016; Fox and Buchanan, 2017). ‘The CTCs were created, as a result of secondary schools failing to provide relevant education for half of their pupils who did not desire a purely

‘academic’ curriculum’ (Taylor, 1986:24). They were to cater for 11 to 18-year-old students of all abilities and were not to ‘cream off’ the ‘academically brightest children’ (Baker, 1993:180). In other words, they were deemed to be specialist technology schools (Caldwell, 2016). It must be noted that when the Conservatives set their 1987 manifesto which wanted to introduce CTCs, they also paved a way for maintained schools (schools funded and controlled by local education authority) to bypass LAs and get full grants direct from the Department of Education and Science (DES) (Conservative Party, 1987). According to Baker (1993), as soon as the Conservatives were voted into power, they passed the Education Reform Act 1988, which gave permission to private charity companies to run CTCs and government schools instead of LAs. DES (1986) stated that sponsors either owned or leased, the CTCs and run them; this had the effect of creating a quasi-market, in which school leadership could effectively be bought and sold.

However, Baker (1993) observed that although the Labour Council controlled LAs did not want CTCs in their area, the successful establishment of CTCs was determined by the ruling government which had power to control and to do the planning (Baker, 1993). In 1996 the new labour shadow secretary for Education and Science Giles Radice, observed that CTCs were causing social dissatisfaction and were not appropriate for both education and technology (Hansard, 1996). He was worried about the unfair selection of pupils and division within the inner cities. The selection for CTCs was based on reports about the candidates in the catchment area from headteachers, followed by tests and interviews of parents (West and Bailey, 2013). The above complicated admissions procedures were not welcomed by parents (Edwards and Whitty,1997). Irrespective of a financial crisis in 1992 which saw the treasury reducing capital expenditure, questions regarding the teaching of technology continued (West and Bailey, 2013). ‘In the White Paper, Choice and Diversity’, (DES, 1992:44–45) it was noted that: the economic health of the country required the vigorous promotion of technology in schools and the active involvement of private sector sponsors in that process’.

There were only 15 CTCs by 1993, and the programme was terminated (West and Bailey, 2013) and substituted by the technology colleges/specialist schools programme. The reason for terminating CTCs according to West and Bailey was that the CTC programme alone could not achieve the objectives of improving technology education and increasing educational standards; hence, the implementation of a revised technology colleges' policy. West and Bailey explain that this revised policy included some elements of CTC programme in order to improve technology education and increase educational standards. It aimed to help maintained secondary schools to specialise in technology, science and mathematics, though they did not discard the national curriculum and the operation of the first technology colleges which started in 1994 (Ryan, 2008).

Although it started with only grant-maintained (state schools between 1988 and 1998 that had opted out of local government control and were funded directly from central government by a grant) and voluntary aided schools (state-funded schools where a foundation or trust like religious organisations contribute to building costs and they have a significant influence in the running of the school), the specialist schools which were introduced in all maintained secondary schools in 1995, included the modern foreign languages, and in 1996 they also covered the sports and arts subjects (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2003; Yeomans *et al*, 2000). As specialist schools, they could use enrolment tests to select their best students for their specialist area (West and Hind, 2003). One of the requirements to become a specialist school was to contribute £100,000 so that they could upgrade their schools in order to match the specialist requirements (West and Bailey, 2013). They explained that this contribution was a requirement from a private sector, although they were still controlled by local authorities. They argued that these private sponsors were in favour of supporting specialist schools more than CTCs. This caused the government to revise their initial aim of asking the private sector to provide large funding according to West and Bailey, to a smaller contribution towards specialist schools.

Due to the introduction of these specialist schools, more schools were encouraged to join in this programme because of the availability of funds that were offered by the government to boost it (West and Bailey, 2013). They observed that all these changes in education were incremental and were transformed through layering new educational policies on top of the old ones. West and Bailey explained that they achieved these changes through the direct funding from central government to publicly funded schools like CTCs, for the first time. According to the Institute for Government (2012), 'Baker's reforms had the dual approach of standardising curriculum content and testing procedures while increasing the diversity of the way in which that curriculum was delivered' (Institute for Government, 2012:4).

However, despite CTCs being perceived as a remarkable improvement to schools and education, it was noted that there was a lot of opposition from different structures within the political environment such as the teaching unions, most local authorities, a significant number of politicians from both New Labour and the Conservative party and the media which was viewed as reporting intense negativity about the programme (Walter, 2007). Moreover, "CTCs were seen as a threat to local democracy, as 'selective' (despite their comprehensive intake) and as a creeping privatisation of education because of the sponsor involvement" (*Ibid*, 2007:14). They were also seen as not worthy/undesirable in the world of education (*Ibid*). Due to CTCs being funded directly from the department for education, just like the 2010 converter academies (to be discussed in detail later) and local authorities seeing their introduction as an attack on them, most local authorities were not too keen on giving away control over education (Caldwell, 2016; Allen and Gann, 2018). This raises broader questions about school leadership that are discussed later in this study.

Nevertheless, the features of specialist schools which attracted David Blunkett who was a Labour shadow education secretary at the time were: the improvement that specialism could bring to the self-esteem of a school and its reputation in the community; headteachers felt a sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability of the programme; and there was an

opportunity for collaboration with external partners (Walter, 2007:14). The next section discusses the educational system under John Major.

2.2.2 John Major: 1990-1997 (Conservative Government)

John Major became the Conservative Prime Minister in November 1990 and he took over from Margaret Thatcher, an education system which had declined in investment and had a lot of issues in equality (Gillard, 2011). Moreover, schools encountered serious problems caused by growing social divisions, and in 1997 Ofsted observed that the worst performers at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) were state schools with large numbers of children from poor backgrounds (Gillard, 2011).

Gillard believes that pupils were let down by John Major and his new education secretary, Kenneth Clarke who continued to follow Margaret Thatcher's footsteps. They continued with the selection policy and elitism according to Gillard. These new 'grant-maintained' schools presented themselves as their own admission authority, and this led to schools enrolling more affluent pupils, a practice known as 'cream skimming' (Institute for government, 2012). Gillard (2011) reported that the government also continued to undermine LAs by giving permission to all schools to come out of LA control and get their grants straight from central government. The Institute for Government (2012) reported that one in six secondary schools chose to opt out of LA control, which showed a significant increase in school autonomy. Also, the government was viewed as damaging the teaching profession, according to Gillard (2011) through competing for students between schools and publishing league tables. However, the Institute for Government (2012) argues that:

> Introducing competition means schools must vigorously compete for students and the funding that follows them by maximising outcomes for students. Without competition, the argument runs, monopolistic state providers can afford to rest on their laurels and allow productivity to fall (Institute for Government, 2012:2).

They also argued that schools were given the autonomy to create different approaches of teaching pupils and this could have been achieved by permitting variation to occur endogenously within the system (a good example would be allowing schools to vary the length of the school day) or by creating it exogenously outside the system (a good example could be the Department of Education introducing a new type of school). After creating these approaches, parents would then choose an approach based on the results of different schools, and superior approaches were then developed as popular schools expanded, whilst unpopular schools diminished (Institute for Government, 2012). They argued that this approach was expected to help in developing the average quality of education, and it also promoted innovation and focused on new approaches. John Major's government, according to Gillard, established a teachers' pay review body; introduced a 'Parents' Charter' in 1991 (the right of the parents to know about school life and its activities) which was amended in 1994; removed further education and sixth form colleges from local authority control (under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act); and established the Ofsted with Chris Woodhead as the Chief Inspector.

The Education (Schools) Act (16 March 1992) made provision for the establishment of Ofsted (Shaw, 2011). The agency employed private contractors who inspected schools and published the reports of each school in order to give parents the freedom to judge the quality of the school (Institute for government, 2012). Every inspection team had at least one member 'without personal experience in the management of any school or the provision of education in any school' who were known as 'lay inspectors' (Gillard, 2011). This was different from voluntary aided faith schools according to Gillard, which had two complementary inspections: a 'Section 9' inspection (which became Section 11 in 1996) covering the National Curriculum and other matters such as equal opportunities and health and safety, and a 'Section 13' inspection which covered religious education which was controlled by governors and foundation bodies. The introduction of Ofsted demoralised teachers because of the huge amount of paperwork and filling in a lot of documents, which a school had to complete before an inspection (Shaw, 2011).

Teachers were not sure about the inspectors' impartiality in judging their schools because teachers' jobs were at stake (Shaw, 2011; Gillard, 2011). The next section discusses the New Labour government's educational policies.

2.2.3 New Labour government and its educational polices: 1997-2010

The education policy was changed as soon as the then New Labour government was elected into power in 1997. Although grant-maintained schools continued to enjoy their comparative freedom as foundation schools, (state funded schools where governors of those schools have more powers of controlling and running them**)** they lost the freedom to get direct funding from the central government that they used to enjoy under the then Conservative government: they were now funded through LAs and were subject to LA supervision (West and Bailey, 2013). The specialist schools programme was re-introduced in 1997 aiming at school improvement and sharing good practice and resources with nearby schools and their local communities (HC Education and Skills Committee, 2003). The outside funding that was contributed by the private sector towards the specialist programme was reduced to £50,000 from the initial £100,000 that was introduced during the Conservative government, and £20 for those schools with small enrolment (HC Education and Skills Committee, 2003). The government broadened the specialisms to include engineering, science and business and enterprise in addition to the ones mentioned before during the Conservative Government period (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2001a; 2003) and it set a goal to have about 2000 specialist schools by 2006, which was achieved ahead of time (DfES, 2003). The 2005 Labour Party manifesto set a goal of every secondary school becoming a specialist school (Labour Party Manifesto, 2005). By 2010, nearly 90% of secondary schools had achieved specialist status (West and Bailey, 2013).

Also, in 2000, David Blunkett announced the introduction of city academies (The Guardian, 2000). These city academies were almost the same as the CTCs, which David Blunkett was in favour of from the time they were in operation in 1995 (Ryan, 2008). City academies were

different from CTCs in the sense that they replaced schools that were considered to be failing by the school inspection body, Ofsted, or were underachieving (The Guardian, 2000). Thus, the main aim of city academies was to replace poorly performing schools and improve 'pupil performance by breaking the cycle of disadvantage and low expectation' (DfES, 2005a:7). According to West and Bailey (2013) this programme was perceived to be a solution for failing schools; the need to improve the quality of education for children in poor urban areas motivated the change in policy. 'Businesses, individuals, churches or voluntary bodies were to sponsor city academies which were to be outside LA control and the sponsors were to make a contribution of around 20% of the capital costs, which could mean up to around £2million', which was different from other ordinary specialist schools (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), (2000:8).

The academies were expected to offer a broad and balanced curriculum according to the DfEE (2000), but with special focus on at least one curriculum area like science and technology, languages, the arts or sport. These academy schools could not just use their own enrolment policies, but they were supposed to discuss them first and agree with the DfEE which required them to follow the admissions code and allowed them to enrol at least 10% of children based on achievement of an enrolment test (DfEE, 2000). Furthermore, the government was supposed to pay the revenue costs which were equivalent to other schools in the LA (DfEE, 2000). However, the DfEE explained that sponsoring bodies had the responsibility of setting up and running the schools by creating a charitable company which discussed the way the Secretary of State for Education and Employment would fund them. City academies were introduced to promote inclusivity in all schools and to raise attainment levels where schools were deemed to be failing (Ryan, 2008). The Education Act 2002 permitted academies to be established outside urban areas and they catered for all-age groups and allowed any subject area (DfES, 2002). From 2004 sponsored academies were supposed to be on the LAs' agenda in order to get funding under the Building Schools for the Future programme (DfES, 2004a).

They managed to introduce 20 sponsored academies by 2005, under the Schools Achieving Success programme (Ryan, 2008).

After the ‘re-election of the Labour Government in 2005, the White Paper ‘Higher Standards Better Schools for All’ and the Labour Party 2005 Manifesto (Labour Party Manifesto, 2005) expressed that academy will remain at the heart of the government’s programme, with continued and new opportunities to develop them’ (DfES, 2005b:8 and 29). Further, the Manifesto mentioned the government’s plan to open about 200 academies by 2010. Tony Blair’s vision was to see every school being a self-governing independent state school (Blair, 2005), and to double academies to 400 by 2010 (Blair, 2006). According to Gove and Laws (2012), there were 203 SAs by 2010, so, Blair achieved his original plan but not the 400 he desired. Gordon Brown took over from Tony Blair and became the then Labour Prime Minister in 2007 and he chose Ed Balls to be the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Ed Balls brought some new changes in the academy schools which were introduced by David Blunkett during Tony Blair’s reign, and these changes expected the academies’ way of funding to follow the same pattern with the national curriculum for English, maths, science and ICT (HC Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009). They also announced that it was not mandatory for educational institutions or multi sponsors of chain academies to contribute financially towards the academies programme, and in 2009 this sponsorship policy was terminated (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007a).

According to Ryan (2008) the New Labour government recognised the similarities between CTCs and academies. Basically, the former CTC programme was revised and changed into the sponsored academies (SAs) programme (Hacker, 2004). A number of CTCs produced positive academic results and SAs were regarded as ‘the radical extension (in schools which underperformed) of a model that clearly works’ (DfES, 2005b:8). Nevertheless, CTCs’ admission policy was different from the SAs in the sense that the CTCs had pre-admission interviews whilst academies followed the 2006 Education and Inspections Act which barred pre-admission interviews (National Audit Office, 2010). There was wide cross-party support of

SAs which saw people like Margaret Thatcher, Kenneth Baker former Conservative Prime Minister and Education Minister respectively and Andrew Adonis, Labour's Junior Schools Minister attending a reception in 2007 to celebrate 20 years of the successful operation of CTCs and SAs (Ryan, 2008). Nonetheless, all CTCs except three, had converted into academies by 2010 just before the general election in 2010 and there were 203 sponsored academies.

West and Pennell (2002) argue that the New Labour government continued with the market-oriented philosophy of its predecessors although it changed the legislation and policies. Chitty and Dunford (1999) state that 'it is possible to argue that New Labour has accepted much of the Conservative government's education agenda… on a broad front, the Conservative education has remained remarkably intact' (p. 50). Some examples were the continuity of interviews of pupils before enrolment in religious schools, possibilities of selection according to ability in schools which practised it before, and there was confusion between ability and aptitude, since new selection according to aptitude was introduced instead of ability (West and Pennell, 2002). However, the idea of whether or not academies "work" effectively for their staff is something I will explore in this study.

2.2.3.1 Critiques of Sponsored Academies

There were concerns around the introduction of the sponsored academies during the New Labour government because of the involvement of private business in state education and the excessive power given to private interests (Chitty, 2008; Benn, 2008). Thus, these academies were considered a threat to state education because of their governance which was viewed as undemocratic, and they had also substituted mainstream subjects in their curriculum with vocational equivalents, which were not the same as GCSE's (Titcombe, 2008; Chitty, 2009).

In addition, more concerns were raised about the sponsorship of academies at that point in time, where some of the sponsors did not want the public to know that they were sponsoring academies; this act denied the public their right to know who was funding local education

(Beckett and Evans, 2008). Nevertheless, these sponsors of academies were empowered to select the governing body, regulate the working conditions for staff and were given the rights to own the school assets without public scrutiny or accountability (*Ibid*). Since the parents of children attending academy schools had different rights from those at mainstream schools, they were no longer influential over the running of these schools because of academisation (Millar, 2006; NAO, 2007). It must be noted that the process of setting up an academy was not transparent, and the consultation process was viewed as imperfect and fake (Wrigley, 2009; Mansell, 2009a).

2.2.4 The Conservative-Liberal Coalition government and Conservative converter academies, free schools and university technical colleges.

Converting state-funded schools in England into academies has been the focus of education policy under both the then Coalition government of 2010-15 and of the Conservative only government, which followed after the Coalition government in 2015 (Mansell, 2016). In 2008, Michael Gove, who was the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, supported the academies programme (Gove, 2008), and in the 2010 Conservative party manifesto the academy conversion programme was suggested again (Conservative Party, 2010). In the same manifesto, the Conservatives stated that 'all existing schools will have the chance to achieve academy status, with 'outstanding' schools pre-approved' (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010:53). When the Coalition government came into power in 2010, they passed the Academies Act 2010, which gave permission to schools to convert into academies and for people to start their own academy schools (DfE, 2010a). This means that the restructuring of the governance of education from the 2010 Coalition Government saw most of the schools being administered by the Secretary of State, the private sector and churches, instead of local authorities (Ranson, 2012).

In their White Paper, 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE, 2010a) the Coalition government commended the way the CTCs and academies were achieving, and desired to see all state schools converted into academies. According to the Institute for Government (2012), Gove

was committed to promote competition between schools as seen in the previous Conservative government. This was demonstrated in his 2012 Spectator Conference where he argued that the government needed to create more new schools to promote innovation, raise expectations, give parents choice and drive-up standards through competition (Institute for Government, 2012); thus, these were the priorities of the Thatcher government as well, suggesting that this is a return to the 80s. Furthermore, the league tables which were also created by the previous Conservative government were redesigned by the Coalition government, according to the Institute for Government, to improve the quality of information given to parents on school performance.

The government wanted schools to be liberated from central and local bureaucracy (DfE, 2010a), also, using this autonomy to raise standards and narrow the attainment gap. Ball (2013) observes that this change of accountability and powers in academies reflects a policy trend known as 'reregulation' (renewed regulation of empowering central government to directly control academies instead of LAs), and new models of centralised control have been created. As discussed before, this was a significant change of direction because the revised policy changed from one aimed to remedy individual schools seen to be failing (sponsored academies under the New Labour government), to one seeking to effect 'system-wide' change (CAs) (West and Bailey, 2013). This is demonstrated by these statistics which show that by January 2018, 72% of secondary schools were converted into academies including free schools as compared to 27% of converted primary schools (National Audit Office, 2018). The difference between the CAs and SAs is that CAs aim to convert good and outstanding schools into academies, whilst SAs only targeted the schools deemed to be failing. Wrigley and Kalambouka (2012) observe that this has produced a spurious improvement in attainment results to satisfy the political masters, but with questionable benefit to students. In addition, the pressure is on the CAs' headteachers who need to persuade a variety of individuals, professional organisations and government, that from the day of opening, they would be sustainably successful (Gunter, 2011).

The first CAs started in September 2010 (Bolton, 2015). He explained that originally, the schools which were deemed 'outstanding' by Ofsted were the only ones which could apply to become academies. However, from April 2011 the government extended the academies programme to all schools which were performing well (DfE, 2011c). These schools were supposed to give a commitment to help other struggling schools or those which were deemed to be failing, so that they could raise their attainment levels, according to the DfE. In addition to the CAs, the government opened two new types of academies; the free schools, which were established and sponsored by different groups of people which included parents who would come together and form a group, or people from different religions (DfE, 2010a).

The other type of academies, according to the DfE, was the **university technical colleges** which enrolled 14–19-year-old students, which were introduced by universities and employers. The governing bodies in each school have taken over after the LAs were removed from academies, and they now play an important role in the running of these academies (Hill, 2012). However, there might be some difficulties in coordinating local services across schools (*Ibid*). The sponsored academies continued with the schools which were deemed to be failing. In 2013 when this doctoral study started there were 1,257 secondary academies which were converted in England and 978 primary academies (DfE, 2014). According to Bolton (2015) by 2015, 3420 schools had converted into academies and a further 782 had applied to convert. The majority of converted academies in 2015 were primary schools (54% of the 3420 academies) and 41% of that figure were secondary schools, although the first two years were dominated with secondary schools (Bolton, 2015). By 2016 there were 5549 converted academies according to Boyask (2016). This meant that by January 2017, 68.8% of secondary pupils and 24.3% of primary pupils in England were enrolled in academies according to the House of Commons (2017) report.

Boyask (2016) argues that the Academies Act 2010 was rushed into legislation soon after the election of the Coalition government in May 2010. However, National Audit Office (2016) expresses that there was a more rapid expansion of academies than what was expected and

the DfE was not prepared for the scale of the financial implications (additional costs) of this. In 2014, eight Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) were appointed by the DfE (West and Wolfe, 2018), to take the responsibility of approving new academies and intervening to address underperformance in academies. The Conservative government was encouraging **academy chains** as opposed to standalone academies, according to Hutchings *et al* (2014). The DfE (2015) explained that just over half of all academies (53%) have joined a chain. However, by 2017, 73% of academies were run by Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) (West and Wolfe, 2018). Hutchings *et al* (2014) suggest that on average, chain academies achieve higher attainment than 'standalone' academies. According to the DfE (2018), over half of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) at key stage 2 (7-11 years) had progress at or above average in writing and in maths, but in reading, over half had below average progress. Over half of MATs' key stage 4 students had Progress 8 scores (pupils' results compared to the actual achievements of other pupils with similar prior attainment) that were below the national average for state-funded mainstream schools (DfE, 2018). Nevertheless, Hutchings *et al* (2014) highlight some risks with these schools in chains which include lack of a clear mission, introversion and overstretch of capacity. Furthermore, there is also an issue of off-rolling in MATs which Local Authorities are finding it difficult to manage properly because of the growth of academisation (Ball, 2018). In 2010 the Coalition government terminated the use of School Self Evaluations (SSE) (reflective process of internal school evaluation which underpins school improvement) in schools, according to the National College for School Leadership (2012), *School Self Evaluation*.

2.2.4.1 Converter academy funding

The government wanted schools to get direct funding, however, due to the economic recession, an austerity programme was introduced from 2010 (DfE, 2010a). The government changed the funding requirements and the 2011 'model funding agreement' expected the academies to adhere to government's policy of enrolment, incorporating and addressing the

needs of pupils with special educational needs; and to deliver the National Curriculum which covered a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics and science (West and Bailey, 2013). The governing authorities were changed, with academies becoming 'exempt' charities regulated by the DfE instead of the Charity Commission (Charity Commission, 2011). Although school-based education had some protection, this was not the same with funding each school separately: while schools used to get more than a 1.5% per pupil, it was reduced to not more than 1.5% per pupil in the 2012/13 budget (and before a new pupil premium for children eligible for free school meals was added) (DfE, 2012a). Pupil premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers (Ibid). The specialist schools programme was terminated, and the funding was channelled to the new CAs, free schools and schools that did not convert into academies and were still under the control of the LAs, to be used as part of pupil premium (DfE, 2012a)

Nonetheless, CAs received a substantial amount of funding; a research that was carried out about schools that had converted into academy status showed that about 8 out of 10 (78%) were attracted by additional funding incentive and they decided to convert (Bassett *et al*, 2012). According to DfE (2014), academies were allocated the same general funding rate per pupil as LAs, but they also received a top-up of £27 per pupil, which increased the amount to £140 per pupil. In addition to that, there was also a protection funding that ensured that any loss which was incurred by any academy as a result of the changes in Education Services Grant (ESG) funding and Special Educational Needs (SEN), Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) could not exceed 1% of its total budget (DfE, 2014).

2.2.4.2 Critiques of Converter academies

Maisuria, (2015:1) argues that 'academies are one manifestation of the history of neoliberalism (see neoliberalism section), and a mechanism to sustain it. They are an evolution of Thatcher's policy agenda of localising the managements of schools and Compulsory Competitive

Tendering' (CCT - CCT is when public sector organisations allow private firms to submit their tenders for public sector services like education, in order to reduce cost, improve quality and efficiency). The destruction of the state education system has been portrayed as development of the educational system, but the marketisation of state schools led to the removal of welfare provision such as Thatcher's ending of free school milk provision *(Ibid).* The neoliberal governments that came afterwards which included the Coalition and Conservative, have sustained this legacy of seizing the state, to the extent of privatising nearly all the mainstream schools through the introduction of converter academies (Maisuria, 2015; Thompson, 2017; Lynch, 2017). It has been noted that many headteachers left their jobs before and after conversion to an academy (Eyles and Machin, 2019). Most of the headteachers left in the conversion year (*Ibid*).

Although the Coalition government claims that converter academies provide autonomy to schools and parents, there seem to be no or an under representation of parents, teachers and nominated community representatives included on governing and trust bodies (Hatcher, 2011; Maisuria, 2015). This shows that the process of academisation is undemocratic in the sense that public schools are now being privately owned without public accountability; thus, the public opinion and participation have been removed (Hatcher, 2011). Also, the teachers' autonomy and the participation of local authorities has been removed (Maisuria, 2015).

It is further suggested that 'a public education cannot be left... to the interested decisions of a corporate club or association' because of the restructuring of the educational policy and the shift of power (Ranson, 2011:411). This view is supported by Ball who reiterates that this power of policy has been centred on the Secretary of State for Education and also spread both locally nationally and internationally by groups of parents and academy chains (Ball, 2013). According to the DfE (2010) 'the government has tended to lead, organise and systematise improvement activity seeking to ensure compliance with its priorities. … We think that this is the wrong approach. … our aim should be to support the school system to become more effectively self-improving' (DfE, 2010:16). This seems to contradict with their practice because educational

power is still concentrated in the hands of the government rather than in schools (Ranson, 2012; Ball, 2013). This study will explore whether there is distributed leadership across schools and whether these academies are exercising their autonomy that was promised by the Conservative government. However, CAs operate like businesses and are discussed in the next section.

2.2.4.3 Academies' business model

According to Cirin's (2014) DfE report on *'Do academies make use of their autonomy'*, academies operate in a more business-like way. They have much better services and they secure contracts for cheaper prices (*Ibid*). Bolton (2015) and the National Audit Office (NAO) (2018) explain that academies manage their own budgets, employ their own staff and set staff pay and conditions. Like businesses, academies can make their own decisions based upon what they think is appropriate and spend their resources according to their needs (Cirin, 2014). LAs do not have access to academies' funds, according to Cirin's report, and they are no longer obliged to use LAs' contractors or employees. Since academies are business-like, Cirin's report explains that academies decide who will do their work, and if it is substandard, they will not contract them again. They also have the privileges of bargaining and negotiating for better prices, and signing contracts that benefit them, and making some savings (Cirin). Cerin's report explains that these savings are passed on immediately to pupils through purchasing more resources or use them to subsidise school trips.

However, the downside of this business-like model of academies according to Cirin's report, is the intensity of finance demands on headteachers/school business managers. The HTs in Cirin's report complained of being monitored with far more rigour than before, especially when they were being audited. The HTs said that it was more time consuming. In Cirin's report one of the HTs complained that:

> I had hoped for less bureaucracy and directives, but this has sadly not happened. I am having to spend much more resources on back office

> functions such as finance and auditing than I had thought I would. It is disappointing…that academy audits are so much more burdensome than those for LA maintained schools. The effect of this is that far more senior leadership time…is spent on these issues (Cirin, 2014:51).

However, Cirin argues that the intensive financial demands placed on academies show that academies are being made to provide value for money and they are unable to waste money. The next section discusses academies autonomy and accountabilities to different stakeholders.

2.2.5.4 Academies' autonomy and accountability

Autonomy and accountability are themes in the literature and emerged in my data as discussed in chapter 7. The government converted state-funded schools into academies with the perception that when autonomy and accountability were intelligently combined, school performance would improve (Allen, 2017). Gibb (2016) believes that academisation permits successful schools to consolidate their success and spread excellence across the country. He also supports academisation because of its autonomy that can stimulate innovation and sharing, which encourages improvement. According to Gibb:

> By freeing schools to innovate, the government has set the profession free to self-improve. This government believes that autonomous schools - within a strong framework of accountability - are the best vehicle to support teachers and headteachers to improve pupil outcomes (Gibb 2016: online).

However, Allen (2017) expressed that Ofsted's annual report stated that the structures alone will not be enough to bring solutions and address the failing gap in schools; instead, Ofsted admitted that converting schools into autonomous academies does not automatically raise standards. Although the academies are independent and private companies, they are accountable to the Secretary of democratic system State for Education (DfE, 2010a). Allen

(2017) recommends democratic participative approaches in academies' governance in order to ensure meaningful accountability. This participatory governance according to Allen, should recognise the expertise and interests of the people within the school organisation and create a system that actively encourages and values their participation. This promotes a bottom-up structure that involves in decision-making processes, and all participants listening to each other and generates group choices (Allen, 2017). According to Cirin (2014) academies were complaining about the significant weight on senior leaders regarding financial accountability. One of the HTs echoed these sentiments:

> It would be helpful for the DfE to be aware that the gains made by having academy freedoms are equally balanced out by financial reporting and process accountability, which, at the moment, are demanding. Although we value the freedoms academy status has given us, the back-office workloads and stresses have been considerable. There appears to be audit after audit after audit. We understand the reasons, but we weren't made aware at the start of our journey. The role of the accounting officer needs to be reviewed as there appear to be conflicting messages (Cirin, 2014:52).

Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Spielman (2017) believes in strong curricula that are effectively taught by good schools, in a supportive and orderly environment which is created by schools. Furthermore, Spielman supports the school-led self-improving system. She observes that much of the improvement of education standards in recent years emanated from the school system itself, and not from central or local government and Ofsted. However, Spielman acknowledges that there is a real challenge for both policymakers and for the school system to do more to break down the strongholds and appreciate the full potential of a self-improving system. Also, the Parents Union (2016) who represents parents, are worried about the lack of parental involvement in the education debate and yet they are directly involved in their children's lives than the accountability system under which a school operates. The union

further explains that parents want to be involved in determining the right route for their children's schools to follow when they are struggling.

2.5 Leadership

This section discusses leadership in general. Although it can be argued that there are various facets and management styles, Kumar (2018) noted that there is no particular or single definition for leadership. This view is shared by Miller (2018) who asserts that there are more than 200 definitions of leadership and more than 70 categories of the phrase leadership. Moreover, each classification gives a different meaning to leadership and how that particular style is implemented and what it can achieve (*Ibid*). The complexity in the definition of leadership is reinforced by different "literature and research studies on leadership" that have concluded that different settings determine different definitions of leadership styles (Kumar, 2018*:*14). It is against this backdrop that it is believed that globally there is no universal agreement on the definition of leadership (Palahicky, 2020).

Despite the lack of a universally accepted definition of leadership, many definitions share a common theme which suggests that good leadership should be able to guide a team towards a common goal as seen in (Yukl, 2012 and Kumar, 2018). In other words, leadership can be viewed as the association between a leader and a team which is centred on mutual interest with every member acting in line with the guidelines of the leader (Shastri *et al*, 2010 and Keskes, 2014). Based on this view, the position of leaders should be considered to be the most important driver for staff as they perform a major role in creating shared standards, supporting staff to confront and bring solutions to the challenges they encounter in their teams (Al-Malki and Juan, 2018). Subsequently, it is crucial for the leaders to provide compelling direction which can help the members of the team achieve the team and organisational objectives (West, 2012). This means the leadership style that is employed by the leaders is vital for determining the success of teamwork (Al-Malki and Juan, 2018).

This claim resonates with Kumar (2018) who proposed that leaders play a vital role in the achievement of organisational objectives by establishing a conducive environment that would influence employee's attitudes, enthusiasm, and performance. Similarly, Amanchukwu *et al* (2015) propose that, with leadership, individuals need to take ownership and responsibility targeted at accomplishing the goals, by utilising the resources that are accessible, and ensuring a unified organisation with the leader inspiring a team. This means that leadership creates the necessary change that is needed for learning and advancement of essential skills and performance; it also creates a good environment for personal growth in an organisation (Malik *et al*, 2016). Likewise, Goleman *et al* (2013, p.38, p.88) argue that 'leadership is a strategic choice and not a function of personality and leaders should switch between styles as circumstances dictate'. Debatably, Obolensky (2008:2) postulates that 'leadership does not have to be, nor should it be, the function of someone specifically designated as holding formal office'.

It is therefore important to note that leadership can be viewed as a dual process where there is interaction between a leader and the team, removing the concept of viewing leaders as heroes or the only ones who can affect the team (Northouse, 2018). Instead, the team can also affect the leader and this reinforces the fact that leadership is not only constrained to one person (Rowe and Guerrero, 2012). Although leaders are viewed as instrumental to the effectiveness of teams, Al-Malki and Juan (2018) postulate that leaders seem to have some shortfalls. Furthermore, in most circumstances, leaders may lack awareness with regards to the important needs, choices and wishes of the individuals they lead, "or they fail to understand the difference between the individuals involved in the team" (Al-Malki and Juan, 2018:40). One can argue that due to the various issues that are not identified on time within the team, the productivity of team members would decrease (*Ibid*). Notwithstanding the successes and shortfalls in leadership, it must be noted that no two leaders from different organisations are identical even though they hold similar roles and responsibilities (Miller, 2018).

Overarchingly, it is important to note that schools are organisations and over the years it has been asserted that leadership is key and plays a pivotal role in the success or failure of the school and therefore becomes a “critical factor in successful schooling” (Rehman *et al*, 2019; Grootenboer *et al*, 2020). The next section will now discuss school leadership.

2.5.1 School leadership

Having noted from the above section that different situations attract different leadership styles, this section discusses the meaning of school leadership and different leadership styles. It must be noted from the onset that school leadership has become an important policy priority in education globally and there seems to have been some convergence in its implementation during the past 20 to 30 years (Pont, 2020). Terms used to define a leader vary from one country to the other and this is also affected by “culture, context, education governance and by school leadership practice” (*Ibid*:156). Nonetheless, Ebot-Ashu (2021) highlights that school leadership is a process by which a leader inspires staff to achieve the school goals and directs the school organisation in a way that makes it more interconnected and coherent. In the same view, school leadership can be defined as ‘learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively’ (Wang, 2017:114). In essence, school leadership should not only focus on a leader and subordinate principle, and neither should the emphasis be on the potential of a single individual (Harris, 2003; Marturano and Gosling, 2007; Bolden, 2011). This means leadership can be interpreted as multi-directional since it can be applied from different directions (Jackson, 2009).

As demonstrated in the previous section, leadership has got the ability to motivate, develop and inspire staff who in turn will motivate pupils and parents (Matthews *et al,* 2014). Similarly, Diamond and Spillane (2016) view school leadership as activities tied to the essential work of the organisation that are designed and understood by organisational members in order to influence their motivation, knowledge, effect, or practices. Based on this, it is suggested that good school leaders encourage teachers to visit other schools, share examples of best practice

and have an opportunity of reflection upon their own teaching skills; these are vital for improving teacher morale and increasing the performance of teachers (Chapman and Harris, 2004). This view is shared by Southern Cross University (2019) who concur that, good school leadership is where school leaders, formal and informal (e.g., teachers who do not have designated leadership roles) leaders inspire and enable school-wide teaching expertise in order to achieve the school goals and good attainment outcomes.

Wynn (2019) supports the above notion by expressing that school leaders create goals and objectives to make sure that their visions are achieved, by improving their school organisations from the initial stages to where they want these schools to be. However, Ebot-Ashu (2021) and Ch *et al* (2017) believe that good school leaders are the ones who take the lead, they are brave, and have a strong vision with the desire to accomplish it. In doing so, they inspire their teams to always perform their best in order to drive the schools' success (*Ibid*). Moreover, these leaders are always studying and developing themselves and they always work within their teams (Ebot-Ashu, 2014; Ch *et al*, 2017; Ebot-Ashu, 2018). What seems to come out of this joint working is that school leaders are able to create great relationships with their staff thereby taking into account their personal needs (Amedome, 2018; Ch *et al,* 2017). Therefore, inclusivity by school leadership plays a vital role because all stakeholders in schools should be included in the school improvements and changes so that they all have ownership (Knerl, 2019).

Meanwhile, Chapman and Harris (2004) believe that school leaders who do not invest in staff development remove the staff's professional confidence, leading them to feel undervalued and incompetent, and a lack of expertise can impede school improvement in schools that are in special measures. The importance of school leaders working with their staff to develop and enhance their leadership skills is highlighted by Jackson's (2009) contention that school organisations where a traditional hierarchical leadership structure is in place can experience problems from many directions. However, in order to manage the pressures and predicaments that School leaders face, the key to successful leadership is getting the values right and having

the right values (Day *et al*, 2000). This seems to suggest that school leaders need to have some insights into effective leadership (Fleming, 2014).

On the other hand, Dahri (2015) suggests that school leaders are involved in countless tasks throughout the year which include planning, curriculum management and advancement, shaping the vision, communication, staff appraisal, and many more. In what seems to be a comprehensive narrative of an effective school leadership, Southern Cross University (2019) stated that:

> Effective school leaders apply their educational expertise and management skills in order to focus their efforts, and those of their teaching staff, on improving the quality of student learning outcomes. Part of this involves keeping up-to-date on the latest teaching technologies and trends. It also requires excellent interpersonal skills – as leaders work with students, staff, parents and external communities to gain constant feedback and find opportunities to innovate (Southern Cross University, 2019: Online).

Additionally, a strong effective school leadership will result in a successful school autonomy (OECD, 2012). Another useful point to note is that, although school leaders face different challenges of leading their schools which include managerial responsibilities, paperwork and school leadership accountabilities, they are in a distinctive position where they should bring change in their school organisations and ensure pupil achievement (Wynn, 2019). Empirical research shows that school leadership has an intermediate positive effect which can cause students to have a high attainment outcome through the introduction of collaborative organisational learning, ethos and cultures (Hallinger, 2010). School leadership can also create room for upcoming leaders and encourage staff to take leadership positions for quality teaching and learning and a healthy school climate; this in turn can encourage pupils' participation and success (*Ibid*). Most importantly, school leaders should practice critical

thinking, compassion, teamwork, and flexibility in different work settings, with different people, so that they are able to connect, lead, and influence change effectively (Knerl, 2019). Despite school leaders being at the centre of creating an effective learning atmosphere (Wynn, 2019), they face challenges in their operations. This point is reinforced by Matthews *et al* (2014) who indicated that many school leaders in England felt overburdened with their schoolwork, and they found it difficult to prioritise their work.

Meanwhile, it must be noted that there are many leadership styles that have been used by school leaders which include transactional, transformational, instructional, authoritarian/autocratic, democratic, new managerialism and distributed leadership. These leadership styles will be discussed in the next sections.

2.5.2 Authoritarian/Autocratic leadership

Autocratic (also known as authoritarian) leaders in schools have “centralised power” and make decisions by themselves (Ch *et al*, 2017: 47). In this form of leadership, only the headteacher establishes policies and practices with little or no group involvement, and task and techniques are imposed on staff (Ogunyinka and Adedoyin, 2013). This means that communication flow between headteachers and their staff is minimum or non-effective (*Ibid*). In a similar view, Karabina (2016) explains that tasks are imposed on staff by headteachers, and they do not want their ideas to be opposed; they expect compliance and submission from their subordinates. In a sense, authoritarian leadership has a negative impact on staff as seen in Dinham (2008) who explains that authoritarian leaders in schools do not appreciate their staff or give them constructive feedback, instead staff sometimes get discouraging remarks from their leaders.

Duignan (2006) observes that some authoritarian headteachers do all the leadership duties on their own, instead of distributing it to the expertise around the school. This type of leadership can be seen as having a stifling effect on staff as noted by Spillane (2006) who discourages headteachers from running the school organisation on their own while they only delegate some

responsibilities to teachers. This means that the headteachers do not trust their staff to work independently (Dahri, 2015). With such a working atmosphere, the staff do not enjoy their work and there is no job contentment (Ch et al, 2017). Dahri argues that with autocratic leadership, 'quality and efficiency' may increase but it also 'results in frustration and suffocation among senior and committed employees' (Dahri, 2015: 4). It is important to observe that autocratic headteachers do not focus on improving a vision for their school organisations or creating relationships but they focus on achieving their tasks and how to do so effectively (Wynn, 2019). In fact, authoritarian leadership is known for its intolerance of diversity and challenge (MacBeath, 2003). Indeed, authoritarian leaders strengthen control and authority by confirming themselves as the leaders who have the ultimate power over their staff (Dinham, 2008). Furthermore, these leaders are not sensitive; they concentrate on procedures rather than the staff, and they seem to be feared instead of being respected or liked because of their tough policies, penalties and sanctions (*Ibid*). In this respect, there are fewer opportunities for risk taking and innovation in authoritarian schools and this may prevent the identification of staff expertise in these schools; teachers need the headteacher's approval in order to do their tasks (Dinham and Scott, 2008; Wynn, 2019). Authoritarian leaders tend to focus on the operational at the expense of the strategic (Dinham and Scott, 2008).

Autocratic leadership has been noted as having a negative effect on staffs' job contentment (Nadarasa, 2014; Amedome, 2018). Due to this, it is deemed that headteachers find it difficult to apply this leadership style and to have a good relationship with their staff because they impose things and force their staff to do them (Ogunyinka and Adeboyin, 2013). In this respect, staff have no ownership of school activities and sense of belonging because of the imposition of policies and procedures by the headteacher (*Ibid*). This is seen in the lack of expected staff performance and in low attainment results of pupils (Ogunyinka and Adeboyin, 2013). Another leadership which shares the same characteristics with authoritarian/autocratic is micromanagement.

2.5.3 Micromanagement

Micromanagement is one of the leadership styles that is used by some of the headteachers in schools, and Oprean (2007) has explained some of the characteristics of micromanagement as follows:

> The headteacher does not trust the team regardless of the hierarchical scale; It does not allow employees to be involved in the organisation's decision-making process by exercising strict control over them; Ask the employees to engage only in solving the tasks for which they were delegated; Do not delegate important work tasks to team members without trust in their training or ability to carry out their assigned work tasks and Intervenes with suggestions during the implementation of a work task not allowing staff freedom of action (Oprean, 2007, 23-24).

The 21st century has seen a management style focused on extreme control and micromanagement, which removed the teachers' autonomy and reduced their intrusive and extrinsic enthusiasm to participate in the schools' decision-making process (Ionela, 2019). Micromanagement refers to surveillance, thorough management by the school leaders and strict control of staff by the school leaders on every activity, which leads to unnecessary attention to detail, planning tasks to the tiniest detail, and obsessively interfering with the staff's wellbeing (Sidhu, 2012). Lewis (2014) believes that micromanagement is a management style in which school leaders extremely focus on trivial aspects of tasks that are performed by the staff and limit their innovations. In a similar way, some of the headteachers micromanage the staff by involving themselves in every activity that is done in their school organisations, and even if they delegate some tasks, they tell the staff the way they want the work to be done and presented (Simplicio, 2011). This results in headteachers missing the broader picture of the most important things of the organisation that they need to attend to as leaders (Limon and Dilekçi, 2021).

Although Chambers (2004) argues that micromanagement is not cruel management, Serrat, (2011) believes that micromanagement is a regrettable occurrence for both the school organisation and its staff, since it is viewed as a kind of bullying. Even though many school leaders delegate power and responsibilities to their staff, they also, micromanage them by trying to make them achieve their goals (Lynch, 2020). However, this is counter-productive because it makes the staff feel annoyed and lose confidence *(Ibid*). Lynch argues that delegating work to staff increases the opportunities for professional growth, but if micromanagement is employed, there is no professional growth, the staff regress and the leaders increase their workload.

Two advantages of micromanagement that have been identified are: when the school employs new staff, they need to be monitored closely for quality check and if they pass the induction, the micromanagement should stop; and micromanagement can be an advantage when there is a serious situation with major implications for the school, where the headteacher needs to intervene or where teachers are monitored due to incompetence or indiscipline (Ionela, 2019). However, research has shown that in school leadership it has been fraught with difficulties. Some of the problems that can be caused by micromanagement include the instability of staff, a rise in conflicts at the school, late arrivals, nonattendance, staff's grievances against leadership, low morale, substandard and less work by staff (Chambers, 2004). In addition to this, when a problem arises, the staff may refuse to come forward to solve the problem because of this micromanagement (Delgado *et al*, 2015). The school staff feel that they are not worthy because of the exclusion in decision making (Plemons, 2014). In this context, micromanagement can be viewed as a management style that limits the efficiency and competence of staff (Serrat, 2010). It also creates some problems for the micromanagers because of extra workloads, finding it difficult to quickly solve problems, blocking the school progress and change, and finding it difficult to get people to support them (Delgado *et al*, 2015). However, the only advantage of authoritarian leadership style is that their schools may be

organised and well managed with allocation of duties, reporting and responsibility structures that are put in place to enable this (Dinham, 2008).

2.5.4 Transactional Leaders

According to MacBeath (2003) with transactional leadership, school leaders and staff are in fixed and noticeable complementary positions. Thus, services are provided and rewarded when they meet the expected standards (*Ibid*). Hartog (2003) argues that in different organisations, reward from transactional leaders is not only in monetary form, but it can come in the form of praise or recognition. However, transactional leadership in schools according to Hameiri *et al* (2014) focuses on exchange relationships, costs and benefits. This type of leadership according to Karabina (2016) focuses on the relationship between school leaders and their staff in the form of a contract, where the leaders give rewards as an acknowledgment of the dedication and loyalty of staff. However, it can be argued that the loyalty and labour of the teachers is traded for payment and other incentives that are offered by a headteacher (Karabağ Köse and Güçlü, 2017).

Nevertheless, Wynn (2019) observes that although transactional leaders create relationships with their staff, they only do it in order to accomplish their school objectives. According to MacBeath (2003), trust is put in systems, structures and data which help in achieving those targets. ‘This is akin to exchange theory, a quasi-market model of everything being weighed in terms of individual profit and loss in an ‘economy’ where there is stability of value and currency. People know where they are, what they owe and what they are due’ (*Ibid*:3). These sentiments are echoed by Wynn (2019) who argued that ‘this constant weighing of cost and benefits can undermine [the transactional leaders] ability to build up others genuinely. Negatively, their followers become focused on completing goals to the point of neglecting any vision the leader may have’ (Wynn, 2019:33). Further, teachers are given clear instructions and constant feedback in order to achieve the set goals (Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). Nevertheless, it can be argued that transactional leadership as noted by Amedome (2018), does not create a

positive school environment because of its top-down practice. There is a suggestion that the main aim of transactional leadership in schools is to encourage the staff to work hard so that they can be rewarded handsomely (Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). Although, transactional school headteachers boost the enthusiasm of the staff by giving contingent incentives, if the staff do substandard work, they can be penalised (*Ibid*). This means that employees are expected to be accountable for their designated work, and the management of the staff's work by school leaders is by exception (Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). Nevertheless, Gunter argues that the type of leadership displayed in CAs is a combination of both transactional (those leaders who lead through social exchange, like rewards for productivity) and transformational approaches (those leaders who motivate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and develop them into leaders), 'although the latter would hardly be transforming what 'was', but rather 'forming' what would be' (Gunter, 2011:97). The next section discusses transformational and instructional leadership.

2.5.5 Transformational and Instructional leadership

In accordance with Day *et al* (2016), it has been suggested that instructional and transformational leadership are the most generally researched leadership models that have been recognised to be cultivating good results in schools.

> Whilst **transformational** leadership has traditionally emphasised vision and inspiration, focussing upon establishing structures and cultures which enhance the quality of teaching and learning, setting directions, developing people and (re)designing the organisation, **instructional** leadership is said to emphasise above all else the importance of establishing clear educational goals, planning the curriculum and evaluating teachers and teaching. It sees the leaders' prime focus as responsibility for promoting better measurable

> outcomes for students, emphasising the importance of enhancing the quality of classroom teaching and learning (Day *et al,* 2016:8).

As was suggested in the school leadership section above, Rigby (2014) reiterates that an instructional school leader should create good relationships with staff, concentrate on and direct staff to develop their classroom teaching and learning. This notion is supported by Goddard *et al* (2015) whose notion by explaining that instructional headteachers may support their staff to work together to develop instruction, and then headteachers and their staff both work as a team to improve their schools' effectiveness by strengthening collective efficiency. However, they observe that instructional headteachers regularly find themselves doing management duties which distract them from exercising their instructional leadership roles. Therefore, headteachers need to change their procedures from managerial to instructional leadership (Barnes *et al*, 2010). This view concurs with Barnes (2010) who explains that:

> It is important that a model of instructional leadership includes behaviours that may have been previously mistaken as management in addition to those that have traditionally been classified as instructional leadership. Creating structures, developing a shared mission and vision, coordinating curriculum, building culture, and fostering an environment of continuous staff development have all been found to increase student outcomes on the part of the principal and should not be neglected as "management" in favour of classroom observations (Howard, 2016:28).

Tarplett (2004) observes that in some cases, in different organisations, the transactional leader's work is just related to management whilst the transformational leader's work is related to leadership.

On the other hand, according to Hall *et al* (2013) there was a long discussion about school leadership during the early years of the New Labour government, in which transformational

leadership came to be the pre-eminent style of leadership in education. With transformational leadership the headteacher became the school leader who was responsible and expected to initiate change in his/her school organisation because it was a single leadership role *(Ibid*). Transformational school leaders according to Williams and Johnson (2013), are visionaries who know exactly where they want to take the school organisation to, and they can share the vision and encourage their staff to support it. These leaders' enthusiasm for the vision motivates their staff and other people who are outside their school organisation (*Ibid*). Cementing this notion, MacBeath (2003) noted that transformational school leadership promotes and builds a shared culture, encourages professional development of staff, and develops the problem–solving capacity of the school organisation.

Furthermore, Wynn (2019) observes that teachers are dedicated, hardworking and enjoy working for their transformational school leader. In addition, the pupils' learning improves because the staff understand their school organisation's problems (*Ibid*). Meanwhile, Ebot-Ashu (2021), proposes that school leadership in the transformational model sets the pathway and help leaders and their staff to do the right thing and improve the school organisation. They achieve this by establishing an inspiring vision, and then encourage and motivate others to accomplish that vision (*Ibid*). It must be acknowledged that the leaders manage to deliver this vision either directly or indirectly; they develop staff and train their teams to strengthen them (Ebot-Ashu, 2021).

In another view, MacBeath (2003) believes that transformational leadership changes school organisations and establishes new cultures where relationship is respected, systematic analysis is viewed as the right way of professional judgement and reflection and dialogue of professional practice is valued. Furthermore, transformational leadership sets high expectations and promotes a robust sense of collective accountability for achieving high educational goals (*Ibid*). This view is contestable as seen in Robinson *et al* (2009) who argue that transformational leadership originally concentrated on the collaboration of staff which makes it less effective on pupils' outcomes as compared to instructional leadership, which

focuses on the main goal of schools, which is improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning. However, it can be argued that the transformational leader has a positive influence on the school climate as a whole (Amedome, 2018).

Although authors such as MacBeath (2003), Amedome (2018), Wynn (2019) and Ebot-Ashu (2021) support transformational leadership, Crawford (2002) explained that this type of leadership, which was overseen by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), was criticised for failing to produce the expected outcomes from the appointed hero heads because of single leadership. Also, these leaders were under pressure and had heavy workloads because of a lot of new educational policies and guidelines that were introduced, which included the marketisation of education, where parents were given a choice to choose their schools for their children (Pollitt 2007). These changes affected all the school staff too in terms of workloads because of extra paperwork (*Ibid*). Further, according to Gronn (2000) and Spillane *et al* (2001), research findings showed that transformational leadership in schools which were dependent upon the single leadership of headteachers was becoming unsustainable; they queried how decisions were distributed within schools and challenged the credibility of single leadership in the way they run their schools.

Subsequently, Hall *et al* (2013), reiterated that Gronn was against this idea of single leadership as they explained that:

> Gronn's (2000) vigorous rejection of individualistic views of leadership, characterised as naïve and mistaken, and his simultaneous highlighting of the extent to which such views had come to dominate the field of leadership, can be viewed as being especially significant in this respect'. It was in this above context that distributed leadership emerged as a discursive intervention promoted primarily by the NCSL in a normative set of published literatures, training manuals and a website (Hall *et al*, 2013:7).

It is important to note that this leadership style was criticised because of single headteachers who were empowered to transform schools and to make decisions instead of distributing leadership to other teachers, (see Gronn, 2000 and Hall *et al*, 2013). The next section will explore transactional democratic leadership.

2.5.6 Democratic leadership

Alam (2017) views a good democratic school leader as one who promotes participation and uses wisdom to distribute responsibilities, but at the same time acknowledging that he/she has the ultimate leadership responsibilities of the school organisation. In the same view, it is important to note that democratic leadership implies that school leadership should not treat people as merely followers of leaders, but they should be included in their leadership (Woods, 2020; Yalçınkaya *et al*, 2021). Furthermore, Woods states that:

> A rich perspective of democratic leadership not only promotes power sharing and transforming dialogue that enhances understanding (rather than entrenching people's existing views and self-interests) but also cultivates holistic learning as rounded, ethical "citizens" of the organisation and relational well-being through a community that fosters both belonging and individuality (Woods, 2020:1).

This rich democratic leadership promotes a sense of agency throughout the school organisation and addresses disparities in power sharing so that there is a meaningful democratic leadership which is shared collectively, and all co-leaders participate proactively to facilitate innovation and all the school activities *(Ibid*). This means all staff are allowed to be part of the decision-making process and this model has been viewed as a major tool for bringing change and improvement to the school (Kılıçoğlu, 2018). Similarly, Woods (2020) explains that in practice, the concept of democratic leadership is viewed as a distributed and developing phenomenon which involves various people who participate in leadership through

everyday collaborations. In a broader perspective, democratic leadership has got a considerably richer and more ambitious focus in education, and it encourages greater participation from all directions thereby reducing potential organisational conflict (Yunus *et al*, 2020). Additionally, democratic leadership has positive influences on a school's atmosphere and teacher job contentment (Amedome, 2018; Ch *et al*, 2017).

Democratic leadership promotes achievement in different initiatives through delegation of tasks to staff by headteachers. This boosts their self-esteem and encourages staff to participate willingly in different activities (Alam, 2012). In other words, this type of leadership is sometimes known for its boosting of staff morale (Yunus, *et al*, 2020). Although the provision of firm leadership may be expected at the beginning of turning around a school in special measures, it could be suggested that a more democratic approach to leadership is necessary as the school begins to move in the right trajectory of success (Chapman, 2003). It can be suggested that democratic leadership style, also known as participative leadership, is portrayed as one of the most effective leadership styles (Aruzie *et al,* 2018). The reason for this is that effective democratic leadership involves team building of leadership, motivation of staff, promoting staff into formal leadership roles, working in teams, meeting targets, openness, respect, trusting staff and being honest (Chapman, 2003; Machumu and Kaitila, 2014). In addition, democratic communities also:

> facilitate the development and sustainability of schools, as well as societies designed to promote a way of living that requires the open flow and critique of ideas with an authentic concern for the interest of the individual as well as the common good...Concepts such as distributed leadership, inclusion, learning communities and student voice appear to resonate with democracy (Woods and O'Hair, 2009: 427-428).

Democracy paves the way for organisational capacity which is demonstrated through distributing leadership by sharing of ideas, creativity and skills and energies which introduce and sustain change in a school organisation (Woods and Gronn, 2009). For a dynamic or progressive democracy, it can be argued that DL opens spaces for individual growth (*Ibid*), this will be discussed in detail in the distributed leadership section. Democratic principles include transparency, discussion, taking other people's ideas, decentralisation, reflection and assessment, so that school staff will be able to access information and have a meaningful discussion (Fenton, 2002). However, it can be argued that democratic principles can be successful, in schools depending on impartiality, respectability, accountability, fairness in power sharing, choice and reliability (Reitzug and O'Hair, 2002). It must also be acknowledged that democratic school leaders can develop opportunities for school staff to work together in significant and constructive ways around important matters which involve individuals or the school community (Cate *et al*, 2006). Also, Day and Gu (2014) encourage schools to build trust, shared relationships and being supportive, so that teachers will be committed and succeed in their workplace through collaboration and tackling hardships as a team.

According to Ogunyinka and Adedoyin (2013) all policies in democratic leadership are made from group discussions. Thus, the headteacher helps his/her staff to work as a team and this style is made successful as a result of being co-operative, taking the initiative of being more responsible and respecting each other's contributions (Ch *et al*, 2017). Also, group discussions can be demonstrated in a school organisation through good mutual understanding, freedom of expression and sufficient co-operation with teamwork between the headteacher and the staff (Ogunyika and Adedoyi, 2013). Teachers are involved in decision making and in all school activities; this will enable them to perform effectively and encourage good collaboration among all school staff (*Ibid*). This means that the democratic leader is situated at the centre of the paradigm of educational leadership, and they create good relationships with their school staff and include them in the decision-making process for generating and achieving goals, together with developing the schools vision.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the democratic leader genuinely accepts advice or criticism from other staff (Dahri, 2015). This means that headteachers who adopt the democratic leadership style "call a meeting to get teachers' ideas or advice when things go wrong [and create] an environment that allows teachers to participate in decision-making as well as allow teachers to set priorities with his or her guidance" (Amedome, 2018:12). Findings from Dove and Freely's (2011) research regarding "the impact of leadership on the process of program implementation" which involved administrators, teachers, parents, and students, show that the middle-school administrators and some staff reported an increase in staff morale because they were included in the school decision-making and their contributions were valued.

However, it can be argued that there are inefficiencies in democratic leadership in that by observing the rights for democracy and its practices, this may make organisations less effective (Woods and Gronn, 2009). Thus, time and effort dedicated to recognising democratic principles are viewed as a diversion of resources from meeting the most important goals of the organisation (*Ibid*). Arguably, democratic styles are perceived as not always effective and pragmatic in practice since ideas and contributions come from various people within the group which can make it difficult to come up with an agreed decision or consensus (Aruzie *et al*, 2018). Meanwhile, Woods and Gronn further expressed that:

> it is not just a matter of hours in a day or days in a year that are 'stolen' by democratic processes: the intellectual and emotional labour expended on these can be disruptive to the flow of organisational work. Equally seriously, if not more so, from a particular organisational view, decisions may be delayed substantially and the direction of the organisation rendered unclear by prolonged debates (Woods and Gronn, 2009:437).

Nevertheless, it might be feasible to have democratic organisational leadership authorised from the top which is motivating and inspirational, or could have a democratic organisational

leadership which is operated from below and is genuine (*Ibid*). Woods and Gronn suggest that the bottom-up democratic leadership could either be enacted as an employment law, where decisions come from teachers instead of the headteacher only, become a habit or custom because it overturns or changes the traditional hierarchical division of rights. Overly, there are suggestions that democratic leadership style will differ in accordance with the performance of the school as evidenced by Machumu and Kaitila (2014) who in their study of leadership styles on teachers in Tanzania primary schools whose sample comprised of 200 teachers from 20 selected primary schools, concluded that democratic leadership was more visible in the best performing schools as compared to those that are underperforming. The next section discusses in detail a key example of democratic leadership, distributed leadership, which is also central to this thesis.

2.5.7 Distributed leadership (DL): How it was introduced and how it has changed overtime

> Distributed leadership is located within wider structural reforms of education in England as part of the [1988 Education Act] and New Public Management (NPM) (The New Public Management was introduced in the 1980s and it tried to make the public sector more business-like and to improve the effectiveness of the government's ideas and management models which it borrowed from the private sector) movement in public service delivery and the marked discursive shift to leadership which took place largely during the New Labour governments of 1997 to 2010 (Hall *et al*, 2013:1).

DL was introduced in schools because of criticisms of transformational school leadership illuminated by Gronn (2000) and Spillane *et al* (2001) (see transformational leadership section above). However, DL is not a new leadership strategy as it came out of an organisational strategy which was called distributed awareness in the 1950s (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2008).

Since then, DL has been adapted and developed in the field of education, and in English schools is particularly associated with the New Labour government's (1997-2010) view of educational leadership after the criticism of transformational leadership (Lumby, 2013). DL was passionately endorsed by a variety of education academics largely supportive of this approach (Leithwood *et al*, 2006, Day *et al*, 2010; MacBeath *et al*, 2004; Bennett *et al*, 2003). According to Hall et al (2013), New Labour's development of DL school leadership was informed by 'the research and reputation of school effectiveness and school improvement (SESI) researchers and consultants' (Ibid:7), research studies by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007), Day *et al* (2009) and the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) (2006) who sought to enable headteachers to raise student achievement and make a difference in their own and other schools through implementing DL.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) was tasked by the DfES in 2006 to carry out an independent research study on school leadership. 'The main aims of the study were to provide a comprehensive and independent account of existing, emerging and potential models of school headship and the wider leadership team that are effective in raising standards for all pupils' (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007: iv). This quantitative and qualitative research had a sample of 50 schools throughout England and Wales where interviews were carried from headteachers, teachers, non-teaching members of the senior leadership team in these schools, multi-agency staff, governors and parent representatives. There was also 'a major postal and on-line survey which resulted in a final achieved sample of 3,260 school leaders including headteachers, members of the Governing Body, and teaching and senior support staff members of the senior leadership team (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007:iv). One of the findings from this research was that school leaders were overburdened with heavy workloads and leadership needed to be distributed across the organisation: thus, distributed leadership was identified as the potential leadership strategy that would solve some of the identified workload issues (*Ibid*).

The government worked in partnership with SESI researchers and consultants in order to speed up the implementation of DL because of its inclusiveness of leadership across the organisation, which included formal and informal leaders who had relevant expertise (Hall *et al,* 2013; MacBeath *et al*, 2004; Bennett *et al*, 2003). It was also because DL was viewed as possibly substituting the former leadership forms like heroic, transformational, charismatic, collegial, top-down and transactional that were criticised because these leadership styles focused on single leaders (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, 2001; Hall *et al*. 2013). This was achieved through financing schemes that produced empirical evidence-based conditions for distribution of leadership (Day and Smethem, 2009; MacBeath *et al*, 2003; Bennett et al, 2003). Further, the government supported the publications that marketed DL as successful professional practice (Leithwood *et al*, 2006). They also collaborated with NCSL, school leaders and other education providers who were contracted to embark on DL initiatives and in addition, were given government roles where they gave guidance and assistance (Hall *et al*, 2013).

DL became the most advertised and recommended form of leadership strategy during the first part of the twenty-first century by the government, NCSL and other researchers because of its inclusiveness and expansion of the leadership structure across the school organisation (Parker, 2015: Lumby, 2019). By 2009, Seashore-Louis *et al* (2009) concluded that DL had become 'a mantra for reshaping leadership practice' (p.157). As DL continued to gain its popularity, more schools were encouraged by NCSL to adopt DL (NCSL, 2011). Since DL was the official leadership model that had been adopted by the then New Labour government, Harris, (2008) and Day *et al* (2010) believe that the improvement of pupils' attainment outcomes was connected to more distribution of leadership duties to staff.

2.5.7.1 Definitions, Characteristics and Strengths of DL

Researchers with an interest in DL who include Tian *et al* (2016), Harris and DeFlaminis (2016), Lumby (2019) and others have acknowledged that there is no universal definition of DL. With DL, power is distributed amongst the staff of the school organisation and some reference is given to the main concepts which include democracy and empowerment, which

means changed power interactions (Woods and Gronn, 2009). Moreover, this concept of DL overlaps with shared leadership, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership (Leithwood *et al*, 2004; Harris, 2008). The DL model encourages a lot of people with expertise to participate in leadership at different levels as Bolden (2007) suggests that the greater the number of people who participate in organisational decisions, the wider the distribution of leadership. This means that leadership roles are always shifting as different individuals assume the leadership roles, depending on the expertise and the circumstance (MacBeath, 2003; Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2008). Furthermore, DL allows many leaders at any one time, to be present in a team, with each leader helping one another in the leadership role (division of labour) and these roles can be temporary or permanent (*Ibid*). In addition, DL empowers leaders to lead their teams and give the teams ownership; it also moves forward their strategies that contribute towards the whole-school priorities (Solly, 2018).

DL does not focus on formal leadership only, but it removes the traditional hierarchical leadership structures and accommodates the informal leaders (school staff like teachers and support staff without designated leadership roles) from different directions who have the expertise (MacBeath, 2003; Bennett *et al,* 2003; Harris: 2008; Hall *et al* (2013). It also focuses on the relationships in both senior leadership team (SLT) and informal leadership and the way the leadership is distributed in different activities (Harris, 2008). Arguably, in most cases, the informal leadership practice is not fully used because of the SLT which is still being prioritised (Harris, 2008; Solly 2018). However, DL does not oppose the key positions of those in formal leadership; formal and informal leadership are not oppositional, nonetheless, they are both leadership roles with different functions (Bennett *et al*, 2003; Bolden, 2007; Harris, 2013a).

Nonetheless, DL is not about a headteacher and his or her subordinates, but it is about teamwork, because organisational activities need the whole team, hence the distribution of power (Gronn, 2003; MacBeath, 2003; Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2008). Thus, 'DL implies thinking about leadership in a new way that takes us from a 'person solo' to a 'person plus'

perspective on leadership' (Harris, 2008:39). Which means that 'leader plus' recognises all individuals who participate in leadership and management, instead of just those in formal designated leadership roles (Spillane, 2006). This leader plus acknowledges that these interdependent relationships are much stronger than individuals' ideas (*Ibid*). Moreover, 'a distributed perspective 'puts leadership practice centre stage', thereby encouraging a shift in focus from the traits and characteristics of 'leaders' to the shared activities and functions of 'leadership' (Spillane 2006:25). By reinforcing this idea, Lumby (2019) suggested that DL weakens the power of the single leader and paves way for school staff to assume leadership roles. Although it can be contested, Murphy *et al*' s (2009:182) research about school leadership in six schools found that leaders promoting distributed leadership are 'rethinking conceptions of power', which means that power needs to be distributed across the organisation wherever there is relevant expertise, instead of focusing and distributing it to formal leaders only.

This can be an advantage when dealing with increased pressures and demands in a school organisation, there should be a distribution of responsibility and decision-making; thus, instead of hierarchical leadership with clearly defined divisions of labour, school organisations need people to share responsibility and accountability (Harris and Spillane, 2008). This is because DL practice allows people to move in and out of leadership roles irrespective of their positions; this means that the primary focus is on interactions, rather than concentrating on individual actions (Diamond and Spillane, 2016).

DL is viewed as a continuous process of communication and negotiation between the whole school community as they create and restructure a reality of working effectively and in harmony together each day, learning together, sharing and being innovative together (Duignan, 2006). As they work in harmony together as the whole school community, there are more opportunities to give freedom to teachers, as part of teacher professionalism because of the participatory element in DL (Hairon and Goh, 2015), although it can be argued that it seems as if these "ideals" of DL may not actually reflect the reality of leadership

situations. Nevertheless, Hairon and Goh's (2015) assertion is supported by Solly (2018) who explains that in a DL approach, leaders in different levels within a school need to be given the freedom to come up with key decisions in their areas of responsibility. Solly argues that these leaders should not be micromanaged, and this practice requires a lot of trust, which could be very difficult for many headteachers. Furthermore, proponents of DL allude to interactions that come from different directions, like teachers, middle and senior leadership as opposed to interactions coming from the top leadership only (headteachers) all the time, in a 'superior subordinate relationship' (Hairoin and Goh, 2015).

The NCSL (2006: online) proposed the five pillars of DL as: 'self-confident and self-effacing headship; clarity of structure and accountability; investment in leadership capability; a culture of faith; and a turning point' in leadership practice. DL principles have been summed up by Harris (2008) as: broad-based leadership; requires multiple levels of participation in decision-making; focuses mainly on improving classroom instruction; incorporates both formal and informal leaders; links vertical (top-down or hierarchical) and lateral (people who take an initiative to lead, leadership without position or title) leadership structures; reach out to students and encourages student participation; is flexible and versatile (non-permanent groupings); is fluid and interchangeable; and is ultimately focused on improving leadership practice. An outstanding feature of DL is its acceptance of opportunities of continuous development of leadership, in conjunction with formal and informal leadership roles (Jones *et al*, 2014).

Nevertheless, distributed forms of leadership can be perceived as motivators and contributors to the effectiveness of teaching and learning and can contribute to capacity building within school organisations which promote school improvement (Harris, 2004; Duignan, 2006; Harris, 2014). Meanwhile, Hartley (2007) claims that the reason for DL's popularity may be pragmatic, to relieve the headteachers from their overburdened workloads. These overburdened workloads might be reduced through DL which encourages collaboration, transparency, trust, mutual respect, teamwork, support and empowerment of teachers to make key decisions of

the organisation (Harris and Muijs, 2005; Harris, 2014). Harris (2014) further suggests that this approach can help teachers to recognise the different aspects of their practice, articulate relations among these different aspects and strategies and plan the way to move forward. According to Barton's (2011) research findings, an Alaskan elementary school improved literacy by holding everyone accountable for all of the successes and struggles of all pupils; this demonstrated good distribution of leadership. In addition, given the right environment, DL can positively contribute to school transformation and development (Harris and DeFlaminis, 2016). According to Hall *et al* (2013):

> It is concluded that although the forms which distributed leadership takes within different school settings are in part shaped by particular contextual features within individual institutions, the capacity of officially authorised discourses of distributed leadership to reach into the social practices of schools remains strong. Indeed, as described above, the very strangeness of the forms which distributed leadership takes in different institutions is shown to be intimately linked to the strength and intensity of this official discourse as designated school leaders and teachers seek to accommodate this notion into their practices' (Hall *et al*, 2013:35).

That is the reason why DL was most popular during the then New Labour era because it was the leadership model that was introduced, controlled and supported by government (I*bid*). Hall *et al* (2013) argue that DL can be seen as playing a vital facilitating role in terms of ignoring conflicting aspects of the professional experiences of school staff. 'Thus, DL can be viewed as acting to smooth the process of creating conforming professional or designer employees very closely identifying their professional work with the tightly defined aims of the school rather than drawing attention to contradictions that might interrupt this process' (*Ibid*;35). Instead of DL being perceived in a negative way, it has been seen and accepted in a positive way by both school leaders and their staff (Hall *et al*, 2013).

2.5.7.2 The push and pull factors of DL

DL is summarised by Oduro (2003) in the push and pull factor diagram below:

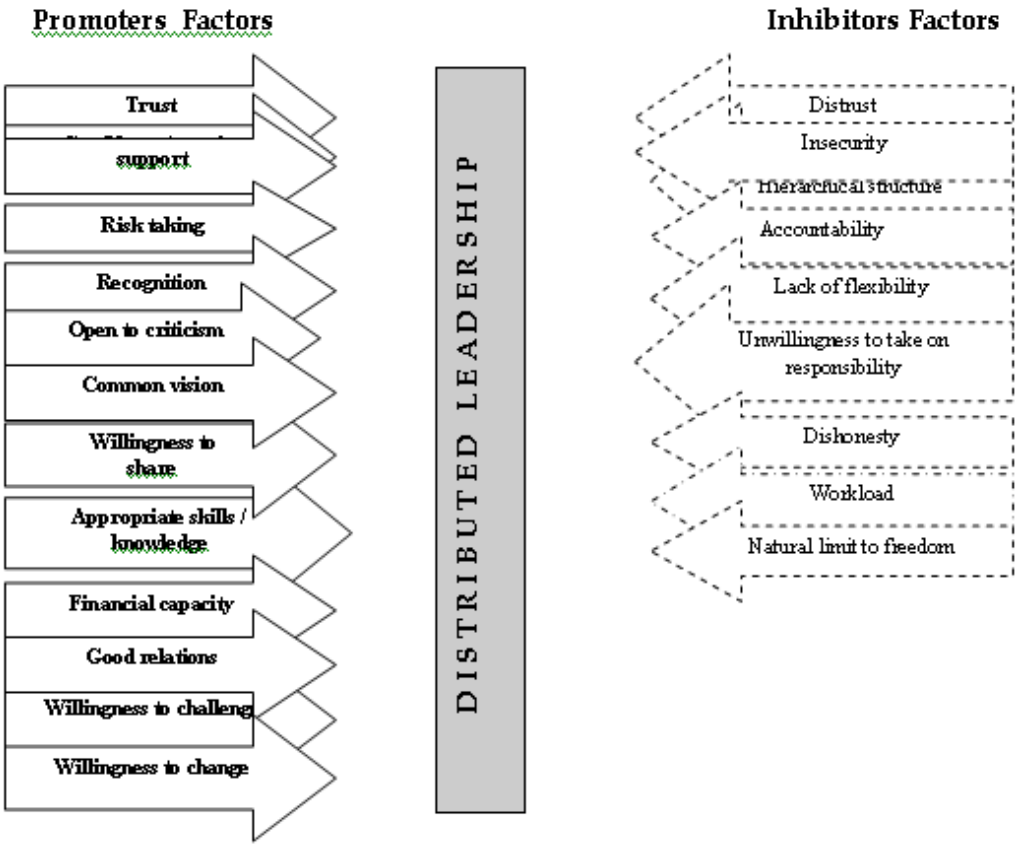

Fig 2: Pull and Push factors that affect DL: Oduro (2004:16).

The pull and push factors in the above diagram are based upon the findings of a research that was sponsored by the NCSL which was carried out between September 2003 and May 2004 (Oduro, 2004). The study investigated the practical implications of DL in 11 schools in Essex, Suffolk and Hertfordshire (*Ibid*). It had a sample of 302 teachers and 11 headteachers where data were gathered through questionnaires, shadowing and interviews (Oduro, 2004). The research findings showed that the factors that promote distributed leadership include trust, confidence, communication, risk-taking, financial capacity, willingness to share, and pursue common goals. On the other hand, Oduro's findings showed the contrasting factors that were raised by headteachers that inhibited the practice of DL as insecurity, dishonesty, external

interference, hierarchical school structures, accountability, workload and natural limit to freedom (*Ibid*). Some of these inhibitors are discussed in the next section.

2.5.7.3 Criticisms and limitations of distributed leadership

DL has been criticised by some authors including Hairon and Goh (2015) who suggest that distributed leadership needs to surrender the power to make decisions. Influence can come from any member of staff, and it should not be the same as delegation, where the headteacher uses his or her authority to ask a teacher to take a leadership role (*Ibid*). DL is viewed almost the same as dispersed leadership but in this case, the headteacher uses his or her professionalism to allocate leadership while holding on to power (MacBeath, 2003). Although empirical evidence has shown that a shared leadership style cultivates large profit for the school, headteachers hold on to power because they have the authority to make final decisions at crucial times (Day *et al,* 2000).

Arguably, 'the whole discussion around distributed and other forms of shared leadership is part of English government rhetoric to claim that power and autonomy are being shared with schools, whereas the reality points to centralisation and many different forms of managerialism' (Crawford, 2012:612). This means that although the government is talking about DL, autocratic methods are still being implemented in schools; so, if school leaders are accountable to external agents for externally mandated targets (e.g. Ofsted targets, league tables), Crawford suggests that DL may have distinct application limits in the school organisation, regardless of its rhetorically being part and parcel of practice. Thus, DL is viewed as problematic in schools meeting those targets (*Ibid*). Additionally, Hartley (2007) and Sol (2021) argue that although DL is perceived as a leadership model, there is no conclusive evidence that DL has a direct causal effect on the success of pupils, and as such they view it as another way of delegation in disguise.

Hartley (2007) observes the difficulties in applying DL when the state's agenda of new managerialism is dominant, as in 21st century England. He explains that bureaucracy remains

a domineering principle for those who focus on maximising efficiency (e.g. Ofsted expectations from headteachers and staff) and minimising trust (e.g. micromanagement by school leaders because of Ofsted inspections and league tables); it is difficult to apply DL within this new managerialism policy framework. Furthermore, most of the DL literature refers to senior authority leaders or formal and hierarchical leaders allowing or permitting distribution; this can be perceived as a one-dimensional power (top-down or autocratic) and can create inequality (Lumby, 2013, Hall *et al*, 2013). Furthermore, it can be regarded as leadership that sits firmly within a managerialist model which is part of the wider New Public Management (NPM) (*Ibid*). Nonetheless, O'Reilly and Reed (2010) and Hall *et al* (2013) argue that there are some tensions and contradictions in the school leadership restructuring process between school leaders and their staff within schools and the opposing perceptions of researchers who criticise DL. Thus, the NCSL who were assigned to co-ordinate and direct national leadership changes in individual organisations were confronted with 'tensions between the directive and agential dimensions implicit in their work roles, within education, these tensions could be viewed as being distributed to a wider range of individuals at lower levels of individual organisational hierarchies' (Hall *et al*, 2013:10). This means that in schools, the headteachers and their entire school staff were being asked to implement change (*Ibid*).

Criticism of DL by Storey (2004) and Lakomski (2005) are supported by Woods and Gronn (2009) who argue that:

> The influential notion of distributed leadership needs to be interrogated critically from the perspective of a concern with building organisations that are more democratic and respectful of the human status of their members and other stakeholders. The context for such critical interrogation is a pervasive instrumental rationality, which treats people as means to the ends of organisational and societal systems (pp.446-447).

Similarly, Lumby (2019) argues that although DL practice spread swiftly in the early 2000's and was approved by many people, the nature of this leadership remains unclear. Although Leo and Barton (2006) are not against the fact that DL enables the inclusion and commitment of a wider community, they criticised the simplistic support of DL by the National College for School Leadership. They want to see senior school leaders employing moral leadership, which means that there is need for a clear and sustained commitment to inclusion (*ibid*). However, Timperley (2005: 417) argues that 'distributed leadership over more people is a risky business and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence', though this can be contested. Brooks and Kensler (2011) suggest that DL theory could be combined with other concepts. This has been proven in Brooks and Jean-Marie (2007) exploratory study where they combined different concepts from the leadership for social justice literature with DL to investigate how equity leadership practices transpired at an urban high school. Their findings showed that "approaching the study of distributed leadership by supplementing it with complementary analytic concepts enriches our understanding of a promising and developing theory" (Brooks and Jean-Marie, 2007:402).

Meanwhile, different researchers (e.g. Brown *et al.* 2000; Gordon 2010; Gronn 2009; Hartley 2009; Hatcher 2005) have indicated that a lot of studies on DL do not focus much on the dynamics of power and control in which DL is positioned. Thus, in school organisations, according to Hatcher (2005), although there might be distribution of leadership, the power is often not distributed. This observation is supported by Bolden (2011) who suggests that the concept of DL may be applied by headteachers to encourage their staff to be involved and committed in school activities while hiding significant imbalances in gaining access to resources and sources of power. Furthermore, DL is viewed as another "difference-blind" model of leadership, which is unable to address racism issues, gender, and class bias (Maxcy and Nguyen, 2006). This view has been supported by Gunter (2013) and Lumby (2019) who argue that although most of the DL literature shows that DL creates opportunities to all staff with expertise to participate in leadership, it does not seriously take into consideration the

effects of a change in practice to include staff with different characteristics like age, experience, background, gender, race and other identity features.

DL does not address the under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups/women who find it difficult to get into informal and formal leadership positions (Lumby 2019). The reason might be that 'BME women are seen as an 'invisible' group within organisations, often not represented in any significant way on employer management programmes or bespoke development and leadership initiatives' (Showunmi, 2020:51). There is also considerable evidence that BME staff find it harder to achieve leadership roles and are disadvantaged and unacknowledged when leading (Bush *et al*, 2006; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Miles, 2013; Miller, 2016; Showunmi, 2020). When White leaders are incompetent, they are understood to be under pressure whilst their Black counterparts are viewed as more incapable than the White leaders (Rudman and Glick, 2001). This is supported by Ogunbawo (2012) and Lumby (2013) who express that BME teachers are significantly under-represented in leadership roles despite the introduction of DL theory, and they find it hard to be promoted to headship positions. Furthermore, Miller (2016) demonstrates that BME educationalists need approval from White colleagues if they want to be promoted to take leadership roles. Moreover, the statistics suggest that distributed leadership has not assisted in opening up leadership roles for BME teachers' (Lumby, 2013:23); this might be politically motivated (Gunter *et al*, 2013). This is an ongoing issue which is supported by DfE's (2021) school workforce figures which reveal that in 2019 there were no Black African teachers who were in headship roles.

Showunmi (2020) recommends that there is need for further research to investigate the leadership roles of BME leaders. This includes looking at barriers that prevent BME women from getting promoted to senior positions as compared to their White female and male counterparts whose promotion is viewed as rapid in contrast. This means there is need for individuals and line managers to embrace "culturally sensitive training to enable them to maximise the potential that BME women leaders can bring to their organisations" (Showunmi, 2020:58). In addition, Miller (2016:218) contends that "In 21st Century England, a multi-racial

and multi-cultural country, any suggestion of ethnic and/or racial superiority should be vigorously pushed back and talents, skills and voices from all ethnicities legitimised and respected." These are some of the issues that DL is failing to address (Lumby, 2019).

Although DL is believed to bring about constructive and beneficial work situations, there are some concerns of evidence and risk, where there is no significant and strong data that can encourage people to implement distributed leadership (Gunter *et al*, 2013). Maxcy and Nguyen (2006) argue that:

> Whatever advance these frameworks offer in describing DL, they are conventional from an administrative standpoint in their lack of attention to the politics of how leadership is distributed, toward what ends, and to whose benefit or detriment. In doing so, they undermine an imperative for effective political voice through deliberative and democratic practices in more socially just schools (Maxcy and Nguyen, 2006: 189).

Gunter *et al* (2013) believe that DL is certainly political, and it is difficult to depoliticise it. They argue that DL in England has been developed and established ahead of thorough research and evidence of how successful it is in school leadership. Thus, the New Labour government (1997–2010) financed and endorsed DL as a model of preferred successful school leadership through the National College for School Leadership, which was commissioned to promote and implement it in schools (*Ibid*). Gunter's (2012) research of the Knowledge Production in Educational Leadership (KPEL) project, where she investigated New Labour's education policy and investment in headteachers as school leaders in England, and gathered data by interviewing policymakers and headteachers, found that there are some leaders who include politicians, lecturers, business people and sponsors, who use the authority that they have because of their positions, to design and change school leadership. However, the approach does not focus on DL only, but it is also about the way economic and political interests

construct and manage power relations in order to guarantee a solid match between education and wealth production (Gunter *et al*, 2013).

Murphy *et al's* (2009) three-year (2004-2007) longitudinal comparative case studies research of ten schools in two mid-Atlantic states in America, which was about promoting the development of distributed leadership in schools, showed that the concept of power that is being distributed to a variety of staff who have got the expertise of taking different projects and make their own decisions is not backed by evidence. Murphy *et al* argues that the distribution of leadership looked like delegating roles to formal and informal leaders within a bureaucratic structure. In the same view, Lumby (2019) views DL as a post-bureaucratic leadership; thus, although DL has been introduced after bureaucracy (controlling staff), bureaucracy will always be there and the extent DL has impact, will always be limited. Lumby further argues that bureaucracy has been involved more rigorously in the matters of power than DL, it is widespread across the world and brings the required ways of resolving the current leadership issues. She suggests that an inquiry is needed to find out how power is perceived and embedded in action, especially in tackling the inequities that are rooted in education (e.g. gender, disability, BME, etc.).

Nevertheless, Hairon and Goh's (2015) research about pursuing the elusive construct of distributed leadership with a sample which involved 1,232 school leaders from Singapore, showed that with DL, although the teachers are empowered, their decisions which they view as autonomous still need to be approved by the headteacher, though it is not talked about. Similarly, headteachers seem to control the process of who get the leadership roles, 'appointing or anointing teacher leaders from those in their inner circle', which shows that there is favouritism (Murphy *et al*, 2009: 187). Furthermore, Tian *et al* (2016) reiterate that although there is limited evidence that power moves from the formal roles, especially the headteacher to the rest of the staff who have the expertise, there is substantial evidence that those in formal authority roles are the ones who are still holding on to that power. In addition, DL practice pretends to be concentrating on the advancement of individuals, and yet its focus is on

improving the school's efficiency and success (Hartley, 2010). Likewise, Lumby (2013) views DL as a suitable way of obtaining additional work for some additional reward.

2.5.7.4 Distributed Leadership Misconceptions

There is a misconception that with DL, everyone leads, and yet DL implies that those teachers who have got the expertise for that particular initiative, are the ones who can lead, instead of everyone (Harris and Deflaminis, 2016). This means that leaders in formal leadership positions sensibly share duties and power with those people who have the talent, belief and skill to lead, at a specific time, in an organisation. Another misconception about DL is the consideration of DL as a blueprint for leadership and management (Spillane and Diamond, 2007a). Likewise, Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) support Spillane and Diamond's observation as they explain that there is a misconception which says that, 'there is some particular model that schools need to follow, that there is some blueprint, some road map, or some definitive guide', and yet it is unsubstantiated (Harris and DeFlaminis, 2016:144).

Bolden (2011:257) asserts that 'in the same way as leader-centric perspectives reduce the ability to recognise factors beyond the individual, a poorly defined concept of DL may render it difficult to differentiate the specific contributions of particular actors and/or aspects of the situation'. However, there are some rules, and some advice about the norms, tactics and methods that appear to work most successfully, but people should totally avoid any standardised prescription for DL (Harris and DeFlaminis, 2016). Otherwise, it is more beneficial to come up with a workable school strategy, that will positively support distributed leadership practice at a school level: thus, this agreement needs to disallow the possibility of autocratic leadership (*Ibid*). Spillane and Diamond (2007a) also dismiss the misconceptions about DL being viewed as removing or ignoring the role of headteachers, and that DL is only about collective circumstances. These assumptions are profoundly unsound and weaken the ability to support the dynamics of leadership practice (*Ibid*) which has led to challenges in implementing DL in schools as discussed next.

2.5.7.5 Challenges of implementing DL in schools

The role of the headteacher has become increasingly multifaceted through the effects of the 1988 Educational Reform Act which brought the National Curriculum with its associated complicated structure of testing, pressures of accountability to Ofsted and the huge responsibilities of headteachers to lead schools (Brundrett, 2000; Leithwood *et al* 2009). All these programmes have increased the pressures on headteachers and have complicated their leadership roles (*Ibid*). These leadership roles are explained by The National Professional Qualification for headteachers (NPQH) as follows:

> Headteachers direct school strategies and develop the school; guide the teaching and learning; lead and manage the school staff; effectively and efficiently distribute the staff and all required resources; choosing and replacing staff; clearly assigning duties to teachers; developing teachers' expertise at the school; observing progress at all levels; generating high and suitable expectations for all staff; and creating a constructive school culture (Leithwood *et al*, 2009:279).

As the above roles are 'too big for one person', Grubb and Flessa (2006:519) encourage schools to have co-principals in DL practice in order to spread the leadership load and to reduce stress. Nonetheless, effective headteachers achieve most change through promoting and influencing instead of being the 'doers' (Male, 2006). DL gives a school an opportunity to genuinely become a more effective educational institution because of its leaders who collectively pull in the same direction, and they are guided by the same vision and values towards a common set of goals (Solly, 2018). Although headteachers hold ultimate responsibility for standards across the school, DL allows them to accept a degree of shared accountability because most of the key improvement strategies across the school are delivered by members of staff instead of headteachers (*Ibid*). So, it is the head's responsibility to ensure

that these strategies are being led well by these members of staff and they are having impact (Solly, 2018).

Headteachers are encouraged to distribute the leadership to teachers in order to improve the pupils' attainment (Wheelan, 2005; Diamond and Spillane, 2016). This means that the headteachers should not run the school organisation alone and only delegate some responsibilities to teachers (Spillane, 2006: NCSL, 2009). Instead, leadership should be distributed throughout the school through the interaction with the whole school community, the SLT and teachers with different expertise (*Ibid*). Similarly, DL is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others but is a group activity that works through and within relationships (Bennett *et al*, 2003). Solly (2018) echoes Bennett *et al*'s idea by explaining that 'the purpose of DL is to increase the leadership capacity within a school so that the school can improve and grow in an authentic manner, with no tricks, stunts [prevention from growth or development] or game-playing' (Solly, 2018: online).

Similarly, leadership is stretched over people, and it is viewed as activities tied to the fundamental work of the school that are designed and understood by organisational members, as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge or practices (Diamond and Spillane, 2016). It should be clear that DL is not delegating because delegation involves getting others to complete your work for you, which is not a good practice of developing leaders in your school organisation (Solly, 2018). Thus, if leaders continuously delegate their work, this work will just get pushed down the chain of command, causing people who do not have enough time and who are paid less money to complete it (*Ibid*). 'This can result in workforce resenting leaders within the organisation, as their perception of those in power is that they are lazy and do not work as hard as they do' (Solly, 2018: online).

However, Duignan (2006) observes that a lot of headteachers are lonely, and they do all the leadership duties on their own, instead of distributing it to the expertise around the school. Respectively, Surowiecki (2005:29) expresses that 'diversity matters and there is wisdom in

the crowd'. He argues that diversity of people and their information play an important part in decision-making than one person. 'It is better to entrust a diverse group 'with varying degrees of knowledge and insight' with major decisions, rather than leaving them in the hands of one or two people, no matter how smart those people are' (Surowiecki, 2005:31). Teacher leaders should be placed in a position where they know that they are trusted, and too much monitoring removes that trust (Firestone and Martinez, 2009). This means that instead of fixating on individual actions, attention should be focused on interactions (Diamond and Spillane, 2016).

2.6 Summary of DL

In summary, although DL has its limitations as shown in the criticism and limitations section, which include the lack of addressing the gender, disability, age and race issues in distributing leadership, there are a lot of evidence-based research studies that show that it is the most popular and recent leadership model for schools (Harris and Spillane, 2008; Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2014; Sol, 2021). It is popular because of its 'normative power' that depicts the contemporary changes in school leadership practice; thus, DL has managed to expand the leadership duties and responsibilities to everyone who has got the expertise to lead across all the school levels (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2008; Sol, 2021). However, my research findings seem to contradict these findings (see chapter 7). The other reason why DL is popular is that it has "representational power," which represents alternative approaches to school leadership (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, 2003; Harris, 2014; Sol, 2021,). Due to the demand of distribution of power across the school organisation, schools had to reorganise their leadership teams instead of the headteacher or senior leadership team only, and build new leadership roles in order to address this demand (MacBeath, 2003, Harris, 2008, Sol, 2021). Also, it has been proven that DL has applied power; thus, a lot of research studies have demonstrated a considerably positive connection between DL practice and organisational developments (Leithwood, *et al*, 2009, Harris, 2014 and Sol, 2021).

DL is the leadership practice that encompasses substantial collaborations with three key elements which include headteachers, school staff, and their situations (Spillane 2006). It can be argued that these collaborations that Spillane has pointed out are formed over a certain period (Sol, 2021). However, Harris and DeFleminis (2016) suggest that practitioners are vitally important in the advancement of new knowledge about DL. Consequently, they argue there is an urgent need of evidence about the actual practice of DL (*Ibid*). Harris and DeFleminis suggest that the school staff and those who work alongside schools are vital in producing evidence-based knowledge of distributed leadership in action. That is the reason for my study; to explore the role of distributed leadership among senior leaders in two academies and to examine whether or not this evidence of its strengths and limitations is forthcoming.

2.7 Neoliberalism and converter Academies

Neoliberalism is significant in this research because this study is focusing on converted academy schools; these academies were marketised and given the autonomy to operate on their own without the assistance of local authorities. In Britain, according to Maisuria (2014) neo-liberal principles in social, economic and cultural life were introduced by Margaret Thatcher soon after she was elected as the prime minister in 1979. Margaret Thatcher took over a country whose economy was in deep recession (*Ibid*). Thatcher introduced her economy reforms by taking capitalism to another level, where markets were deregulated to facilitate commodification (commodification is the conversion of goods, services and people into commodities or objects of trade) and privatisation of government assets (Harvey, 2005). This process of change according to Treanor (2005) is called neo-liberalisation. In education, neoliberalism includes 'ideas of marketisation and autonomy; parents' right to choose the 'best school for their child'; schools' freedom from local authority 'bureaucracy'; administrators' ability to pay teachers based on 'performance'; risk-based approaches to performance management and educational outcomes; the use of data to drive responsible activity; and the re-purposing of education for human capital development' (Hall and Pulsford, 2019: online).

The other elements of neoliberalism according to Thompson (2017) include competition between schools, league tables for the whole nation and diversity of provision.

Neoliberalism assumes that a person's relationship to the Government and other members of society is facilitated through the market (Lynch, 2017). 'It builds on the idealisation of choice in classical liberalism, which prioritises freedom over equality. Freedom is defined in consumption terms: citizens are redefined as 'customers' with market preferences rather than democratic citizens with human rights and public interest obligations' (*Ibid*:2). Lynch also believes that neoliberalism is centred on privatising citizens and they should be able to take care of their own risks whilst being accountable for their failure and success.

Neo liberalisation is seen through the passing of the Academies Act (2010) by the Coalition government in England which led to the introduction of converter academy and Free schools in 2010. These schools are run like businesses, and have been liberated from local authority control, and have been given the freedom to run on their own. The Academies Act permits any private group of people like parents to set up their own new Free school and they are considered as consumers and producers of education who are empowered to deliver public services (Morris and Perry, 2019). However, there are noted disadvantages of these Free schools in that they may not be inclusive in the sense that they tend to favour their own particular group interest, resulting in grouping certain classes of children in different schools (*Ibid*). To reinforce this notion, Hall and Pulsford (2019: Online) expressed that 'there is a social restructuring based around the development of punitive, non-democratic and unequal re-organisation of access to education…such that access to collective, public goods is predicated upon dominant, patriarchal notions of productivity and success'. Instead of the Government taking responsibility for providing the services of education and for school outcomes, they give that responsibility to parents and pupils who are the service users, and to schools (*Ibid*).

With this marketisation policy, the Government monitors teachers and schools' activities through public exam results so that schools are held accountable for the public money that

they are allocated (Hall and Pulsford, 2019). According to Roda (2013) the audit and accountability by the Government in schools is done in order to undermine the autonomy that schools were given when they were still run by LAs, with the consequence that choice and freedom are only offered to academies and free schools.

2.8 New Managerialism and its Effects on Headteachers and Teachers

It must be noted that new managerialism is an extension of organisational neoliberalism (Lynch, 2014). 'It is the mode of governance designed to realise the neoliberal project through the institutionalising of market principles in the governance of organisations' (*Ibid*:1). Lynch (2014) argues that new managerialism is not an ordinary management approach, but it is politically motivated, which came about because of a drastic change in the organisation of capitalism. 'As such, it is embedded in a complex series of social, political and economic organisational changes that are tied to neoliberalism in particular' (*Ibid*:2). An important fact to note is that in education research 'new managerialism' and 'managerialism' are used interchangeably (Lynch, 2014). The implementation of managerialist values in both public and private organisations make new managerialism 'new', and, increasingly, non-governmental (Lynch *et al*, 2012; McCrea, 2014).

New managerialism of the public sector is synonymous with Conservativism and privatisation (Vogt, 2002). New managerial policy change in schools had a significant impact on the role of headteachers during the Conservative government of the 1970s (Vogt, 2002). Headteachers were considered to be the ones who were going to carry out managerial change in schools; thus, new managerialism helped to exploit headteacher power (*Ibid*). Vogt explained that:

> Hierarchical differentiation with a powerful headteacher was already part of the tradition of English schools before new managerial reforms…Headteachers lead, direct and manage other people - the existing hierarchy has been re-constituted. The policy of headteacher standards reveals a hierarchical, management model which places

> others in a largely responsive relationship to the head's vision …the new managerial understanding of management is a generic tool, whereby private business management techniques are to be applied in the public sector (Vogt, 2002:8-9).

This means that the traditional power relationships in English schools were autocratic or top-down in nature as opposed to collegial; headteachers were in powerful positions of authority and were imposing their policies without much consultation with their staff, which resulted in a lot of staff turnover (*Ibid*). This new managerialism within the education sector can be perceived as a way of the Conservative government trying to enact its authority to schools as individual organisations (Pollitt, 2007). 'The emphasis during this period can be viewed as one where the centralisation of curriculum and assessment linked to the creation of a National Curriculum went hand in hand with the financial decentralisation of schools through both the construction of educational markets and a variety of measures that offered increased opportunities for schools to manage their own finances' (Hall *et al,* 2013:3). The effect of these reforms on the school leaders was the establishment of a set of authoritative school rules that were designed to release a wave of new managerialism in all schools in England (Gewirtz, 2002). Thus, this new managerialism was designed to drive up educational standards, mostly within single school organisations and in which headteachers, who were viewed as single leaders within schools were expected to perform this vital role (Hall *et al,* 2013). However, new managerialism continued with the New Labour government, but their focus was on performance target setting and outcomes and standards unlike the conservatives who focus on market forces, competition and entrepreneurialism (Vogt, 2002 and Archer, 2018).

According to Maisuria (2014) the Coalition government introduced performance-related pay for teachers in England since September 2013, which means that teachers are paid according to their performance. This also meant that that progress up a pay scale was no longer automatic with experience (Fullard and Zuccollo, 2021). 'It was then up to headteachers to decide how to assess performance and what pay progression to provide' (Fullard and Zuccollo,

2021:20). Maisuria (2014) said that the replacement of pay scales with this performance related pay is demoralising for headteachers and teachers and undermining the teaching profession. This means that the school staff are being forced to work extra hard in order to meet their targets and get a pay rise (*Ibid).* There are constant changes in education which are targeted to improve the quality of education in developed countries called The Global Education 'Reform' Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2012). These changes included the removal of the public welfare type of education which is centred on interactions, care and dedication to the job and staff, then moving to a new postmodern, private sector type of education (*Ibid*). Such changes are evident in England whereby the introduction of a business model in education may be intimidatory to teaching because headteachers and teachers are assessed in various ways, by different methods and through the employment of various frameworks (Skinner *et al*, 2021). These assessments include 'monitoring systems such as performativity and accountability in appraisal meetings and promotion applications, and through production of information, such as databases of exam results, school inspection reports and league tables' (Skinner *et al*, 2021:2). Skinner, *et al* (2021) express that this notion of setting standards and monitoring teacher/school performativity depicts a new era of school managerialism which does not respect teachers' professional identity.

There has been an ongoing problem of teacher retention and it is difficult for teachers to take on leadership roles because of new managerialism, and findings from research show that workload and pressure and the negative behaviour of students were the most mentioned reasons (Barmby, 2007). However, later research finds that the demands of new managerialism from the government, through the headteachers are affecting the teachers and overshadowing their dedication to their work. (Fernet *et al*, 2014). Similarly, Skinner *et al* (2021:1), contend that new 'managerialism can relate to a loss of [teacher] commitment, professional identity, self-confidence and vulnerability to stress, anxiety and depression'. They explained that issues such as school staff workload, reforms in educational policies, and a lack of managerial support from headteachers can remove the experienced teachers' professional

identity and their commitment to the job, which in turn can bring stress and worry to school staff and undermines their well-being (this is discussed in chapter 6 of my findings).

It has been noted that new managerialism practice in schools is shifting the staffs' attention from teaching and learning and from taking leadership roles because of continuous changes in curriculum, performance management, unnecessary paperwork, pressure to raise student attainment outcomes, heavy workloads and other organisational changes (Open Access Government, 2019). The first set of 43 standards which set the minimum expectations for teachers' practice and conduct, which are used by headteachers to monitor their staff were introduced in England in 2011 by the Department for Education (Department for Education, 2011).

Also, there has been some educational policy reforms that have been introduced in 2015 and implemented in 2017 which include the introduction of a new curriculum and changed qualifications at GCSE and A level, with the qualification assessments removed from coursework to exams, with the introduction of a new grading scale of 9–1(*Ibid*). These non-negotiable policy reforms are passed down to teachers by headteachers through new managerialism, which is affecting the teachers' well-being and professionalism (Open Access Government, 2019). This notion is supported by Skinner *et al* (2021) who explain the demands of new managerialism in schools as being accountable, performativity, achieving the given standards, and having the new skills that are required in this modern world. It can be suggested that the pressure that comes with these expected standards from government to headteachers, then passed down to teachers, can affect the teachers' mental health and emotional well-being (McCarthy and Dragouni, 2020; Skinner *et al.* (2021).

New managerialism has contributed to an ongoing problem of teacher retention and findings from research show that workload pressure and the negative behaviour of students were the most mentioned reasons affecting teacher retention in the early 2,000's (Barmby, 2007). Later research points to the continuing influence of heavy workload on teacher retention. Burge *et*

al's (2021:viii) research about teacher retention showed that 'nearly half of the sample stated they work 21% to 50% more than their contract hours and almost a third report working 51% to 100% more. Importantly, when faced with choices that featured differences in workload, respondents valued workload reduction very positively, but showed a strong disinclination towards options that increased their workload'.

Nevertheless, Fernet *et al* (2014) argue that school staff are passionate and committed to work when they are given autonomy to lead in different initiatives in their schools, but they are not committed when they are controlled by their work activities. It can therefore be argued that the new managerialism in education shows that commitment to work is inconsistent because of the stress that it brings on staff and some of them are not confident to take leadership roles (Busher and Saran, 2013).

In addition, Skinner *et al* (2021) argue that 'the managerialist approach to education by government and headteachers leaves teachers feeling that their expertise is useful only for the schools' accountability statistics, rather than for the pupils' learning and that they are no longer allowed to be professionals. They feel their knowledge is no longer their own; it has been commodified' (Skinner, 2021:13). Furthermore, the new managerialism that is employed in schools by the headteachers make many teachers feel that they are under continuous surveillance and pressure to produce unrealistic results, although headteachers are also under pressure to implement new government policies (Open Access Government, 2019). The school staff feel that they are not included in policy making by the headteachers and they are not provided with the resources to implement these polices (*Ibid*).

In conclusion, neoliberalism is important in this study because it facilitated the passing of the Academies Act (2010) by the Coalition government in England, which led to the introduction of converter academy and Free schools in 2010. These academies are run like businesses, and have been liberated from local authority control, and have been given the freedom to run on their own. New managerialism is also important in this study because it is one of the themes

in this study, it is an extension of neo- liberalism. It is the mode of governance in schools which is employed by the Conservative government. New managerialism has contributed to an ongoing problem of teacher retention because of its autocratic principals which have brought heavy workload pressures on teachers. With new managerialism, the relationship between the citizens and the government is now referred to in terms of market values, customers, service users and competitors, instead of the traditional public service language which includes public welfare, the rights of the citizens and unity (Lynch, 2014). Anything which is not easily enumerated does not have any value and it is discarded (*Ibid*). Lynch (2017) argues that new managerialism is guided by the market which can direct how we organise education unless its principles of competition and selfish individualism are contested. Therefore, it is important to have a system that promotes sound education because new managerialism is affecting the headteachers and their teachers in doing their job and some teachers are reluctant to take u p leadership roles (*Ibid*).

2.9 Leadership in CAs

The majority of CAs rely mostly on the strength of personal relationships or collaborative partnership and trust between leaders in order to make their joint work effective (Hill *et al*, 2012). This is whereby headteachers or principals agree to work together in beneficial areas according to Hill *et al*, or federations with novel leadership structures including 'executive heads', whose role is couched in business terms as much as educational ones, who may lead more than one school and who, in some cases, are trained for this role at business schools (Harper, 2009). Some of the key skills and attributes of an executive head role are: a continuing commitment to DL, along with building capacity and empowering people, leading the system, developing positive relationships and exhibiting trust in others (Hill *et al*, 2012; NCTL, 2012). However, according to Hill *et al* (2012) these elements may be in tension and this raises a key question for this study of whether DL is still understood and implemented as it was under the then New Labour government. Difficulties in implementing DL were evident when it was part

of the NCSL model of school leadership. One of the leaders of a federation school explained that:

> There is a significant difference in the kind of leadership needed to make federations work. As heads, even with DL, we tend to lead from the apex of our institution in a still hierarchical fashion … It is a kind of leadership that, as heads, we are not at all comfortable with, and it does not come easily to some of us (Hill, 2008:256).

According to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) (2012) the qualities that are required to lead an academy are the same as those that all skilled leaders require. However, NCTL explains that they differ in context in the sense that academy heads are all leading some kind of transformational change for their schools and communities. Further, academies need skills such as entrepreneurial and political leadership as well as technical skills such as the ability to devise, lead and sustain demanding structures of accountability (NCTL, 2012). Also, the NCTL suggests that academy leaders should have a passion for improving the lives of children and inspire them, as well as patience, tenacity and stamina. According to the research that was carried out by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (2011), the sponsored and CAs agreed on four key leadership skills that were more important in an academy context. These included: 'financial management/budgeting skills; political/diplomatic skills; accountability; and change management skills' (NCSL, 2011: online). Both sponsored and converted academies ranked political/diplomatic skills at the top in terms of importance (*Ibid*). The NCSL also found that CAs' major challenges were funding and financial resources, and buying in support services, though their inspiration for becoming an academy was financial autonomy. According to the NCSL (2011) the excitement of converting into an academy was affected by the reduction of funding due to austerity measures because of the recession. Instead, the workload in schools is increasing and is affecting most of the teachers as explained by Harris (2016) that:

> Workload has, despite all the rhetoric from the government, become worse – something we all know. I now visit a wide variety of schools regularly. They have many differences, but they all have one thing in common: the members of staff say that they cannot carry on like this. A recent survey of 4,000 teachers supported this view. Some 82% of those interviewed said that the workload expected of them was unmanageable. This is unsustainable. The effect on teacher wellbeing is there for us all to see, and 73% of those interviewed said that their health had been affected (Harris, 2016: online).

The NCSL (2011) found that most of CAs had a traditional leadership structure which comprised of the headteacher, one or more deputy heads and assistant heads with a number of middle leaders working together in a single school and there was a degree of DL, although there were exceptions to this. Although this type of leadership was there before the conversions, some of the academies were going to use their academy freedom to change these leadership structures (*Ibid*). This would bring a wider range of leadership models/structures within CAs as the programme developed, which would also have an impact on the roles of the middle and senior leaders (NCSL, 2011). In academies they have school business managers who play an important role in the process of converting the school into an academy status, and often assume the role of the Company Secretary (Allen, 2017).

2.10 Precariousness in schools

Along with the CAs programme have come changes in teacher working conditions such as:

- alternative routes into teaching including school-based and assessment-only accreditation
- no requirement for academies to employ qualified staff
- end of national pay scale

- short term contracts and contracts closely tied to success for teachers, based on performance and for leaders, related to their success in transforming schools, improving recruitment and outcomes, and improved Ofsted results.

Precarity is a way of theorising the effects this has on the workforce and their lives (Standing, 2014). The precariously employed are paid low wages, their jobs and income security is next to none and they are employed in low quality jobs. These employees are at a high risk of poverty and are likely to have harmful psychological effects (Olsthoorn, 2013). This notion is also shared by Benach *et al* (2014) who explain that,

> Although there is still no full consensus on its definition, precarious employment might be considered a multidimensional construct encompassing dimensions such as employment insecurity, individualised bargaining relations between workers and employers, low wages and economic deprivation, limited workplace rights and social protection, and powerlessness to exercise workplace rights (Benach *et al*, 2014: online).

To be precariatised is to be exposed to pressures and experiences that lead to a precarious situation where you live without any development, or a secure identity achieved through work and lifestyle (Standing 2011). Standing explains that the precariat has no opportunities to be promoted and has lack of progression and they are frustrated and disengaged: these can also be found in salaried and professional jobs like teachers. Precarious work may further be defined as employment that the worker views as doubtful, unstable, and risky (Kalleberg, 2009). The precariat lives with anxiety because they know that one mistake can lead to losing their job (Standing, 2011). These people are stressed, uncertain, desperate in their behaviour, frustrated, angry and they feel insecure (*Ibid*). “The precariatised mind is fed by fear and is motivated by fear” (Standing, 2011:20).

However, Raunig (2007:7) argues that 'precariat is not a state that empirically refers to a class in itself, but it is more of a turn, a struggle, and a question. It is the development of problems instead of political or conceptual closure and homogenisation'.

However, the public sector joined the precariat zone because of privatisation (Standing, 2011). People who previously were not 'precarious' are increasingly finding that this is the norm; teachers included, who are part of a 'professional precariat' (Raunig, 2007). Similarly, educational organisations are creating a group of employees who experience short contracts and low income, thus, precarity (Ivancheva, 2015:39). Job precarity started to develop in the late 1970s, when 'globalisation escalated economic integration and competition' (Kalleberg, 2009:2). This brought the concept of flexible labour which substituted the ideas of corporation and long-term interests between employees and their employers, which was in favour of the employers because they were gaining more capital (Duguay *et al*, 1997; Fudge and Owens, 2006). These neoliberal principles have been introduced in educational organisations where professional members of staff are employed on casual or fixed-term contracts, in order to cut costs and have an upper hand over their performance, which causes a lot of staff to feel their profession as precarious (Torres and Schugurensky, 2002; Newfield, 2008; Ginsberg, 2011; Ward, 2012; Walsh, 2013; Lynch, 2014).

Headteachers and staff who are in precarious positions have got their different concerns about their pay, allowances and long-term job protection because some teachers are paid according to their working hours, and yet they are permanently employed (Kramer *et al*, 2014; Leslie and Gappa, 2002; Valadez and Anthony, 2001; University and College Union, 2016). Further, precariousness comes with a variety of different contracts, but they all have a common characteristic; work can be reduced or diminish or disappear entirely and teachers will be left out without income (University and College Union, 2016). Some of the staff's precariousness is further exacerbated by their lack of participation in the running of the organisation and in decision making (Adamowicz, 2007). Standing (2014) argues that "unlike the 20th century

proletariat, which experienced labour insecurity that could be covered by social insurance, the precariat is exposed to chronic uncertainty, facing a life of 'unknown unknowns". Also, they have rights insecurity because their rights are fewer than others and most of these people do not have state benefits (*Ibid*). Kezar *et al* (2014) echo Standing's view by reiterating that precarious part-time staff seem not to get access to some of the resources and assistance that the other permanent staff get. Furthermore, these precarious school staff have high workloads (Schuster, 2003; Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006; Klentzin and Bucci; 2012; Steinþórsdóttir *et al*, 2018).

Rauinig observes that the figure of the precarious shows weakness, instability and heterogeneity. He explains that:

> The precariat does not represent a unified, homogeneous or even ontological formation; it is divided and diffused across many hotbeds, not because of weakness or incapability, but rather as a discontinuity of geography and production distributing itself in space (Rauinig, 2007: online).

Rauinig argues that precarisation creates competition, lack of commonality and opportunism, even if the precariat are able to access some means of production and especially of communication to broader circles.

Standing's (2011) argument is that there is going to be an established group in the society who are at risk of joblessness and homelessness, they are just about keeping afloat. That applies to the public sector which includes teachers and school heads. This has been caused by the marketisation and quasi-privatisation of education (West and Bailey, 2013), that has enabled and even encouraged this, so it comes as part of the package of the shift from public sector LAs to academies. This view is supported by Bradbury (2018) who argues that the change of policy under the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 has caused this precariousness in headteachers. This is a problem to all education workers because staff find

it difficult to wholly dedicate themselves to their professional job due to bad working conditions where they are underpaid, exposed and constantly afraid of losing their jobs (University and College Union, 2016). Jobs are precarious because of the short-term contracts which cause staff to spend most of their time looking for the next employment (*Ibid*).

There are tensions between external pressures and the accountabilities of headship (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2013); these tensions are driving away head teachers from their jobs and causing difficulties in recruiting and retaining headteachers (Busby 2019; Turner 2018). Some of these tensions include the SATs results which are stressing headteachers and they live in fear of losing their jobs, according to Bradbury (2019). Bradbury explains that headteachers perceive that they are wrongly judged on their school's SATs results and some have been sacked because of their accountability for SATs outcomes. Due to this precariousness, they dedicate most of their time in preparation of these SATs instead of concentrating on whole school teaching and learning (*Ibid*). This is aggravated by the budget cuts and difficult decisions headteachers have to make about staff allocation and the time needed to prepare for SATs (*Ibid*).

According to Bradbury, 'many headteachers particularly object to the ways in which SATs results are used in a high stakes system of accountability through their links to Ofsted ratings and the negative comparisons they generate with other schools, as well as their impact on the children preparing for and sitting their SATs. Similarly, headteachers acknowledge how precarious their job is and their job security depends on the continuous positive attainment results (Burnitt (2016). Some headteachers feel very insecure because they are replaced or sacked when there is only one set of lower results which is viewed as a source of increased intervention and possibly a replacement of a headteacher (Bradbury, 2019). This precariousness even affects the headteachers who have a Good Ofsted grade, which shows that no one is secure in these school organisations, their jobs are at risk (*Ibid*).

The Role of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and its effects on school inspections

According to Ofsted (2020), the role of Ofsted is to carry out some inspections to services that offer education and skills for learners of all ages and inspect and regulate facilities where children and young people are in care. They also, do research on education and social care, then report their research findings together with the schools and care inspections to the government. Ofsted inspectors visit schools, to inspect teachers' lessons, the curriculum delivered, student performance data, school leadership and the running of the school, and then they rate the school's performance with a scale from satisfactory to excellent (*Ibid*). Consequently, Ofsted has the 'authority to paint schools in a negative or positive light' (Study International Staff, 2019:1).

Study International Staff cite Spielman (the Ofsted Chief Inspector) who explains that:

> I have seen a really positive response to the focus we are bringing on the substance of education – the curriculum. Across all the sectors we inspect and regulate, there is a real understanding that we need to regain our focus on substance: to teach an academic curriculum, to improve social care practice, to open up a range of future careers to young people (Study International Staff, 2019:1).

However, Spielman's above speech according to the Study International Staff, was in contrast with the teachers' survey that they carried out, which showed that 'for many teachers across the UK, the term 'Ofsted' is met with mixed reactions [and that] Ofsted has the ability to provoke feelings of anxiety for educators' (Study International Staff, 2019:1). The survey also revealed that teachers' impending stress was about Ofsted inspections.

These findings were supported by Ofsted's (2019) report which explained that the teachers' stress was caused by these inspections, which were increasing the administrative workload, and an extreme concentration on data and exam results, which were reducing the teachers' focus to exams results instead of concentrating on quality education provision. This is also supported by Ferguson's (2019) survey, which shows that teachers are not happy with Ofsted, as these teachers expressed that Ofsted had a negative effect on them because of the fears, worries and anxiety that it brings with it in schools. These teachers complained that they had an added workload because they were asked to tick a lot of boxes on unnecessary things that had nothing to do with teaching and learning, in order to impress Ofsted inspectors (*Ibid*). Furthermore, Ferguson' s findings show that headteachers and teachers did not feel supported by Ofsted, but they felt that the system was vindictive because Ofsted was just coming to look for faults and failing the schools, without giving them solutions and putting support systems in place. One of the teachers in Ferguson's survey expressed that:

> Schools should be held accountable, but they should be supported as well as evaluated, ideally by other school leaders with local expertise, as part of a continuous improvement process. Context matters and, unlike Ofsted inspectors, local teachers will understand the school's demographic and its history over the years. Schools should be told: these are your strengths, these are your weaknesses and these are some brilliant schools in your geographical area, we're going to support you to work together collaboratively (Ferguson, 2019: Online).

Ferguson argues that Ofsted should not base their inspection judgement on what they see in one or a few days because that does not represent a full school year. Ofsted should shift its focus from the performance of teachers, in order to reduce the added stress, and focus on effects of Ofsted, or these two should be balanced (*Ibid*).

According to Bousted (2019) the Labour government has proposed to abolish Ofsted if they are elected to power, because they are against the idea of awarding schools single grades. Bousted argue that 'schools are far too complex, the aspects of their provision far too various, to be judged by a single grade' (p.1). Under the Labour government, inspections will be performed by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who are comprised of experienced, experts professionals who will replace Ofsted because of their poor inspection decisions (*Ibid*). According to Labour's proposals, whole school inspections will only be carried out when there is a pressing need, instead of a set timetable and these will not be across a whole school (*Ibid*). The other proposal by the Labour party is that they want to use qualified HMI subject specialists who know what they are doing, instead of sending non-subject specialist to inspect schools, like what Ofsted is doing (Bousted, 2019).

Just as the Labour party proposed changes to Ofsted inspections, Ofsted (2019) introduced a new inspection framework which suggests the following as the case for change:

> Accountability is important, but the system as currently constructed can divert schools from the real substance of education. An industry has arisen around data. What young people learn is too often coming second to delivering performance table data. This data focus also leads to unnecessary workload for teachers, diverting them from the reason they chose to enter the profession. Teaching to the test and narrowing have had the greatest negative effect on those we care about the most: the most disadvantaged and the least able children. It is therefore time for Ofsted to stop making separate judgements about pupil outcomes. Any conversation about pupil outcomes should be part of a larger conversation about the quality of education they receive (Ofsted, 2019: slide 15).

The new Ofsted (2019) inspection framework focuses on quality of education instead of the data that they were focusing on before. Thus, refocusing more on how schools are achieving results and less pressure to produce assessment information. In this new framework, they aim to reduce the workload for teachers and leaders.

2.11 Key conclusions from the literature reviewed.

The process of change from CTCs to CAs was by layering and policy revision, with a new educational policy being added alongside the original policy (West and Bailey, 2013). This was portrayed in the sponsored academies which brought the CTCs and the specialist programmes together. There was a continuity of goals across all the programmes. The CTCs' goals included: giving schools freedom to operate outside LAs; schools to include technology as one of the most important subjects; to improve the attainment levels; to give parents the freedom to choose their own schools, and to promote school diversity, particularly in big cities. As for sponsored academies, their main goal was to improve schools deemed to be failing, whilst the main goal for converted academies was to increase school autonomy in order to improve educational attainment (West and Bailey, 2013). Therefore, continuity was seen in all educational policies with the main aim of increasing freedom and improving the achievement outcomes in schools. Also, all parties focused on the reduction of the LAs' role in providing education and empowered central government with per capita funding, which gave contracts to private companies and employers who were actively involved.

Nonetheless, there were some differences in the functions of the programmes. CTCs were introduced in main cities in order to bring a variety in education, so that everyone would benefit from the education which was available (DES, 1986), which was a vocational rather than academic curriculum. Sponsored academies were established to improve schools which were deemed to be failing. In contrast, the CA programme could be viewed as effecting system-wide change by empowering academy trusts to run school-based education (West and Bailey, 2013). In addition to that, 'a publicly-funded, mainly publicly-delivered school system is now

shifting towards one that is increasingly privately provided and delivered' (West and Bailey, 2013: online). By January 2018, 72% of secondary schools had converted into academies and free schools and only 27% of converted primary schools. Nevertheless, questions still remain as to whether the leadership in the CAs will achieve the desired goals as prescribed in the 2010 Academies Act of raising the standards and narrowing the attainment gap.

There are different forms of school leadership that have been explored which include transformational, transactional, authoritarian/autocratic, democratic, micromanagement, new managerialism and distributed leadership (DL). Despite the criticisms of DL, it was explored in my thesis because it was a guiding philosophy in school leadership during the New Labour government, therefore, this study wanted to explore whether DL was still employed in the subsequent Coalition government and the Conservative government. In 2000 Wright recommended strategies that would help school leaders to avoid micromanaging staff which are still relevant today which include: flexibility through employing different strategies for different staff; setting realistic and measurable objectives for staff at the right time; give staff freedom to direct and plan their work as long as they bring out the intended outcomes; and staff development courses should be put in place (Wright, 2000). Staff should also be given room for making mistakes and promote innovation (White, 2010). Furthermore, staff should be given clear guidelines of their job, reduce hierarchical leadership, and school leaders should be encouraged to delegate power to other members of staff (White, 2010). Wright (2000) and White' s (2010) notions are reflected in DL practice.

DL was also chosen for this study because of its inclusiveness of informal leaders and expansion of leadership duties to everyone who has got the expertise to lead different initiatives across the school. DL is the leadership practice that encompasses substantial collaborations with three key elements which include headteachers, school staff, and their situations. There are a lot of evidence-based research studies that show that it is the most popular and recent leadership model for schools, although my research findings seem to contradict these findings (see chapter 8). Due to the demand of distribution of power across

the school organisation, schools had to reorganise their leadership teams instead of the headteacher or senior leadership team only and build new leadership roles in order to address this. Also, a lot of research studies have demonstrated a considerably positive connection between DL practice and organisational developments.

However, opponents of DL have criticised it because of its lack of addressing gender, disability, age and race issues in distributing leadership. Although empirical evidence has shown that a shared leadership style cultivates large profit for the school, headteachers hold on to power because they have the authority to make final decisions at crucial times. These critics argue that the whole discussion around distributed leadership is part of English government rhetoric to claim that power and autonomy are being shared with schools, whereas the reality points to centralisation and many different forms of managerialism. This means that although the government is talking about DL, autocratic methods are still being implemented in schools; so, if school leaders are accountable to external agents for externally mandated targets like Ofsted targets and league tables, these opponents argue that DL may have distinct application limits in the school organisation, regardless of its rhetorically being part and parcel of practice. Thus, DL is viewed as problematic in schools meeting those targets (My findings in chapter 7 support this claim).

Precariousness and Ofsted are relevant to this study because they are some of the themes that emerged from this study's findings. The role of Ofsted and the precariousness of the two headteachers, shaped the way leadership was implemented in these two academies by the HTs (see findings chapters).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology of the study in different sections. Methodology is sometimes confused with methods. According to Guba and Lincoln (1998) methods are the tools and skills that are used to carry out a task, whilst methodology refers to the overall guiding principles that shape the design and inform the choice of methods. They express that methodology is a distinct way of approaching educational research with an understanding of the purpose, focus, data, analysis, and the relationship between data and what they make reference to. The methodological question is 'how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?' (Guba and Lincoln, 1998:108). The study has taken the interpretivist, phenomenographic, qualitative approach using interviews as the preferred approach. This approach is evidenced in the following main research questions:

- Who has the responsibility for leadership at the CAs under study?
- How do the headteachers of these CAs understand their role and what has contributed to their understanding?
- What leadership strategies do the HTs use to deal with the demands of their schools, and their roles? Has this changed because of a transition to academies status?
- What role do ideas of DL play in leadership strategies at these CAs, and can they be reconciled with the business model in academies?

The chapter will clarify the following terms: epistemology and ontology. The role of the insider researcher will be explored. The chapter will also discuss interpretivism as the chosen paradigm. Phenomenography, its aims and the methods used will be discussed. The role of the researcher and ethical framework will be explained as well as qualitative methodology. The study will explain methods of data collection in phenomenography and case studies will be visited. Ethical considerations, sampling and data collection will also be explained.

3.1 Ontology and epistemology

This section will explain the terms ontology and epistemology in order to lay out the foundation of this study. In research, it is essential to have a reliable philosophical and methodological approach underlying the choice and research design (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The philosophical consideration in this study was driven by the need to understand the nature and structure of the world (ontology) as well as the origins and construction of knowledge (epistemology).

3.1.1 Ontology

An ontological perspective is widely regarded as a clear formal specification of how the world is represented, and what is perceived to exist through concepts, objects and other characteristics that are believed to exist in specific research areas of interest (Wand and Weber 1993, Miles and Huberman 1994, Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Crotty (1998:10) describes ontology as 'the study of being. It is concerned with 'what is' with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such'. He further explains that ontology sits together with epistemology informing the theoretical perspective. Furthermore, ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to be combined. According to Craig (2000), different ontological positions show different prescriptions of what can be real and what cannot. Thus, there are some people who take a materialist ontological position who only believe that all that is real is the physical and material world (Craig, 2000). Craig further describes another position as idealism, which suggests that reality is mental and spiritual rather than material.

The other ontological position is metaphysical subjectivism which proposes that our perceptions create reality, and there is no other reality than that one in our minds (Craig, 2000). These different ontological positions show how researchers choose different positions in various issues. The ontological question that is asked is 'What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:108). Willis *et al* (2007) explains relativism as another ontological position which states that the perceived

reality is always conditioned by our experiences and our culture, and there are multiple realities because of multiple interpretations. My research is informed by the relativist standpoint which is under the interpretivist paradigm (to be discussed in detail later) because I wanted to hear the experiences of the staff at these academies. I wanted to produce individual subjective instead of objective accounts of these teachers who participated in my interviews. This resonates with Crotty (1998) who argues that different people may construct different meanings regarding the same phenomenon.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Crotty (1998:3) describes epistemology as 'the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology. It is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know'. Crotty explained that there are several epistemologies which include objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism just to mention a few. Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) pose an epistemological question as follows: 'What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?' In other words, epistemological position describes the way researchers view the world and how they think knowledge is generated and shared. My study adopted an interpretivist epistemological stance because my belief is that meaning was constructed and interpreted by the staff as they experienced the leadership of their academies. This is supported by Collins (2017) who argues that knowledge is constructed through the interaction of social actors (the teachers) and their environment (the academies and their leadership).

Since interpretivism is more likely to align with qualitative research methods according to Bryman (2012), I adopted a qualitative phenomenographical approach which allowed me to carry out semi-structured interviews with the participants (discussed in detail later). My study was neither looking for similar answers nor attempting to determine the 'essence' of leadership or DL, but I was mindful of the fact that interpretations of teachers were divergent, and consequently creating different truths. Easterby-Smith *et al* (2002) further explain that having

an epistemological perspective is important for clarifying issues of research design, which means the overarching structure of the research, which includes the type of data that is being gathered, the source and interpretation of data. They explain that knowledge of research philosophy will help the researcher to decide the design that works for a given set of objectives. The next section will discuss my position as an insider researcher.

3.2 Positionality of the researcher

My active role is noted throughout the process of my research study and therefore, it was important to discuss my connection to the topic and my positionality to try and bracket my previous assumptions before undertaking the research. I am a Black African woman who taught in Zimbabwe secondary schools for 11 years (1990-2001) before coming to England in 2001, where I have been teaching in a middle school for almost 20 years. During my time in Zimbabwe, I was part of the management team as a head of department for 10 years. When I came to England, I held a middle school leadership role for four years. The leadership challenges I had experienced in England because of my gender, ethnicity and being among a majority of white teachers in school, influenced my desire to carry out this research. At one school I had suffered a lot of discrimination at the hands of one of the former headteachers and his deputy who were both White.

Nevertheless, owing to my Black African background, I was conscious that I was likely to face some barriers during the process of conducting my interviews with teachers as I had lost my leadership role in one of the case study schools in this thesis. Furthermore, I was the only Black teacher in a White affluent community, and I was supposed to interview White headteachers, deputy heads and middle leaders in the two academies. As discussed before in the study rationale section in chapter one, I had struggled to become a head of a department because of discrimination and being told that I was incompetent. I noted that my experience was supported by Showunmi's (2020) findings which revealed that Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) women experience 'more challenges and difficulties in their role as leaders, and that they saw their ethnicity as having a clear bearing on their identities, their perception of

leadership, and their experience as leaders' (Showunmi, 2020:1). When I finally became a head of department, I only led this department for two years because our school was converted into an academy and the leadership positions were streamlined.

Again, being a Black woman made it worse because all the middle leaders were told to compete for the few leadership positions and as result, I failed to get the job. I was disappointed and discouraged to note that only White teachers were selected. In this view, I realised that the progression of BME teachers is still marginalised, as they are far more likely to occupy the novice roles in schools because of their ethnic/racial profiles (Earley *et al*, 2012; Bhopal and Jackson, 2013; Equality Challenge Unit, 2014; Miller, 2016). Later, there was another leadership position that was advertised, and two leaders were required to compliment and support each other, and I was one of three women who applied for this job. Regardless of the thorough leadership coaching and preparation for this interview, I was not successful. However, my two colleagues who were White were offered the positions. I was not only fighting for promotion and progression, but also for reciprocal appreciation as an individual and for equality. My sentiments are shared by Miller (2016) who explains that:

> The continuing struggle for mutual recognition and equality in terms of promotion and progression among BME teachers and academics has led them to question the usefulness of the national and institutional apparatuses in place that are believed to be genuinely advancing equality and diversity, when, in fact, evidence continues to confirm that whereas White teachers and academics continue to progress in their careers, the promotion and progression of BME teachers and academics has more or less flatlined (Miller, 2016:206).

Nevertheless, I was aware of the impact of my own experience on the collection and analysis of data because of my professional, ethnicity and discrimination experiences. In order to minimise my own bias on the data, I shared the data that I collected with the participants in order for them to make some amendments on their scripts wherever possible, for transparency

and accuracy (to be discussed in the insider section). I also encouraged myself as one of the UK researchers, to put aside the colour of my skin and the discrimination experiences I endured, as discussed in the insider section.

3.3 Insider researcher

In a research, one may take the position of being an insider or outsider. I chose to carry out my research at a school where I taught (second academy). As a result of this I considered my position to be that of an insider researcher. According to Breen (2007) an insider-researcher is one who chooses to study a group to which he/she belongs. This resonates with Buckle and Dwyer's (2009) sentiments who state that a researcher's position may enable them to adopt an insider or outsider perspective. Meanwhile, an outsider-researcher does not belong to or have intimate knowledge of the group under study (Breen, 2007). I have been teaching at this school since 2002 and this was an added advantage, as I approached this research as both a former HOD and an experienced teacher. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) state that an insider-researcher generally knows the politics of the institution, its formal hierarchy and also, how it works. They further explain that an insider researcher knows how to best approach people. I should acknowledge that I did not struggle to carry out the research at my school as I was part of the teaching staff. It was an added advantage to me because all the staff that I approached, agreed to participate in the interviews. I had to seek permission from the headteacher to interview the staff as an ethical procedure.

Some of the advantages of being an insider researcher according to Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) include: having a wider understanding of the culture being studied; not changing the flow of social interaction; and having an established relationship which encourages both the telling and the judging of truth. Furthermore, Smyth and Holian (2008) echo the same sentiments by expressing that generally, an insider researcher has a wealth of knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire. Due to this wealth of knowledge as an insider researcher, I was aware of the culture and politics of the school since 2002, and the changes

that were made from the time the school was converted into an academy in 2011. However, I was not involved in the 'inner circle's' SLT where crucial issues were discussed, and important decisions were made. Nonetheless, I knew the teachers who were affected by the conversion and the former middle leaders who lost their leadership positions, as I was part of them, because of the amalgamation of subject departments.

Being a teacher and a former HOD made it easier for me to acquire information from respondents, although I was able to step back and ask questions with a degree of objectivity and distance. The respondents did not hesitate to discuss and freely divulge sensitive information because of their trust and knowledge of who I was. I had also experienced some of those things and I had assured them of the confidentiality of their data. For example, during the interviews, some of the teachers talked about their personal experiences which they encountered with the HT, and this information could have not been obtained by an outsider-researcher. However, new information emerged from their narratives which I did not experience, and this created opportunities for me to probe further in order to have clarity. There were instances where these teachers wanted to involve me when they were narrating their stories by using phrases such as, 'as you know' or 'you know it', after they had explained their experiences. Instead of answering to the above quotations, I asked the respondents to explain what they meant by their comments, in order to minimise bias and getting them to set aside their assumptions of what was shared and common knowledge, and encouraged them to articulate their ideas in more detail.

Having this wealth of knowledge could have led me to choose only the participants who identified with my situation because they lost their leadership roles due to conversion. This was one of my reasons for carrying out this study, because I was disappointed at losing a HOD position after struggling to get into this leadership status. In the beginning stages of my research, I only wanted to interview the former HODs and the HT because I thought the former HODs had the relevant answers since they were affected by the conversion. I should

acknowledge that this was my bias, as stated by Pannucci and Wilkins (2011) who elucidate that bias is fluid and it can happen at any stage of research. However, being an insider-researcher, I was conscious that my personal experiences and emotions had a big influence on the way I was going to carry out my study. This included the disappointment that I experienced when I lost my HOD position and had my pay reduced, despite getting an outstanding report about my department. In order to ensure reduction of bias, I had to maintain a balance between my personal biases and my role as a researcher, by constantly revisiting reflexivity throughout the course of my study. As an insider researcher I employed reflexivity because it played a role in ensuring the quality of my research, since I was aware of the factors that were at work in my interpretations and analysis, which included my disappointments.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2017) describe reflexivity as a continuous way of viewing and understanding what happens in a research process, from the planning stage and continue throughout the research. I employed reflexivity through the use of a diary which helped in examining my feelings and thoughts, so that I would bring these to my conscious awareness and consequently considered the effect on the research. I also used my diary when I interviewed the deputy who was leaving her post on that day (Appendix 6). She told me everything and she did not care because she was leaving. When I reflected upon it through my diary, I thought she was happy that she was leaving and that is why she told me everything. However, I needed to treat that with caution because her emotions were different from what she used to be; she was so relaxed and not cautious with information like what she used to be. I also discarded both my position and experience as a teacher, and the researcher role took precedence. I tried to avoid the teacher role during my interaction with teachers who participated in the research because whenever I was slipping back into a teacher role, I would always remind myself of my position in the study.

This helped me to choose a representative sample of all the leadership team at the second academy that was comprised of the HT, deputy head, deputy chair of governors, all the new and old HODs, all year group leaders and a teacher who did not hold any position of leadership.

I did this in order to get rich and unbiased data. My interview questions were informed by the main research questions as I realised that it was crucial for me to set aside my emotions of losing my leadership position, as supported by Denscombe (2014) who suggests that qualitative researchers should remove their pre-existing ideas. I revised and changed my interview questions several times with my supervisor in order to minimise bias. This also helped to increase the credibility of my research and to ensure that my questions were relevant to my research aims. However, when I read the participants' experiences, at times it reignited my emotions, but I used my diary to write down my emotions and constantly reminded myself of my position as a researcher.

Before I started my interviews, I was faced with the challenge of combining the roles of a teacher and a researcher. I was aware of DeLyser's (2001) sentiments where she stated that insider-researchers may struggle to balance their insider role (teacher) and the researcher role. I overcame this by explaining the importance of my research and my position as a researcher to all the teachers who agreed to take part in my interviews. The participants understood this when they read and signed the consent forms. Although the staff knew that I was a member of staff at the second academy, I approached my interview sessions as an outsider-researcher by clearly introducing myself and the university where I was studying, followed by specifying my research aims. I tried to remain focused and just followed the research process without preconceived ideas. Smyth and Holian (2008) recommend that the more a researcher overcomes his/her bias as an insider, the more he/she is able to come up with rich themes.

During the interviews, I took the phenomenographical stance of allowing the participants to tell their stories without interrupting them. I should acknowledge that there were times that I found myself almost offering cues that were leading and controlled participants' responses, especially when the answers were off topic. For example, I asked one of the HODs the reasons for converting into an academy and he started to tell me about his negative experience with

the HT, which had nothing to do with the conversion. In order to refocus the respondent, I restructured my question and asked him if high funding in academies was their reason for converting. I should acknowledge that this was a leading question. After that suggestion, he explained different reasons for the academy conversion.

My insider perspective allowed me to stay true to the participants responses and gave priority to the way they interpreted their experiences. I made sure that I analysed perspectives which echoed their experiences rather than mine. I avoided altering these testimonies, but I took them as they were narrated. I was aware of the possible effects of perceived ideas on data collection and analysis (Smyth and Holian, 2008) which included my own knowledge of the school and its politics. I tried to avoid it by acknowledging that I had a perspective that was affected by it. Further, I collected the research data without any prejudice. This created a good opportunity to study the experiences of the participants at this academy. The next section will discuss the chosen paradigm for this study.

3.4 Interpretivism

This section will discuss interpretivism as the chosen paradigm for this study. Interpretivism is a paradigm or an epistemological position that recognises how important it is to understand the differences between people in their role as actors (Bryman, 2004). This approach is the opposite of positivism, as suggested by Bryman (2012). The interpretive paradigm has several philosophical traditions or branches such as phenomenology, phenomenography, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. Interpretivists want to understand and describe the participants' perceptions and understandings of a particular situation or event (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). They seek to understand the meanings behind these actions, and they believe that there is no singular objective reality that exists outside the actor's explanations, just different versions of events. 'Interpretive researchers do not seek the answers for their studies in rigid ways. Instead, they approach the reality from subjects, typically from people who own their experiences and are of a particular group or culture' (Thanh

and Thanh, 2015:25). Thanh and Thanh also explained how interpretivism is different from positivism in the sense that interpretivism support different interpretations of views from different people because of its inclusiveness, whilst positivism focuses on one correct answer only. 'Different people and different groups have different perceptions of the world' (Willis *et al,* 2007:94). This is the reason why I used interviews in this study, as explained in the epistemology section.

However, interpretivists believe that the way people understand their reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and situational factors and as such is subjected to the positions, identities and perspectives of the individual (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). They explain that for the interpretivists, the social world is comprised of, and is constructed through meanings that come from the people. Furthermore, Schwandt (2000) suggests that in order for the researcher to interpret the action, he/she must understand the meaning behind the actions. Interpretivism supports the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and objects and the requirement to understand the meaning of social action (Bryman, 2004). However, the inquirer wants to comprehend the meanings that are created as a result of interactive social behaviour, in order to understand the social world, and human action is understood by interpretive frameworks (Cohen *et al*, 2007). Although interpretivism has different branches, this study has chosen phenomenography as a suitable approach. The next section will discuss phenomenography as the chosen paradigm of this study.

3.5 The chosen paradigm for the study: Phenomenography

Morrison (2007:26) argues that 'all educational research needs to be grounded in people's experience' and interpretivists 'explore the meanings of events and phenomena from the subjects'. Therefore, this research fitted into the phenomenography interpretive philosophy which is trying to understand and gain knowledge about how the staff perceived and experienced the leadership at the academies under study. According to Marton (1981) this

research approach, which was developed within educational research in the 1970s, explores some qualitative ways in which people make sense of the world around them. Marton (2000:105) argues that 'there is only one world, a really existing world, which is experienced and understood in different ways by human beings. It is simultaneously objective and subjective'.

However, Marton (1994) defines phenomenography as the empirical study of the different qualitative ways in which a variety of phenomena and aspects of the world around us are experienced, conceptualised, understood, perceived and apprehended. This definition implies that phenomenography is focused on people's experiences and their perceptions of the world. Although phenomenography is not a research method according to Sjostrom and Dahlgren (2002), it is a set of assumptions about humans, science and how researchers can gain knowledge about other people's ways of experiencing the world. They view phenomenography as a research approach. Also, Pherali (2011) describes phenomenography as a research strategy which is mostly applied in studying qualitative various ways of conceptualising learning.

This paradigm wanted to bring out different content-related categories which were trying to reveal the differences in the staffs' ways of experiencing and viewing the way these academies were led, as supported by Sjostrom and Dahlgren (2002). This technique provided insight that could not otherwise be derived. According to Marton (1981) we cannot derive an understanding of what people think from what we know or what we can observe. 'The emphasis is on how things appear to people in their world and the way in which people explain to themselves and others what goes on around them and how these explanations change' (Barnard *et al*,1999:214).

According to Harris (2008) phenomenography differs from many qualitative approaches because it focuses on the collective meanings of groups and does not make claims about the positions held by individual participants. It does not attempt to proclaim that participants 'hold'

specific conceptions, but instead collects evidence to demonstrate the range of conceptions present within the population under study (Harris, 2008). Participants may describe more than one conception, as their ways of thinking about a concept frequently change as they discuss it within a range of contexts (Marton and Pong, 2005). The next section will discuss the aims of phenomenography.

3.5.1 The aims of phenomenography

According to Sjostrom and Dahlgren (2002) phenomenography aims to distinguish and outline different ways of experiencing phenomena in the surrounding world. In phenomenography, Johansson *et al* (1985) describe conception as a way of perceiving or understanding something, or what something means to a person. They further explained that it is assumed that a person's conception of something is relational, as it is internally constituted between the person and the world. For that reason, conceptions are likely to be different.

Nonetheless, phenomenographers study participants' experiences and look for their conceptual meanings of the phenomenon of interest (Sjostrom and Dahlgren 2002). These are grouped into categories according to their similarities and differences. Then the outcomes of phenomenographic research describe the different categories of conceptions of the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoint (Marton and Pong, 2005). In other words, it is not about the conceptions of individual participants that are reported, but it is about the collective variations of conception of the phenomenon (Marton, 1994). Furthermore, Marton (1988b:147) reiterates that: 'It is a goal of phenomenography to discover the structural framework within which various categories of understanding exist. Such structures (a complex of categories of description) should prove useful in understanding other people's understanding'. Also, Marton and Booth (1997) echo the same sentiments about the main goal of phenomenography as to characterise variations in people's experiences.

3.5.2 Assumptions of phenomenography

According to (Svensson, 1997) the phenomenographic approach was introduced as an alternative to positivistic, behaviouristic and quantitative research. Svensson explains that phenomenography developed its own set of epistemological and ontological assumptions. The epistemological standpoint of phenomenography according to Marton and Pang (2008) is centred on the principle of intentionality (the subject-world relation). I support their notion that knowledge, according to phenomenography, is formed through internal relations between people and their world; it is viewed as a human-world relationship. Furthermore, as explained by Svensson (1997), I believe that in phenomenography, knowledge is understood in terms of the different meanings that are related with the phenomena of interest, and the similarities and differences in those meanings. According to Marton, positivists differ from phenomenography which has a non-dualist ontology, whereby the person and the world are regarded and studied in relation to each other. Thereby, this study supports the non-dualistic standpoint which believes that there is no separate relationship between people and their world; hence, the exploration of this relationship as a point of focus by phenomenographers. The next section describes the different contexts of phenomenography.

3.5.3 Different contexts of phenomenography

According to Marton (1981), there are three different lines of phenomenographic research. The first line looks at the qualitatively different ways of experiencing or comprehending learning and how they relate with various approaches taken on by the learners and their outcomes, which Marton describes as general aspects of learning. The second line deals with associating phenomenographic research with a specific content domain like physics, science, engineering, medical science and others. Marton describes the third line of research as ‘pure’ phenomenographic research that focuses on people experiencing or understanding different features of their reality, not in subjects studied in education, but in their daily lives. He further explains that this can be studying people’s conceptions about political scenarios, market prices and taxation. Although this study is in the field of education, it does not focus its attention on learning or specific content domain as described in lines one and two, instead it explores the

experiences of staff at two academy schools in terms of leadership and how the academies are run, which relates to line three of Marton's different contexts of phenomenography. The next section looks at phenomenography methodology.

3.5.4 Qualitative research and phenomenography

This section discusses the qualitative research and phenomenography approach as part of the qualitative. Francis (1996) stresses that it is now common in educational research to use qualitative data to generate local descriptions from conversationally constructed narratives. According to Becker *et al* (2012) there has been a major debate and discussion about quantitative and qualitative research which started as far back as the late 1960s, and before then, qualitative research was seen as insignificant as compared to quantitative research. Becker *et al* further expressed that the factor that drew qualitative research into more significant discussions and recognition was that it was seen as an alternative to quantitative research. Quantitative research is associated with measurement (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2000) and some of its methods of collecting data are experiments, questionnaires and surveys.

The qualitative research perspective has gained unprecedented popularity and has secured a berth in mainstream methodology and has become a significant element of the methodological repertoire of social research (Barbour 2001, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, and Guba and Lincoln 1994). It is broad and multiple in its focus, which involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This means that qualitative researchers generally study things in their natural settings, trying to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Hallberg, 2006; Denscombe, 2003; Pope and Mays 1995). Also, Bryman (2004) explains that qualitative research aims to explain and examine the culture and behaviour of people and their social groups from their point of view. Thus, the researchers want to understand what is being done or said by human beings (Schwandt, 2000). Generally, qualitative research is viewed as 'the world of individuals' experiences and their socially constructed realities' (Hallberg 2006:141). As an interpretive

practice, qualitative research does not consider any methodology or method above others (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Phenomenography is one of the rigorous forms of qualitative research and it prioritises the actor's perspective and recognises that people are 'capable of thought, self-reflection and language' (Becker *et al*, 2012:126). Morgan and Smircich (1980:491) suggest that 'the choice and adequacy of a method embodies a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be obtained, as well as a root set of assumptions about the nature of the phenomena to be investigated'. According to Mantzoukas (2004), whatever or whoever is represented in a qualitative enquiry, has a direct correlation with ontological and epistemological assumptions of that researcher.

As highlighted before, I was an insider-researcher who was seeking various interpretations of experiences from the participants, which were not going to be generalised. This descriptive inquiry could only be achieved through qualitative methods as opposed to quantitative methods, which include surveys and statistically based questionnaires whose information is numerical rather than conversational (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2000). In this study, I carried out face to face semi- structured interviews with teachers (see chapter 4) in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their experience of leadership at two converted academies, as they narrated their stories. This qualitative approach gave me an opportunity to explore questions of my study in detail because of its flexibility. I was not testing any ideas like quantitative approaches, but these ideas were being discovered, as described by Nurmi (2014). Creswell (2003) argues that qualitative methods are most suitable for the study of meaning and purpose of human action, because knowledge claims are derived from the different constructed and interpreted perspectives of the research participants. Nonetheless, Boulton and Hammersley (1996) stress that qualitative methods provide easier collection of views from different people. According to Miles and Huberman (1994):

> Good qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous [unexpected] findings and to new integrations; they help researchers get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks. The findings from qualitative studies have a quality of undeniability. Words, especially organised into incidents or stories, have a concrete vivid, meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing to a reader – another researcher, a policy maker, a practitioner – than pages of summarised numbers (Miles and Huberman, 1994:1).

The motivation to use qualitative over quantitative methodology stems out from the observation that one thing that distinguishes humans from the natural world is their ability to talk (Moores, 1993). Hence, researchers are inspired to use qualitative research according to Moores, because they want to understand people, the cultural and social context within which they live. Priest (1996) explains that qualitative research methodology is an inductive and holitsic approach which provides the opportunity to develop a rich understanding, descriptive and perception into individuals' lifestyles, beliefs, concerns, aspirations, and culture. This study preferred to employ qualitative research methodology rather than the quantitative approach for the reason that quantitative research tends to view events from the outside and to impose empirical concerns upon social reality. Since this is a study of people and their school environment, qualitative research becomes more appropriate than quantitative research. However, in qualitative research, actual talk, gesture and other social actions are the raw materials of analysis, which provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Lindloff 1995). These are the reasons why I chose qualitative over quantitative methods. The next section will discuss case study and phenomenography.

3.5.5 Case study and phenomenography

The use of case studies has become very common in social research (Denscombe, 2014). According to Creswell (2009:13) 'case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which a researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals'. It is an in-depth study of just one person, group or event (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). A case study is an approach that allows the researcher to examine data carefully within a specific context (Burgess *et al*, 2007; Zainal 2007). Yin (2013) maintains that a case study is an empirical enquiry that examines a current phenomenon within its real-life setting. More so, according to Yin, it is a strategy used to narrow down a very wide area of enquiry into one easily researchable topic. It aligns with the interpretive paradigm in that the researcher observes participants within their environment (Sarantakos, 2013). It is suggested that the first step in a case study enquiry should have a strong research focus to which the researcher can refer to during the research of a complicated phenomenon (Robson, 2002). The focus of my case study was on how leadership was employed at these CAs.

Cases are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect rich data using different data collection methods over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995). The data collecting tools that are used in case studies are; interviews, documents analysis, observations, and collection of artefacts (Robson, 2002). As mentioned before, the tool that I used for collecting data was the semi-structured interviews. Unlike surveys, case studies according to Robson, give the researchers the opportunity to unpick the complexities of a particular situation. This study sought to understand whether CAs business model would be reconciled with DL which was the guiding philosophy in school leadership during the New Labour government. Case studies have been widely used by social researchers as a qualitative research method to explore contemporary real-life situations and offer the foundation for the application of ideas and extension of methods (Burgess *et al*, 2007). A case study offers a better understanding into the detailed activities of the topics of interest (Robson, 2002).

Burgess *et al* (2007) explain that when the researcher tells others about their findings, case studies bring quite popular and exciting issues than just numerical surveys: this has been

brought forward by teachers long ago. The general assumption is that readers prefer to read things that are explained and described in situations that they can identify with (Travers, 2001). Many of the underpinning assumptions and intentions of case study researchers parallel those of phenomenography (real life settings, understanding complexity, multiple meanings, mixed methods and others). The case is the school as it converted, and the rationale for phenomenographic approach is that it provides a way of exploring the multiple interpretations of the people 'inhabiting' the case, rather than the researcher trying to establish a single narrative of what happened. The next section describes methods of data collection in phenomenography.

3.5.6 Methods of data collection in phenomenography

Interviews are one of the most common methods of collecting data in phenomenographic research (Åkerlind *et al*, 2005b). Phenomenographic researchers may also use other data collection methods like interpreting people's conceptions by observing their behaviour under certain controlled situations (Marton, 1986) or researchers can use open-ended interview questions (Bliuc *et a.*, 2012). Also, focus groups, written surveys and drawings can also be used to collect data (Edwards, 2007). Nonetheless, this study used the face-to-face semi-structured interviews which resonates with Åkerlind (2005a), Ashworth and Lucas (2000) and Limberg (2000) who stated that most phenomenographic researchers use face-to-face interviews as the primary method of data collection.

Bruce (1994:49) describes the phenomenographic interview as a 'specialised form of the qualitative research interview'. He identifies some qualities that are seen in both phenomenographic and qualitative research interviews. The qualities are as follows:

- they are centred on the interviewee's lifeworld;
- they seek to understand the meaning of phenomenon in the interviewee's lifeworld;
- they are qualitative, descriptive, specific and presuppositionless;

- they are focused on certain themes;
- they are open to ambiguities and change;
- they take place in an interpersonal interaction;
- they may be a positive experience (Bruce,1994:49).

Nonetheless, the point of departure with the phenomenographic interview is that its purpose is to study variation in how the participant experiences or understands the phenomenon of interest. Hence, the focus of the interview is on the relation between the participant and the object being studied, rather than the participant or the research object itself (Bruce, 1997). Although data may be collected at an individual level, phenomenography focuses on collective awareness and difference in how a phenomenon is experienced. This means that, data collection from individuals is the starting point for building a picture of collective awareness concerning how particular phenomena may be experienced. Some of the phenomenographic interviews are semi-structured in nature, and they are described by Trigwell (2000:68) as 'exploring at greater and greater depths of thinking without leading'.

Furthermore, interview questions are distinctively open-ended in nature and are intended to direct the participant towards the phenomenon of interest. They also allow the participant to choose the dimensions of the question they wish to answer (Marton, 1994) and to remain honest to the participant's thought processes (Marton and Booth, 1997). Regardless of the use of set questions, Marton (1986) warns that different interviews may take different routes. That is why there is this open structure of questions which allows the interviewer to pursue unexpected lines of reasoning that may lead to new reflections (Booth, 1997). A phenomenographic interview uses a specific number of set questions and considerable use of unstructured probes to follow up or further investigate the interviewees' responses (Akerlind *et al*, 2005b). However, Bowden (2005) warns the interviewer to avoid making judgemental comments during the interview process, regardless of whether these are positive or negative in nature. Although I was an insider-researcher who knew the structure and the politics of the

second case study school, I allowed the participants to tell their stories, then probed further for clarity without leading, in order to minimise bias. Through this process I gathered as much rich data as possible.

In phenomenographic research, there are some conventions that are followed during the gathering of data. Akerlind *et al* (2005b) recommend that an interview should take place in a conducive environment where it is open and friendly, and the participants should be given enough time to describe their experiences. During the interview the researcher should probe further whenever the interviewee raises something interesting or if a response is not clear (Akerlind *et al*, 2005b). Still on follow up questions, researchers should be aware of 'bracketing', which is the researcher's own experience, own idea or perception (Akerlind *et al*, 2005b; Green, 2005; Prosser, 2000b); (section 3.6 discusses bracketing in more detail). Green (2005) advises that researchers should make sure that they get as much data as possible in that one-off interview from each participant, in order to avoid coming back to the interviewees for more interviews. The next section will discuss sampling.

3.6 Sampling

According to Cohen *et al* (2007:100) 'the quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted'. Cohen *et al* (2007) further explain that researchers should decide the sampling population early when they are still planning their piece of research. They explain the factors that need to be considered in sampling as: the size of the sample; representativeness and parameters of the sample; accessibility to sample; and the sampling strategy to be used. There are two main methods that are employed in sampling which are: probability (also known as a random sample) and non-probability (also known as a purposive sample) (Cohen *et al*, 2007). They further explain that the difference between these methods is that: with a probability sample, the chances of members of a wider population being chosen for the research are known, whereas the chances of members in a non-

probability sample of being selected are unknown. In addition, Cohen *et al (*2007) argue that probability gets its samples randomly from a wider population and this might be useful to a researcher who wants to generalise the findings since this method seeks representativeness of a wider population. Contrary, non-probability sample avoids representing the wider population according to Cohen, however, it seeks to represent only a particular group or a particular named section of a wider population which represents itself only (Cohen *et al*, 2007). This usually occurs in small scale research like one or two schools or a particular group of teachers (Cohen *et al*, 2007).

In this study, I employed the non-probability (purposive) sampling because as an insider researcher at the second case study, I knew the teachers whom I wanted to choose for my interview, and I did not want to generalise my findings (to be discussed in detail chapter 4). These small-scale researches according to Cohen *et al* (2007) are frequently found in ethnographic research, action research or case studies. They explained that:

> 'Small-scale research often uses non-probability samples because, despite the disadvantages that arise from their non-representativeness, they are far less complicated to set up, are considerably less expensive, and can prove perfectly adequate where researchers do not intend to generalise their findings beyond the sample in question, or where they are simply piloting a questionnaire as a prelude to the main study' (Cohen *et al*, 2007:113).

They further expressed that non-probability sampling also has different types of sampling such as: convenience sampling; quota sampling; dimensional sampling, purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Instead of representing the whole, undifferentiated population, each type of non-probability sampling mentioned above, according to Cohen *et al, 2007)* seeks to only represent itself in a similar population. In phenomenographic research, there is an argument

about the sample size or the number of participants that are needed during data collection. Trigwell (2000) suggests that this type of research can take a minimum of about ten to fifteen participants and a maximum of about twenty participants as a reasonable amount. As this methodology needs as much variation in experience as possible, this can be achieved by choosing participants from various disciplines, level of experiences, teaching position, age and gender (Akerlind, 2004). The next section discusses data analysis.

3.7 Data analysis

The most challenging and vital part of phenomenographic research is the analysis of the verbatim transcripts from the interviews (Akerlind, 2005a; Prosser, 2000a). Marton (1986) describes the phenomenographic data analysis process as follows: First, the researcher should bracket preconceived ideas. Bracketing in phenomenographic research was developed from Husserl's concept of the epoché in phenomenology (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000). It is the process where researchers put aside their preconceived ideas about the phenomenon before examining the data (Marton, 1994). As discussed before in the insider-researcher section, I put aside my preconceived ideas in order to minimise bias. Second, the researcher should record and interpret data from the participants' perspectives and the data should not be judged against the researcher's values or existing knowledge (Marton, 1986). Third, Marton expressed that codes should not be created before examining the data; they should be developed from the transcripts using participants' words. In this study, the themes emerged from the participants' data. After the bracketing process, the transcripts should be read several times and 'utterances found to be of interest for the question being investigated are selected and marked' (Marton, 1986:42). However, Sjostrom and Dahlgren (2002) recommend basing judgments on three indicators:

> Frequency - how often an idea is articulated.
> Position – where the statement is positioned; often the most significant elements are found in the introductory parts of an answer.

> Pregnancy – when participants explicitly emphasise that certain aspects are more important than others (Sjostrom and Dahlgren, 2002:341-342).

Irvine and Gaffikin (2006) recommend that before pulling data from their contexts to form a pool of meaning, or grouping of similar conceptions, two steps need to be followed which include: the analysis of data in its context so that the participant's meaning is correct and not misrepresented; data extracts should be viewed as representative of a bigger portion of data.

Once these two stages have been met, data should be removed from their context to form a pool of meaning (Marton, 1986). After the pools of meaning are compared and contrasted and criteria have been formed in association with each pool, the collective meaning of the pool is abstracted to form a category of description (Marton, 1986). Once after the establishment of the categories of description, they are hierarchically organised into the outcome space, the major setting for reporting phenomenographic results.

The outcome space is a 'space of variation' 'representing all possible ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question, at this particular point in time, for the population represented by the sample group' (Akerlind, 2002:2). These relationships are mostly defined by similarities and differences and can be ordered in relation to a given criterion or by complexity (Marton, 1994). According to Marton (2000) the outcome space is considered to be synonymous with the phenomenon as all of its potential meanings are represented. The development of the outcome space depends on a balance between allowing the structure to emerge from the data and relying on the professional judgments of the researcher (Walsh, 2000). In this stage there is no need for bracketing because of the outcome space which 'allows the phenomenographic researcher not only to list people's conceptions in the form of categories of description but also the researcher's interpretation of the relationship between them' (Yu, 2003:5). The researcher can compare the study's findings with other data to create a 'logical' model of how the categories are related (Marton, 1986). The next section discusses the role of the researcher.

3.8 Ethical role of the researcher

It is the responsibility of the researcher to observe the research ethics. Burton *et al* (2014) explain that teachers and researchers share a common responsibility of 'duty of care' in relation to all the research participants. A case study is well known for its sensitive data which might attract ethical issues (Cohen *et al*, 2011). This study observed the research ethics in order to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity. The study was guided by the British Educational Research Association's (BERA, 2018) ethical guidelines. It also complied with the then 1998 Data Protection Act which was updated in 2018 to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the University of Bedfordshire's Code of Ethics in order to ensure the safety and security of the participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institute for Research in Education (IRED).

The 2018 BERA guidelines specify that all those who are interested in research should carry out their studies in a way that will promote and encourage future enquiries to do other research instead of hindering them. The study's sites that I chose were future potential centres for research in education. If I did not abide by the ethical guidelines that were specified by the University of Bedfordshire, upcoming researchers might find it difficult to get access into the case study schools. Every research has different ethical requirements, and it can be difficult to carry out research in your workplace when it involves your work colleagues (Burgess *et al,* 2007). Our lenses as researchers are important as they are determined by our previous experiences and interests (Punch, 2009). Due to my position as a teacher; an insider and a researcher, I was aware of the ethical issues when I was carrying out my research, as suggested by Willis *et al* (2007).

3.9 Ethical considerations

This section will discuss the ethical considerations under different subheadings.

3.9.1 Informed consent:

In this study I sought permission to carry out my research from the headteachers who were gatekeepers (Appendix 2) and key participants in both academies. I was aware that my headteacher might refuse to give me permission to carry out research at her school (the second case study) because I was part of the school. Probably I would find out some sensitive information which the headteacher did not want to be exposed. In this case, I was prepared to choose an alternative school. However, it did not turn out that way; I was given permission by the headteacher to go ahead with my research at the second case study school.

I was aware of the complexity of ethical issues regarding the involvement of children in research. However, this research's participants were the heads of the case study schools, deputy heads, HODs, heads of year, a teacher and a governor. I ensured that respondents had freedom to participate in the study without pressurising them mentally or physically. I made sure that I explained the aim of my research clearly. Schwandt (2007) expresses that 'research subjects have the right to know they are being researched, the right to be fully informed about the nature and purpose of the research…and the right to withdraw at any time' (p.150). In this study, although one of the case studies involved researching on my work colleagues, they had a right to know and declined to participate. Participating in any research involves risk to the participants involved (Chadwick, 2001). However, at the initial stage of meeting with each participant, I gave a detailed verbal and written explanation (information sheet) to each participant clearly explaining the aims and objectives of the research. This included information about the importance of their participation and how their information would be used.

Furthermore, I informed the participants that interviews would be used for the purpose of the research. Robson (2002) believes in supplying the participants with all the required information for transparency, trustworthy and removing any form of doubt. Each participant was given a consent form and sufficient time was given to participants to read through the form before signing it, to show their approval. During this process, I was present in order to answer any

questions that might arise. I also explained to each participant their right to withdraw from the research at any time without any obligation or questions asked as advised by Burgess *et al* (2007). However, participants were made aware that withdrawal could only take place before their information had been included in the thesis and the write up had been completed. Each participant was requested to sign two copies of the consent form and one copy was retained by the participant (Appendix 3) I kept the consent forms separate from other collected data in order to maintain confidentiality.

3.9.2 Confidentiality and anonymity:

Confidentiality was maintained by applying pseudonyms and codes to individual participants. It was the prerogatives of participants to suggest the pseudonyms they wanted to use in the study. I ensured that information used, or data collected could not be traced back to participants. In the case where heads might want to know the responses of the teachers, middle and senior leaders, they were reminded of the need to maintain confidentiality. In order to protect the identity of the organisations, I avoided using names. I reassured all participants that no identifying information was going to be used in the thesis.

3.9.3 Information dissemination and communication with participants:

I outlined the information regarding the nature of the research in the research information sheet. I used simple, polite, none-persuasive and jargon free language (Appendix 1). I did this in order to make the participants feel that they were not pressurised into taking part in the research. Greig *et al* (2007) explain that researchers should make sure that all research information is simplified so that the participants will clearly understand everything. I used an inclusive on-going dissemination approach. This included informal discussions before and after the interview. I reassured the participants that their information was safe where they felt that their responses might be given to the school heads or names published in the thesis. It was my responsibility as the researcher to make sure that the interviews were confidential and to safeguard the dignity of the participants (Somekh, 2006).

However, I specified in the information sheet that the findings of the research whether favourable or unfavourable, were going to be published in the form of a thesis and could be obtained from the library at the University of Bedfordshire. Furthermore, I mentioned that the research work was going to be disseminated through published books, seminars, workshops, conferences, flyers, brochures, posters, magazines and letters of appreciation to participants. I explained to the participants that copies of the findings of the research were going to be sent to individual organisations upon request. Additionally, abstracts and findings of the work of the researcher were going to be available on the internet for individuals to access. In these cases, anonymity and confidentiality of individuals and organisations would be preserved.

3.9.4 Storage of research information

All hard copy information for this research was anonymised and stored in a locked steel cabinet in my house which I only accessed. Consent forms were kept separate from other collected data to maintain confidentiality. I kept confidential and sensitive data in encrypted folders on my laptop. I accessed my laptop through a password only known to me. There was no identifying information in the collected data, and I ensured that there was no personal data which was shared with third parties other than my supervisory team, and only after the data had been anonymised. I also ensured that all collected data would be destroyed after completion of thesis and paper documents would be shredded to maintain confidentiality.

3.9.5 If participants are being placed under any form of stress (physical or mental).

I explained to the participants that if they felt that they were emotionally or psychologically affected by issues arising from the interview, they were free to stop the interview. I suggested some potential support mechanisms for the participants like union support, discussion with school leadership team or seeking legal advice. Participants neither asked for their interview to be stopped nor sought additional support.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the philosophical position that I used in my study. It was very important to identify the research philosophy underpinning my research because it enabled me to clarify and specify the research methods and strategies that I would employ. The philosophical stance underpinning this study was interpretivism - phenomenographic case study, which guided me to select a qualitative methodology which was appropriate for my research. I employed this framework in the case study academies. The aims of phenomenography were explored, and ethical considerations were explained. The next chapter will discuss the study's research design which was used.

Chapter 4: The study's research design:

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the research design of this study. It will start by explaining the qualitative case study. The chapter will also discuss the research process of both case studies which include the setting, the history, the sample and the method of data collection. The analysis approach will be explained, and the chapter will be concluded by explaining how the next chapter will unfold.

4.2 Qualitative case study

I chose qualitative methodology because I was studying two cases; 'leadership in new CAs'. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004) argue that a qualitative approach is useful in carrying out an in-depth study of limited cases. I chose two academies because I wanted to study them in depth and closely examined data within a specific context. I also chose only two converted academies to study the leadership styles because of the uniqueness of academies, and I did not have enough time to study many academies in great depth. The qualitative approach was also chosen because it permitted me to use the data which I gathered to establish how participants interpreted their experiences. A case study enabled me to investigate each academy in its actual setting. I used this strategy to reduce a wide area of study (Bryman, 2012), newly CAs, into two manageable academies. A case study gave me the opportunity to record some gestures, (writing them down in a notebook during interviews), mannerisms, expressions and other things (transcribing every sound) that might be missed in larger scale data collection.

It is known that different leaders at each school have their own styles of leadership, but I wanted to understand how the HTs of these two academies led, through their own perceptions and other staffs' perceptions. I needed an in-depth study in order to understand the relationships between leaders and other staff, leadership styles and support for staff through a case study. A case study suitable for my study because 'it emphasised detailed contextual

analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships' (Bryman, 2004:21). I was able to choose only two schools and studied them because of a case study; I gathered data from the leadership team, governors and teachers, in real situations. I was able to gather sensitive data from the HT, SLT, HODs, heads of year and governors, which helped me to understand situations which were difficult to access.

The initial stage in a case study should consist of a solid study focus to which enables the researcher can continuously revisit throughout the study (Robson, 2002). My research was based on the leadership styles and their effectiveness at these academies. I kept all participants focused on how they were involved in leadership and supported by these leaders. I also focussed my participants on the reasons for converting into an academy and the major changes and their effects after the conversion. This focus kept us on track in order to understand the leadership styles which were experienced at these academies. I also preferred a case study because the findings were related to teaching and they identified with teachers who were experiencing the same things. The major aim of these case studies was to understand the different experiences of leadership at these academies from the staff, instead of generalising the findings like the positivists. This study served its purpose because of its phenomenographic approach; it described the leadership styles which were applied, the leadership structure and roles, the reasons for the conversion to an academy, the teacher support by leadership and the extent to which DL was implemented.

4.3 First case study: Academy one: Sample, location and interview

The first academy was primarily chosen as a pilot academy then it was developed into the first case study because of the rich in-depth data that it produced during the interviews. The use of pilot interviews can enable the development of appropriate open questions for an interview schedule (Smith *et al*, 2009; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). I piloted my questions in order to identify errors and to gain confidence in interviewing participants, as well as getting used to the questions. It provided me with an opportunity to practice interviewing and using the

interview guide. I also wanted to ensure that the respondents understood the questions. Furthermore, my intention was to check for irrelevant questions as well as the time taken by these interviews. Pilot interviews also enabled the development of possible probes and prompts that would be used to facilitate elaboration and clarification in the interview. The reason for choosing this first academy was its convenience and proximity as it was just opposite my school where I was teaching. This academy was converted in the same year as the second academy school. Before the conversion into an academy, this school was run by two deputy heads, since the headteacher had resigned. When the school recruited a new headteacher, he converted the school into an academy.

As a neighbouring school, I did not find it difficult to approach the headteacher to seek permission for the first academy. The headteacher acted as the gate keeper and gave me a list of the leadership team. I selected six participants from different levels of leadership which included the headteacher, the deputy head and four heads of departments in order to test my questions. I emailed all the leaders that I had selected and introduced myself. I also explained my research and politely asked them if they were willing to participate in my research. They all agreed, and I sent the information sheets and consent forms for them to fill in. As soon as I received all the paperwork back, I made appointments with them for the interviews.

However, I interviewed five leaders instead of six because one of the heads of departments fell ill and cancelled the appointment. From that illness, I learnt that I should have a wider sample of respondents in my study, in case, unforeseen things might happen. I was given an office to carry out all my interviews for the first academy school by the receptionist. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour. A paper copy of the interview questions was used during the interviews (Appendix 4), and I used an audio recorder to record all the interviews. I also transcribed them verbatim after each interview. Participants were given enough time to explain their accounts in detail and I sometimes probed further on some of the responses that were not clear. The next section will explain the outcomes of the first case study.

4.3.1 Outcomes of the first case study

This section will discuss the methodological development that the first case study which also acted as a pilot study informed, and the findings will be discussed in chapter 5. The first school interviews showed that the use of vague questions confused the interviewees and sometimes resulted in irrelevant responses. In order to maintain comfortable interaction and gather detailed data of participants' experiences, interview questions were revised for the second case study and clearly written. During this first case study I observed that some of the participants' answers overlapped with questions that I had structured to ask at a later stage. I realised that I should have marked all answered questions in order to avoid duplication. I also discovered that I asked more than one question per time before the participant responded and I ended up receiving part of the response and missed other parts. For example, I asked Pat (pseudonym) the following question: 'Were you consulted, were all the staff members consulted, did you know what was happening and did you understand? When I revised this question, I divided it into three parts and I asked one question per time, which resulted in getting the in-depth data that I was looking for.

The other issue that came to light was of not following up some of the vague responses. I found out that I missed some important data that was quite useful. There were also some instances where I was asking leading questions. For instance, when Pat explained the leadership styles of the headteacher, I asked her the following question: 'So, are you saying that he's democratic?' Pat answered as follows: 'Yeah democratic and very good inter-personal skills I think'. I felt that I should not have suggested the democratic leadership style but asked her to explain the leadership styles herself. Also, a pause would have been better to allow Pat more time to respond.

However, I gained experience from the first study interviews and I was able to rephrase vague questions and removed the irrelevant ones. Furthermore, this process helped me to rearrange my interview questions in a sequential order (Appendices 5 and 6). Having the view that

research interviews are pragmatic enterprises and that proficiency can be learnt through practice (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), I developed a better understanding of the interview process overtime and became more skilful and confident in asking relevant questions. Finally, what emerged from the first case study interviews was intrinsically interesting as a set of data that helped understanding of leadership, academy conversion and change in the school (to be revisited in a later chapter). The next section will discuss the second school setting and how I gained access.

4.4 Second case study: Introduction

This section will discuss the setting and access into the second academy school. Sampling and justification of the chosen participants will be explained. The section will also discuss the interview process and its challenges.

4.4.1 Setting and access

I chose my school as my second case study area because of: the leadership which was changing from time to time; easy access to participants; and it was also one of the schools that were converted into an academy during the then Coalition government. Although I was part of the staff at this academy, I was hesitant to talk to the headteacher about my research, since it was a sensitive leadership study. However, I later gained confidence and approached her. She consented and signed the gate keeper consent form (Appendix 2). From that time, I found it easy to select and approach the participants that I wanted because of my position as an insider-researcher. I was an insider-researcher because of my teaching job at this school and I knew the suitable leaders and teachers to approach, and also as a former head of department who had worked with all the HODs and SLT. I approached each participant privately. They all agreed to participate in the interviews, and we arranged a convenient and flexible time for individual interviews. I met the participants separately and gave them the information and consent forms to read and sign before participating in the interviews (Appendix 3). The next section will discuss sampling of participants in the main school.

4.4.2 Sampling

As explained before in chapter 3, I used non-probability also known as purposive sampling to select a sample of fourteen academy school staff for this second case study (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Research sample of the main study participants

Participants	**Number of participants**
Headteacher	1
Deputy headteacher	1
Heads of year	4
Heads of departments- Maths, English, PE, Humanities, Design and Technology	5
Teachers	2
Governors	1

As an insider-researcher, I knew all the teachers and the positions they held. I also knew the teachers who were before and after the conversion, which was an added advantage. I employed this type of sampling instead of random sampling because of my commitment to a phenomenographic approach which helped me to choose my sample. I wanted a representative sample of multiple roles and perspectives who were going to participate in this phenomenographic research; hence, the selection of the above-mentioned staff from different levels of leadership. I chose the HODs and teachers who were at this school before and after the conversion into an academy because they experienced the changes. The next section will discuss the interview process.

4.4.3 The interview process

One of the key strengths of the phenomenographic study approach is the aim to reveal what is experienced and how it is experienced. All face-to-face interviews were conducted in the school premises and we used empty free classrooms and offices. I gave the participants enough time to explain their answers and follow-up questions were applied whenever the responses were not clear or there was something interesting. I encouraged the respondents to reflect on and reveal the ways in which they experienced leadership at this academy. At times there were moments of quietness during interviews whilst these respondents were reflecting upon the questions. Still on follow up questions, I was aware of bracketing whereby a researcher removes his/her own experience, own idea or perception, according to Akerlind, *et al* (2005b).

In this study, although the participants were my work colleagues and I had a leading role as the interviewer, I allowed the interviewees to express their views freely without my input. I also made sure that I got as much data as possible in that one-off interview from each participant, in order to avoid coming back to the interviewees for more interviews because of their busy schedules. Some of the interview questions that I asked were about the styles of leadership that were used by different leaders at this academy, the reasons for converting the main secondary school into an academy, the changes that happened as a result of being an academy, the support that the participants got from their leaders when they were under pressure, whether their school was run like a business, how they participated in policy making, mission statement of the academy and others (Appendix 4).

I gained knowledge from these interviews and I understood the actual positions of these teachers in school leadership. After each interview, the participants would appreciate the interview process and questions, and would explain how much they had benefited from the interviews and how these interviews had made them stop and think again about their practice. Some of the heads of departments told me after interviewing them that they were going to

review their leadership skills because of the interview questions which were a wake-up call for them. Each teacher participated in a forty-five to sixty-minute interview which was recorded on an audio recorder and note taking for gestures and mannerisms. This helped me to understand their emotions and feelings, especially when they were raising their voices, frowning, changing their sitting positions and shaking their heads or becoming so emotional. I faced some problems during the interviews which are discussed in the next section.

4.4.3.1 Problems that I faced during my interviews

One of the constraints that I faced during my interviews was when one of my participants was interrupted towards the end of the interview because he forgot to attend a very important leadership meeting. Nonetheless, he asked me to continue with the interview, although I had offered to reschedule it. He explained to me that he had missed it already and he was going to get the minutes of the meeting. I learnt that I should always be prepared for disruptions during interviews, no matter how prepared we were. The other incident happened when we thought we were in a very quiet room away from the pupils' play area, and suddenly, in the middle of the interview, some pupils just stormed in the room and they wanted to report an incident that had happened, since it was a lunch break. We paused, and I gave the respondent an option to reschedule the interview. She chose to continue after attending to the pupils.

Another surprise came from one of the heads of year who forgot her lunch detention duty. However, we were on our last question and we managed to finish the interview. I should acknowledge that these distractions affected the flow of the interviews. It took me a while to locate where we had ended, and I had to repeat the last question where we ended, for recapitulation. Before we resumed our interviews, I had to ask whether they were quite sure that they wanted to continue. Although all my participants were willing to participate in the interview and I had negotiated convenient times, it was still difficult to find time to do it because of other commitments like after school meetings, lesson planning or marking pupils work.

However, as an insider-researcher, I kept on negotiating with them until we found the most convenient time.

4.5 Transcribing and data analysis

This section describes the transcription and analysis process for the recorded data that was gathered during the interviews.

4.5.1 Transcribing

As the interviews were audio-recorded, I transcribed them verbatim to obtain data for analysis. I found transcribing as one of the major stages in data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology, as also observed by Bird (2005) because of its interpretative act, where meanings are developed, instead of simply translating the recorded spoken words onto paper (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). I found the transcribing process to be the most time consuming and laborious thing to do. I spent more than five hours transcribing one interview. I played the tape several times in order to capture each word and for accuracy. In doing so, I became more familiar with the interviews as explained by Boyatzis (1998:45) who explained that the researcher gains a 'close contact and familiarity ...with the data'. After transcribing each interview, I played the tape again in order to check for mistakes and omissions. All interviews were labelled with the pseudonym of the participant, gender and number of the interview, according to Lankshear and Knobel (2004) who suggest the marking of qualitative data. Two copies of each transcript were made in preparation for data analysis, which is discussed next.

4.5.2 Analysis of the verbatim transcripts

The most challenging and vital part of phenomenographic research is the analysis of the verbatim transcripts from the interviews (Akerlind, 2005a; Prosser, 2000a). The aim of carrying out phenomenographic analysis is to derive conceptions of the phenomenon of interest from the data. I used the qualitative methodology to analyse the transcribed data because I wanted to identify and discern the school leaders and teachers' qualitatively different experiences or

understanding of leadership at the CA schools, in a limited number of categories collectively rather than the conceptions of individual participants. Although I interviewed the school staff from the same academy school about how the academy was being led, they came up with different or at times, similar experiences and interpretations. Thus, the aim was to categorise these similarities and differences and describe them from the participants' point of view. I did not use a single technique for analysing the collected data as also mentioned by Marton (1986) who explained that in phenomenographic research, there is no particular technique for analysing data. The bracketing technique was vital in my data analysis since I was an insider-researcher. I tried to put aside or bracket my own knowledge, beliefs, values and experiences in order to accurately describe participants' life experiences as advised by Chan *et al* (2013). However, the data analysis was guided by the research questions of this study.

I started my data analysis after I had finished all my interviews of the first case study. I read and reread the transcripts throughout the whole analysis process to familiarise myself with the data, and to identify the distinctive ways of leadership that were experienced. I started to look for qualitatively different meanings or themes that were evident in the data through coding and highlighting them as indicated by Marton and Pong (2005). I identified themes by looking for sufficient evidence of a particular overall meaning which has been expressed by interviewees and which were relevant according to the interview questions. Some of these words came to be themes because of their frequency in the interviews, for example, words in leadership like autocratic, 'dictatorship', micromanagement and staff wellbeing. The other themes like autonomy, accountability, precariousness and pragmatic emerged as responses to the questions which were asked. Also, some themes like conversion consultation and perceptions of reasons for converting into an academy emerged from the questions and their subthemes emerged from the frequency of the teachers' responses.

Around each major theme, I also identified the other sub themes which were related to that major theme and colour coded them manually in the first case study (see Appendix 6) and used the NVivo analysis program after receiving my training while conducting the second case

study. The sub themes identified included for example, autonomy and accountability, 'every day as an Ofsted' day, and subthemes that emerged from academy consultations and perceived reasons for converting into an academy. As I was sifting through the data trying to get the relevant data within the transcripts, I tried to avoid discarding important data. I grouped the experiences into different categories in order to have a deeper understanding of what participants said or meant. This process was crucial in my analysis as it involved reading the transcripts several times in order to get all the relevant themes and revised the categories. I then named the categories according to the major themes that were emerging from each category. These categories displayed the variation in how the leadership has been experienced, conceptualised or understood.

The NVivo programme in the second case study created many nodes and I used my research questions to group the most relevant data into main themes in order to narrow down the data. I had to look at commonalities and overarching themes, then break them into subthemes as I did in the first school. I achieved this through re-reading and deciding what data fitted with which themes. The next section will briefly explain the reporting of findings.

4.5.3 Reporting findings

I gathered lots of rich data because I allowed participants to articulate their own views and stories. The early interviews in the first case study helped me to restructure the questions for the second case study. My decisions on what to focus on was initially guided by my research questions. I identified relevant themes and sub themes on the way; I did not just follow up themes that were interesting or letting the participants set the agenda, but I had research questions to answer (see chapter 1). Once these relevant themes had been identified they enabled the analysis of the similarities and differences of experiences of leadership strategies and academy conversion at the academies as explained by Yu (2003).

Chapter 5: Consultation and perceived reasons for converting into academies

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the consultation process and reasons given by senior leadership staff and teachers in the case study schools for converting into academies. The findings are divided into two sections namely: 'consultation of academy conversion' and 'staff perceptions of reasons for converting into an academy'.

5.2 Consultation of academy conversion

The two case study schools were converted into academies in 2011. This was one year after the then Coalition government was voted into power and had introduced the 2010 New Converter Academies Act (DfE, 2010a) as part of their educational policy. Three months after the new headteacher (HT) of the first academy assumed his role, he informed the staff of his intention to convert the school into an academy, whilst the headteacher of the second academy announced his intention to convert as soon as he was appointed as the HT at this school. However, the headteacher of the second academy left before I started my study which meant that I interviewed the deputy headteacher about the conversion, as she was involved in the conversion process of the school.

As a statutory procedure, both HTs consulted the relevant parties which included teachers, parents and governors. This is in line with Section 5 of the Academies Act (2010) whereby the school's governing body is required to consult with all the relevant stakeholders about the conversion. DfE (2016) highlights not only the importance of consulting all the relevant stakeholders before conversion, but states that in doing so stakeholders should all be given a reasonable opportunity to respond. This means that the teachers, parents and governors stakeholders at the case study schools were supposed to be given enough information so that they would comment intelligently about the conversion. They were also supposed to be given enough time to consider the conversion proposals properly. In addition, the HTs and the

governors were supposed to specifically consider the consultation responses received in order to make their decision whether to convert the school into an academy or not.

The rest of this section discusses the sub-themes that emerged from the consultation interviews of the two academies. These include: the consultation process and poor attendance by parents; rushed and political decisions; fear and uncertainty of converting into an academy; and job security and pay protection. The HT/deputy head and HODs explained the consultation process and the poor attendance by the parents in the next section.

5.2.1 The consultation process and poor attendance by parents

The HT/deputy fulfilled the statutory requirements by consulting the relevant stakeholders before the conversion of the academy. Don the HT of the first academy explained that:

> *We consulted; we held meetings where we discussed it and said "this is what we would like to do", and staff came along and discussed ahead of the evening for parents… I think the teachers got the message* (Don the HT).

Pat expressed the consultation process as follows:

> *They consulted us. There were processes, there was a questionnaire, there was a lot of [information] coming to all staff, coming into the theatre and obviously the head explaining the process and the information that basically, they were permitted. The governors are going to be making [the] decision on obviously moving to an academy school. Didn't see that there were any problems. Didn't see that it affected the school negatively. Didn't disagree with the decision because the head thinks it's a wise move* (Pat, the HOD).

Also, Trish explained that:

'ultimately the governors are the ones who are in charge of the school because they have so much power' (Trish, HOD).

The above excerpts show that the academy conversion consultation in the first academy school was carried out and the stakeholders were given the conversion information. Pat's excerpt demonstrates the degree of consultation of staff by the HT. It means that it was not a one-off consultation, but it was in stages as seen in the word *'processes'* and the phrase '*there was a lot of [information] coming to all staff*'. Probably the teachers wanted some clarification and that is why all the staff received a lot of information. The meetings and the consultation process could have been the reasons why Pat explained how smooth the conversion was and why Pat stated that she supported the conversion.

The other point that has been raised in the excerpts suggests that the governors had the ultimate power to convert the school into an academy. It shows that the head did not have the powers to convert although he suggested the conversion, but the governors had the ultimate powers to make the decision. This resonates with the HT's quotation who explained that, '*the governors are the employers, they are my boss',* whilst Trish explained that *'ultimately the governors are the ones who are in charge of the school because they have so much power'.* This is supported by Hill *et al* (2012) who believes that the governing body is the key strategic body in a school, and it is responsible for the overall direction that a school takes. It can be argued that it is acceptable for the governors and the HT to make the final decisions after consultation and taking the opinions of the stakeholders, but it is not good for them to make their own decisions without considering other people's ideas. This resonates with Solly (2018) who believes that although headteachers hold ultimate responsibility for standards across the school, DL allows them to accept a degree of shared accountability because most of the key improvement strategies across the school are delivered by members of staff instead of headteachers.

However, the HT of the first academy also consulted the parents and there was a very low turnout, as he explained that:

> *I think 6 parents came to the consultation meeting, so not very many. They came and criticised our move and said that it was a bad move for the school. It was only 6 parents out of 1200 students* (Don, the HT).

The HT of the first academy did the right thing by consulting the parents although most did not respond. Since this conversion was an important move in that area, it could have been helpful if the HT had decided upon the different ways of reaching out to parents and informed them about the decision-making process. It could be argued that parents seemed not to attend the evening events for several reasons. These could include: their working patterns; the timing of the consultation meeting, lack of child minders; having other evening activities; not being concerned about parents' evenings; or parents did not understand the importance of such a big change in the education of their children. It can be suggested that the HT could have run another parents' consultation meeting using different methods in order to engage them more effectively, since they had the children who were directly affected by this move. This included: changing the time of the day and being flexible; using social media forums or even sending questionnaires and flyers to parents for them to respond. He could have even asked the parents to suggest how they wanted to be consulted. The parents should have voiced out their opinions about their children's education. However, on the other hand, the HT could not be held to account because of a lack of parental participation; he consulted the parents, and they made their decision not to participate.

Nevertheless, the HT's perception about the conversion was that '*the teachers got the message'.* Questions may be raised about this quotation; what message did the teachers get? Was it the governors' message, the headteacher's message that most parents were supportive, or that conversion was going on regardless of the poor attendance of parents? The teachers' interviews did not confirm that they got the message, even Pat's excerpt does not

say much about what they were told. She just explained that they were given lots of information, that they could convert, and the governors were going to make the decision. Findings also showed that there was fear and uncertainty of converting into an academy, as discussed below in the next section.

5.2.2 Fear and uncertainty of converting into an academy

The other theme that emerged from the consultation process was fear and uncertainty of converting into an academy. The HT of the first academy and the governors were scared of it because it was new to everyone as he explained:

> *Academies conversion was new to all of us, it was new to me. Academies were new at the time anyway. I was new to this school and the governors weren't sure of the conversion as well. It was new to them, it was scary to them, it was scary to all of us* (Don, the HT).

Despite Pat (as noted above) saying that staff received a lot of information about the conversion process, deputy head (Getty) at the first academy said that:

> *All staff did not have enough information about academies* (Getty).

This view was shared by Felie the deputy head of the second academy who observed that staff were asked to vote without enough information as explained below:

> *The staff members were asked to vote, although the academy information was not clear, because no one knew the future of these academies and how they were going to operate (*Felie*).*

Tecla from the second academy reiterated that:

> *So, I am not sure that we did have all the information* (Tecla, HOD).

The excerpts above demonstrate the decision that was taken to convert the academies without staff having enough information. Although some of the teachers did not understand or had little

information about the academies, as suggested in the excerpts above, it seems as if they just trusted their HTs and voted for the conversion, because they did not want to lose their jobs. They did not know what the future held for them as explained by Felie from the second academy. However, they still voted to convert because they believed they did not have any choice. This was a very difficult position for staff to vote for an agenda that they were not quite sure of and had limited information about.

As discussed in chapter 2 the decision to convert schools into academies was a Coalition one, and because the Liberal Democrats went along with this in order to share power with the Conservatives, it could be argued that privatisation of schools has always been the Conservative governments' agenda, hence, the conversion of most of the schools into converter academies and freeing them from the control of the LAs. The Conservatives continued to convert more schools when they won the 2015 elections. However, since the academy conversion (at the time the first and second academies converted) was still new to everyone, the literature about academy conversion was limited. The HT of the first academy stated that '*it was new to them, it was scary to them…'.* This means that these consultation meetings were conducted with the HT who did not know much about the academies because they were new to everyone. Lack of information about academy conversion possibly accounts for why many headteachers left their jobs before and after conversion to an academy, especially during the first year (Eyles and Machin, 2019).

If the conversion policy was '*new and scary'* to the HT and the governors as mentioned in the case study interview, it was also new to the teachers, regardless of being given information about academy conversion. Consequently, contrary to the view of the HT of the first academy, it can be argued that the teachers did not '*get the message',* about academy conversion, and they did not understand the conversion policy or process. So, because of that, they might not have had the base for opposing something that they did not understand. It can be argued that a DL approach with its commitment to deliberation would have required more and better information. On the other hand, it might be argued that the teachers just agreed to the

conversion because of the non-existence of the LA services (to be discussed in detail under removal of LA services) and they feared that there might be no other options because of the lack of information. Although the HT of the first academy and the governors had lots of information about academy conversion, it seemed as if they did not fully understand the reasons or the broader picture behind the conversion, as the HT of the first academy mentioned that it was new to them. West and Bailey (2013) describe the academies conversion as:

> The school-based education system in England changing radically from a national system locally administered via democratically elected local education authorities to a centrally controlled system with the Secretary of State having legally binding contractual arrangements with an increasing number of private education providers (West and Bailey, 2013, p.138).

Also, the DfE (2010a) explains that the principle behind these academies' conversion was to give all schools greater autonomy which include freedom not to follow the National curriculum, to vary term dates and the length of the school day, having flexibility over staff pay and conditions and greater budgetary control. All these freedoms, it was argued would enable innovation and drive-up standards and reduce gaps between rich and poor students (DfE 2010a). It can be argued that the above ideology brings uncertainty and doubts to whether the promise of being autonomous was genuine or just rhetoric, given the fact that the academy schools were going to be controlled by central government after being liberated from LA control, according to the Academies Act (2010) and West and Bailey (2013). Although as the Coalition government claimed that academies would provide autonomy to schools and parents, there seem to be no or an under representation of parents, teachers and nominated community representatives included on governing and trust bodies (Maisuria, 2015; Hatcher, 2019). This shows that the process of academisation is undemocratic in the sense that public schools are now being privately owned without public accountability; thus, the public opinion and

participation have been removed (Hatcher, 2019). Also, the teachers' autonomy and the participation of local authorities has been removed (Maisuria, 2015). Yet, this neoliberalism marketisation policy allows the government to monitor teachers and schools' activities through public exam results so that schools are held accountable for the public money that they are allocated (Hall and Pulsford, 2019).

The first academy interviews above seemed to suggest that the head and governors just took some risks to convert, although they were not quite sure, as they explained that it was scary. However, Tony from the second academy had a different perception; he understood how converted academies worked as explained below:

> *I understand what an academy will be like. I had experience of schools before. That didn't really influence my decisions either way* (Tony, HOD).

Also, Archie shared the same view with Tony that:

> *I voted in a certain way as I saw fit. Although I understood the whole process of academy conversion, I think a lot of staff did not have enough information.* (Archie, Head of Year).

The above excerpt shows how people perceive and experience things in different ways. Tony and Archie understood what they were voting for, unlike the other staff who Archie claimed were put under pressure to vote in a certain way without enough information. However, it is not clear whether Tony was referring to LA schools about his experience or sponsored academies which were introduced during the New Labour government. In either way, he said he understood how academies functioned. It can be suggested that some people like Tony and Archie could have researched about CAs well ahead of the consultation and conversion, that is why they knew how the academies functioned and why they were not fearful of the change to academy status. The teachers felt that the HTs took autocratic decisions in their consultations, as discussed below.

5.2.3 Autocratic decisions in consultation

Another theme that emerged from the teachers' interviews about consultation was the perception that the HTs made some autocratic decisions because they did not consider their views. The following excerpts demonstrate the phenomenographic perceptions of teachers on how they viewed the HTs as making autocratic decisions.

Pretty from the second academy explained that:

> *...we all gave our opinions. I don't think most people were in favour of it, but it went ahead anyway. So, I think that was an autocratic decision* (Pretty, Head of Year).

Also, Tony from the second academy expressed that:

> *we were never shown the actual numbers of the voting system, what the actual results were. I like to say I would question if it was accurate or correct or not or whether it was forced upon us* (Tony, HOD).

Tecla from the second academy had this to say:

> *We did not have any choice; it was our head's decision and we just had to go with it* (Tecla, teacher, no leadership position).

Lora's perception from the second academy was that:

> *The people who put through the ideas about turning the school into an academy put forth as an idea to be discussed, but I think they had already made their mind up and the school became an academy* (Lora, HOD).

Derrick from the second academy felt that:

> *I don't think we had much say in it. The explanation was quite in fair depth. I think it was more of a done deal* (Derrick, HOD).

Also, Getty, the deputy head from the first academy had the same views as explained above:

> *I think the consultation was more out of courtesy, I think that was done so that the staff will be brought into the decision. I'm not sure if the staff had been very anti, that it would have changed the decision* (Getty).

The above extracts which show the perceptions of teachers and a deputy head about the consultation process, demonstrate the level of autocracy that was purported to be employed by the HTs, and suggestions that the consultation process was superficial, and the outcomes predetermined. This is seen in phrases like '*autocratic decision', 'forced upon us', 'head's decision', 'already made their mind up'* and *'more of a done deal'.* These phrases show that although the consultation which included voting was carried out, it seemed as if the ideas were not considered, since the decision was said to have been made already. There was a consultation 'event' but there was little opportunity for discussion or deliberative processes. This is typical of autocratic leaders in schools; 'they have "centralised power" and make decisions by themselves' (Ch *et al*, 2017: 47). In this form of leadership, only the headteacher establishes policies and practices with little or no group involvement, and task and techniques are imposed on staff (Ogunyinka and Adedoyin, 2013). In this respect the 'consultation' could have been done to tick the boxes so that the HTs would not be held accountable for not following the conversion process.

This type of leadership practice does not represent DL which advocates consulting widely and takes everyone's views into consideration through full consultation. This is supported by Harris (2014:1) who explains that 'genuine DL requires high levels of trust, transparency and mutual respect'. This is also demonstrated in the pull and push factors identified by Oduro (2004). It can be argued that converting a school into an academy was a big move which from a DL

perspective needed everyone's views incorporated instead of a sole leader making such big decisions. If DL was employed, this would have meant that the HT of the second academy could have trusted and included the teachers in the decision making and considered their ideas. Also, it would have encouraged the HT to be transparent with the results of the consultation as argued by Harris above, instead of the teachers having doubts about the results.

However, there were some tensions here of trust in the sense that the teachers wanted their ideas to be considered and they wanted transparency, but the HT was focusing on converting the school, regardless of whether the votes were for or against the conversion, as demonstrated in the excerpts in the next section. This was caused by the political pressure for schools to convert into academies which was mentioned in the excerpts before. Arguably. these HTs wanted to fulfil the government's neoliberalism agenda of marketising the education system (Thompson, 2017; Hall and Pulsford, 2019). This shows how powerful the politicians are in pushing their agendas, alongside the influence of the 2010 Academies Act despite it being perceived by schools as rushed, as discussed in the next section, and how difficult it was for DL to be implemented in these academies.

5.2.4 Rushed and Political decisions

One of the themes that emerged from the staff interviews from the second academy was that the academy consultation process was politically biased; the then Coalition government wanted all schools to convert into academies, and it was rushed. Lora explained that:

> *I think it was sort of a political decision at the time with the former HT. I don't think very much consultation of staff was really taken into consideration. So, the people who put through the ideas about turning the school into an academy put forth as an idea to be discussed, but I*

> *think they had already made their mind up and the school became an academy. That's what I saw from the outside looking in* (Lora, HOD).

Also, Tecla, a teacher who did not have any leadership position explained that:

> *I don't think it was a consultation as I recall it, it seemed to be rushed through, so it's almost presented that we had no choice and we had to do it quickly…It was done very quickly; it was a bit of a shock to all of us. But it's almost, it was presented that we had no choice as I recall* (Tecla, a teacher – no leadership position).

There are commonalities between the above excerpts in the second academy and the excerpts in the first academy school where the consultation process was described as *'rushed'*, and the decision to convert had already been made. Also, in the first academy findings, they used the word '*scary'* and in this second academy they used the term '*shocked*' to describe how frightening this conversion process was, as it was new to everyone. This '*rushed'* decision demonstrates the pressure that was coming from the then Coalition government who wanted schools to be converted into academies. That was the reason why the HTs presented this conversion idea to their staff as if there was no option and yet there was because LA schools were not removed. This is similar to what happened in the first academy school where staff were informed that LAs were marginalised by central government who had taken over, and the services LAs used to provide to schools were terminated. As the staff in the second academy suggested that the conversion was politically motivated and this school was running short of conversion time, that could be one of the reasons why their consultations were viewed as rushed. Boyask (2016) echoes the same sentiments that the government rushed the Academies Act (2010). Due to government political pressure, the HT of the second academy exhibited some autocratic tendencies which were in opposition with the DL approach, as she according to Tecla, denied stakeholders the opportunity to make informed choices. If DL had

been employed, all the stakeholders would have been given the opportunity to make their choices. The next section will discuss the job insecurity and pay protection theme.

5.2.5 Job security and pay protection

Although the teachers were given information about CAs, they were also concerned about their job security, as echoed by the deputy head from the first academy:

> *Most staff just needed to know what and how it affected their role* (Getty, the deputy head).

Also, Trish from the first academy explained how the unions made sure that the teachers' pay was protected.

> *…we were told there'll be very little change for us. The unions took it on board with the pay and making sure that everybody's pay will be protected, and so which was very good, and we were assured by the head that there would be very little change in how the school was run,* (Trish, HOD).

The rhetoric about conversion was about the school, but the staffs' response to it was about their individual circumstances, as expressed by Getty from the first academy that '*most staff just needed to know what and how it affected their role'.* The headteachers and the governors were talking about the academy conversion and the response from staff was about the effects of conversion on the teachers' jobs. This reflects how headteachers and staff who are in precarious positions have got their different concerns about their pay, allowances and long-term job protection because some teachers are paid according to their working hours, and yet they are permanently employed (Kramer *et al*, 2014; Leslie and Gappa, 2002; Valadez and Anthony, 2001; University and College Union, 2016). However, Trish from the first academy explained that the teachers were '*assured by the head that there would be very little change*

in how the school was run', which can be interpreted to mean that their jobs and pay conditions were still secured.

Although these teachers' jobs and pay were secured, it could be argued that the conditions were not going to be the same with the new teachers who were expected to join after the conversion. This resonates with the DfE (2016) who suggest that academies can choose the best teachers according to merit, rather than following the formal procedure of qualified teacher status; they can give them the pay that they want. This means that any new teachers were likely to have been employed on contracts that were quite different to existing ones. It could be argued that because of this, existing staff were less bothered. Also, the promise by the HT from the first academy that there would be very little change seemed to be rhetoric as compared to the changes in leadership at the academy, including non-negotiable policies, tight budgets and the reduction of middle leadership that followed (to be discussed in detail later). This showed that the HT wanted to convince the teachers so that they would agree to convert. On the other hand, it might be that the HT and the governors were also convinced that there would be very little change and they were not aware of the accountabilities that were coming because this conversion was new to everyone.

However, the teachers from the second academy voted in support of academy conversion to protect the support staff whose jobs were in danger. Archie explained that:

> *The support staff were told that they could be financially worse off, there could be job insecurity if the school didn't become an academy, so they were put under pressure to vote in a certain way.* (Archie, Head of Year).

Also, Matty from the second academy expressed that:

> *There was a consultation process but really, the whole way, we focused on the possibility of people losing their jobs because of [a] lack of*

> *funding. I think myself but I am certain most other people as well, voted in agreement with becoming an academy because no one wanted their colleagues to lose their jobs. We were told that if we convert, there wouldn't have to be job cuts* (Matty, HOD).

The excerpts above from the second academy demonstrate the fear that was instilled in the staff about their job insecurity. Archie used phrases like *'financially worse off'* and *'job insecurity'* to describe the source of insecurity facing the support staff. This can be interpreted to mean that the staff did not vote based on their choice to convert or not to convert; rather, they voted for the security of their jobs and those of other staff. Thus, they were put in a situation where they had no choice except to vote for conversion. Conversely, it appears as if the vote to convert was about the HT securing a large number of votes to support the decision rather than because of fears of job insecurity. That is the reason why Archie explained that '*they were put under pressure to vote in a certain way',* which was the HT's autocratic way, and not the teachers' way. This means that staff did not exercise their democratic right of voting for what they wanted because of fears of job insecurity.

There are two different insecurities here; the support staff were afraid to lose their jobs and the teachers were afraid that the support staff could lose their jobs. In this case, the staff members chose to support each other, and they decided to vote for conversion to secure the support staffs' jobs. This shows that they voted out of sympathy rather than their hearts' desires. That means the teachers were not engaging in this political discussion of converting the school into an academy, but they were worried about losing their jobs. The teachers in the second academy shared the same sentiments with the first academy teachers who were also worried about their jobs. The HT of the second academy responded by telling the teachers about the huge sums of money that they were going to be given if they converted into an academy (to be discussed in detail later). The next section will discuss the staff's perceptions of reasons for converting into an academy.

5.3 Academy conversion: Staff's perceptions of reasons for converting into an academy

The themes that emerged from the staff's perceptions of reasons for conversion interviews include financial gains, removal of LA services, and most schools in the area were converting.

5.3.1 Financial gains

The phenomenography approach gave the respondents the latitude of telling their stories of the academy conversion without any boundaries or limitations. It also allowed the researcher to probe further and seek clarity on any unclear information. This is portrayed in the excerpts below where the HTs and their staff explained their perceived reasons for converting into an academy. Some of these phenomenographic experiences were similar whilst others were different. Don the HT of the first academy expressed his reasons in the excerpt below:

> *I was not pressurised to convert into an academy. We could have stayed as an LA school, but we decided in terms of the budget it was the best move to make. I had all the information about academy conversion. I had only been at the school for 2 or 3 months when I told the staff we should go for that, so they didn't know me of course. We held several meetings with the staff in which we looked at the LA and we provided a picture of what the LA was providing compared to the money it was taking from the school, and it was fairly clear that we weren't getting value for money. So, if we are going to lose money because of what happened before academies, we lost 10% of our budget to the LA. We want that 10% in our budget to pay for those services. We decided in terms of the budget; it was the best move to take. I am not saying I am particularly in favour of an academy agenda at all. It doesn't fit with my politics, but we figured it was the best move for the school* (Don the HT).

Getty the deputy head of the first academy explained that:

To be honest, I think it's financial mostly, I mean as far as I know (Getty the deputy).

Trish from the first academy echoed the same sentiments that:

Financially, I guess it was more sensible (Trish, HOD).

The excerpts below are from the staff of the second academy who expressed their perceived reasons as follows:

We converted because of money... We were afraid of losing the money that the academies were offering (Felie the deputy head).

A school governor explained that:

Obviously, the financial impact had some bearing on the decision (Ben).

Archie had this to say:

Financial pressure really, financial drive and the former HT would have been given a large lump of money, and the earlier they converted into an academy status, the more money they get (Archie, HOD).

Matty was made to believe that:

We were sold it as a funding issue, that we receive more funding as a school as an academy, which the consequence of that is there wouldn't have to be job cuts (Matty, HOD).

Billy believed that:

I think we were short of money at the time. I think we were slightly over staffed, and we took the money and we ran with it. We were led to believe that we had no choice but to become an academy (Billy, HOD).

Pretty, one of the Heads of year expressed that:

> *I think it was to do with money and I think we possibly were struggling a bit financially and again they wanted the money, because you got lots of funding* (Pretty).

The excerpts above show that both academies could not risk losing the huge sums of money that they were offered to convert into an academy. The risk to convert was needed since they were offered the autonomy to use their huge amounts of money in the way they liked. This was a big decision that the academies governors and the headteachers made. According to the DfE (2013) pupils in academies are given the same funding as those in the same location in maintained schools, but on top of that, they also receive more funding for the services which used to be provided by the LA.

The additional funding promised to academies resonates with West and Bailey (2013) who suggest that the additional resources that were given to academies acted as incentives for schools to convert because they were able to make their own decisions on how to use these resources. However, there was financial pressure in the sense that the earlier they applied to convert into an academy, the more money they would get as explained by Archie in the excerpt above. This might be the reason why the HTs according to their staff rushed their consultation and why they were said to have already made the decision to convert, even before the consultation, as mentioned in the interviews in 5.2.4. Hence these staff regarded their school conversion into academies as politically motivated because of the large sums of money the government offered schools as incentives to convert.

This demonstrates how the DfE used the rhetoric of high funding in academies in order to encourage schools into converting. Both academies thought that it was an advantage to have their own funds without LA control. What they did not envisage was the fact that they were going to pay more on private services than the 10% that Don from the first academy claimed

to be losing to the LA, and also losing all the LA services that they used to get for free (to be discussed in detail in the next chapter). Don's perception was that the LA was gaining more from the school's finances. This shows that these HTs did not do a thorough research before deciding to convert; it was a rushed decision as discussed before, and they were just excited about the big and direct funding, and the freedom to use it, as promised by the DfE (2010a).

Don explained that, '*we decided in terms of the budget, it was the best move to* take'. What this HT did not foresee was the accountability, in terms of examination results, that converter academies would have for the public money allocated to them to run their schools (Adams, 2013), or that the expansion of academies would be so prolific such that the DfE was not prepared for the scale of the financial implications (i.e., additional costs) of the expansion (The National Audit Office, 2016).

Although Don (HT) said that he was not pressurised into converting the school, it can be argued that the external political pressure (i.e. funding incentives, loss of LA services, school autonomy) forced him to convert this school against his personal wish and principles especially as he admitted that he was not in favour of an academy agenda. However, Don had to convert the school in order to move it forward as supported by Trish who said that '*I guess it was more sensible'* to get more funding. He also took advantage of being new to this school to convert it into an academy, as he explained earlier on. Thus, as a new HT, he came with a new idea of converting the school into an academy. This might be one of the reasons why he did not face resistance from staff, and the conversion was implemented 'smoothly', as explained by Getty the deputy head.

Like the first academy, finance also played a major role in the second school converting into an academy. The HT of the second academy did not give his staff any options to convert because they were made to believe that there was no choice because the school had no money except to convert, as explained by Billy and Pretty. In this case, the huge sum of money that was offered to this academy played an important role in converting into an academy

because it came as a relief to a struggling school. It can be argued that the school converted out of desperation because it wanted to solve this problem of over staffing and the shortage of money to cover staff salaries. This came as a solution to prevent the job cuts that were mentioned in the interviews.

However, the payment of large sums to newly converted schools to fund educational services and producing good school outcomes was short lived owing to cuts in funding and converted schools inability to maintain effective finances, as shown by the National Audit Office (NAO) (2018) who explained that, 'in 2017-18 the DfE withdrew the 'general funding rate' that was previously paid to LAs and academies for school support services as part of the Education Services Grant' (NAO, 2018:9). According to the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2018) the DfE undertakes some financial checks before they agree to convert a school into an academy because some CAs have failed to get a 'Good' school inspection grade, and this has been costly to the taxpayer who ultimately fund education. So, the financial checks are to ensure that schools can financially sustain academy conversion. According to the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2018:5):

> The checks that the Department carries out before schools convert to academies have not prevented a succession of high-profile academy failures that have been costly to the taxpayer and damaging to children's education… More recently the DfE has strengthened its scrutiny of the financial health of prospective academies, although it acknowledges that there is still more to be done (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts 2018:5).

There is also a group of schools that got the funds and converted into academies before the 2017-2018 withdrawal of funds and rigorous checks by the DfE and then failed to get a 'Good' Ofsted inspection grade. These academies are now failing to get a sponsor as explained by the National Audit Office (NAO) (2018) report which highlighted that CAs that are

underperforming are finding it difficult to find a sponsor and they are orphaned. In the NAO (2018) report, **Kevin Courtney, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said:**

> The true legacy of the academy programme, and its attack on LA oversight and structures, are the 105 schools previously forced to become academies following an 'inadequate' rating by Ofsted which are now languishing without support nine months later because the DfE has failed to find a sponsor for them. The government's marketplace system has simply failed to deliver for these schools or their children (NAO, 2018: Online).

This means that they are no longer part of the academy structure nor MAT. In this case, questions may be raised about the consequence for these children in these orphaned academies where no one wants to sponsor them, and the job security of teachers is in doubt. If we have schools that do not belong anywhere, that seems to suggest that this current converter academies model is not working. It is not effective because we have these academies that are converting and trying to survive on their own (NAO, 2018), which defeats the objectives of CAs.

It can be argued that the UK government's converted academy policy was hurriedly implemented without enough preparation and training of people on how to run these academies as exemplified by Felie, the deputy head who expressed that although they got the funding, they did not have trained people to manage their funds. Felie explained that:

> *We did not have a business manager who knew how to handle or plan such big monies. All professional lawyers and accountant governors acted as if they knew what to do but when we converted into an academy, they knew nothing* (shaking her head and raising her voice) (Felie, the deputy head).

The above except shows the extent to which the second academy took the risk of converting without having enough resources in place. This demonstrates how desperate this school was; their focus was on the huge sums of money, but they did not have a plan on how to handle it, which was quite risky. According to Felie, they were relying on their professional governors and accountants who did not have the financial knowledge or experience of handling large sums of money. She shook her head as a sign of dissatisfaction as she expressed the above point.

Clearly, the challenges identified by Felie in managing newly converted academy resources epitomise how the conversion process was rushed but this was not confined to local schools. According to the House of Commons Committee of public accounts (2018) the DfE acknowledges that in the past it had concentrated on converting large numbers of schools quickly, although they did not mention the time scale. However, the National Audit Office (2018) stated that by January 2018 the Department had converted nearly 7,000 maintained schools to academies, at an estimated cost of £745 million since 2010-11 (NAO, 2018:13). Such big policies like this academy conversion needed proper planning, and resources should have been put in place before it was implemented.

Another reason for academy conversion was the freedom offered to schools to manage their own resources and the removal of LA services as explained next.

5.3.2 Political pressure and removal of LA services

One of the tools that the government used to encourage the schools to convert into academies was the termination of most of LA services and political pressure. The DfE (2010a) explains that the government wanted the schools to get direct funding and to be liberated from LAs, also, applying this freedom to improve their outcomes and reduce the attainment gap. When the Coalition government took over in 2010, they decided to convert the schools into academies and transferred powers from the LAs to central government (DfE) while transferring

other management responsibilities to schools. This reduced the functions of LAs. Don from the first academy explained that:

> *We converted into an academy school because the LA made it clear that it was the way to go. So, education welfare officers had stopped, the connections career's library, where we got our connections services had stopped. There were no LA subject advisors anymore, so we won't get value for money that we were giving the LA, and that was a fair clear argument, staff could see that* (Don, the HT).

Also, Trish from the first academy reiterated that:

> *The support from the LAs was being much marginalised and was going to be non-existent* (Trish, HOD).

Also, Archie from the second academy expressed that:

> *It had to do with political pressure and local pressure. It was very much a push from central government also local authority to be fair (*Archie, HOD).

Derrick from the second academy reiterated that:

> *There was pressure and manipulation by the government and local authority to go that way, by removing funding unless you accept the role of [the] academy, so it was two sided* (Derrick, Head of Year).

The evidence from above demonstrates the change of educational structure and how the DfE pushed its CAs agenda. The DfE moved the powers from the LAs to central government, making it impossible to operate within the LA framework. Although the academies were told that they were given the freedom to operate on their own, it can be argued that this academisation moved from decentralisation in LAs to be centralised by the DfE. According to

Francis (2015), academies became directly accountable to the DfE through the removal of local authority powers. Also, West (2015) reiterated that the funding and regulatory framework shows that the role of central government in England increased under the then Conservative–Liberal Coalition government (2010-2015), whilst that of local government declined. The above excerpts suggest that the HTs and the governors converted because the LA confirmed that conversion was the better option than not to convert.

Since the LA was in charge of these schools before the conversion, the HTs believed what the LA said. The LAs themselves encouraged conversion either because they agreed with the ideological shift or because they simply did not have the resources to continue with their services. However, it can be argued that just because of the restructuring of educational policy and the shift of power from local authorities to schools, this does not mean that state education delivered in academy schools should be 'left... to the interested decisions of a corporate club or association' (Ranson, 2011:411); that is academy leaders, private companies and the Secretary of State for Education (Ball, 2013).

Although the HT of the first academy indicated that he was not pressurised, the excerpt shows that he was because most of the services that the LA used to provide were terminated, as explained by Don that, '*education welfare officers had stopped, the connections career's library, where we got connections services had stopped, there were no LA subject advisors anymore'.* This was clear pressure because even if he chose not to convert, he was not going to get more of it because of the termination of the services that the school used to enjoy, as highlighted by Trish (HOD). It can be argued that although Nancy (HOD) said that they were informed that LAs were going to be non-existent, there are many still operating. According to Gee *et al* (2017) in May 2017, 31% of secondary schools and 77% of primary schools were still under LAs. This shows that the rhetoric of LA extinction was not true. This resonates with the National Audit Office (2018) who expressed that LAs still hold important responsibilities, which include an obligation to provide enough school places even though they do not control the number of places in academy schools.

Nonetheless, the excerpts above demonstrate the lack of democracy in choosing to convert because the schools were not given the choice to do so. This was a government agenda which was just pushed and imposed on schools through removing LA services and left the schools without any choice except to convert, as mentioned by Archie. As academisation of maintained schools has been at the heart of the government's education policy (NAO, 2018) and neo-liberal agenda, central government took over from LAs. According to the DfE (2010a) the government wanted the schools to get direct funding and to be liberated from central and local bureaucracy. However, words like '*push', 'pressure'* and '*manipulation*' that were used in the above excerpts, suggest how this second academy was sort of coerced into conversion by the government. However, it can be argued that just because there was a restructuring of state schooling and there was a shift of power from local authorities to schools, this does not mean that conversion decisions should have been left to just a few (Ranson, 2011); that is academy leaders, private companies and the Secretary of State for Education (Ball, 2013). Derrick implicated the LA alongside with the government as victims of terminating the services and withdrawing the funds. It can be argued that the LA did not withdraw the services, but the government was the one who withdrew the LA services, and it affected the schools.

It is quite interesting that the conversion agenda, according to the DfE (2010a) was sold as being autonomous, and yet the choice on whether to convert or to remain in LA control had some conditions, and they also removed the LA services, which contradicted the government's stated intention in the Academies Act of 'support[ing] the school system to become more effectively self-improving' (DfE, 2010:16). Moreover, the reality that Derrick highlighted conflicted with the rhetoric of the politicians about CAs. However, most schools in the area at the time were converting into academies, as discussed in the next section.

There were further contradictions between government stated intentions and their practice as power remained in the hands of the government rather than converted academy school leaders (Ranson, 2012; Ball, 2013) as evidenced by none-negotiable policies being imposed on

schools deemed by Ofsted (the school's inspectorate) to need improving (to be discussed in detail in the none-negotiable policies section).

5.4.3 Most schools in the area were converting into academies

There was this fear of being left behind and the uncertainty of what would happen if they did not convert whilst others have converted. Both case study schools had to convert because of the fear of being left behind as echoed by Don in the excerpt below:

> *So, eventually every pilot secondary school in our area is now an academy* (Don, the HT).

Also, Pat explained that:

> *I think it was because a lot of schools were moving, but it was mainly because the other schools in the area were converting* (Pat, HOD*).*

Trish echoed the same sentiments that:

> *I guess it's probably to do with the fact that most schools were changing into academies* (Trish, HOD).

Archie also explained that:

> *It's been a move in the whole area really, middle and pilot secondary schools (Archie, HOD).*

Felie explained about the 'fear of the unknown' in the excerpt below:

> *The school was converted because of fear of the unknown, everyone else was. It was not well planned, and we did not have enough information. We asked other schools, but they did not have enough information* (Felie, Deputy Headteacher).

The excerpts above demonstrate the influence of other schools' decisions to convert, on these schools. Even if both academies had no intention to convert, the fact that every middle and secondary school in their locality was converting, acted as one of the push factors (Oduro, 2004) of converting into academies. Although the HT of the first academy expressed the rhetoric of not being pressurised into converting, the above excerpts confirmed the conversion of most of the schools in that area as one of the pressures that pushed the HT to convert the school into an academy. Yes, the academy conversion did not fit into the HT's politics, as he explained it:

> *I am not saying I am particularly in favour of an academy agenda at all. It doesn't fit with my politics …* (Don the HT),

but the fact that they were converting, was pressure on him. He was influenced by the fact that he knew that all the other schools in that area were converting. It can be suggested that the consultation could have been done to tick the boxes, but the decisions were made based on the political push and the talk of academy conversion at that time. The risks associated with converting were seen as being less than the risks of being left behind in a much-reduced LA, despite little knowledge of what was going to happen in practice.

According to Felie's (deputy headteacher) excerpt, the conversion of the second school into an academy was a huge risk as the school was venturing into the unknown without proper planning and lack of enough information. Felie expressed that they converted because of '*fear of the unknown'*; which meant that what they did was something unknown. This academy had two unknowns; they were supposed to either choose to stay with the LA or convert. However, their choice could have been based on policy and the school's outcomes. If they did not convert and outcomes were good, they had no money. If they converted and outcomes remained good, they got money. If they did not convert and outcomes were bad, they were still going to be converted, as explained by the National Audit (2018) '*Converting Maintained Schools to Academies'* that the DfE has a statutory duty to direct all maintained schools that Ofsted has

rated as inadequate to be converted into academies. If they converted and outcomes remained bad, they probably were all going to be made redundant. They rather chose to do the unknown of converting without any idea of what was going to happen than not to convert. The only difference between these two unknowns was that the government promised academies some good things like autonomy and huge sums of money to spend in the way they chose, if they converted (as discussed in section 5.3.1), but it turned out to be rhetoric in practice because of the accountability imposed on converted schools and government spending cuts.

The headteacher and governors were supposed to go out there and tell the parents, teachers and pupils of their intention to convert as part of the consultative process, and yet behind the scenes, there were two unknowns. This was quite risky because they were supposed to answer all the questions that were being asked during the consultation, and yet they did not have enough information, as discussed before. That is why the teachers explained in the consultation section that the consultation and conversion were rushed; they did not have enough information to give the stakeholders to make informed decisions.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the HTs led the conversion process which required consultation, and this happened. Though it may have been seen as their initiatives, as new headteachers, it would at least have required the support of the governors, and this may have been their intention even before the new headteachers arrived and they would have been tasked to do it. The headteacher of the first academy seemed to have presented it as a fait accompli (*'they got the message'*). If the HTs had been fully committed to DL ideas, they might have approached the consultation differently.

The staff felt that the consultation was rushed through, they were pressurised into voting, and they did not have clear information about the academies. Other teachers felt that even if they were going to vote against the conversion, nothing was going to change because the HTs had already made their decisions to convert. Evidence from the excerpts above shows that the HTs

did not hold a proper consultation, and it appears as if the HTs wanted to just put it on record that they had done the consultation and the teachers voted.

Probably the HTs were also under pressure because of the time limit allowed for schools to convert, since it was politically driven. However, there were some teachers who said they had the full information about the academies, and they understood the whole conversion process. Probably these teachers consulted their unions for more clarity or gathered a lot of information about academies conversion. This is typical of the phenomenography studies where people perceive the same world in different ways. This is demonstrated in this consultation process, which after all the staff had a meeting about conversion, some teachers understood the whole process whilst others complained that they did not have enough information. Their perceptions of academy conversion between these two groups of staff were different in the sense that they were not certain about the future of academies and did not understand what was going on, whilst others stated that they understood.

Nonetheless, from the interviews above, the ones who understood the conversion process were aware that their colleagues did not understand it. Findings also show that some of the teachers voted for the conversion because they did not want to lose their jobs. This practice demonstrated the lack of engaging in the academy's conversion with the HTs; instead, they focused on their job security. There was a mismatch between the academies' politics and the needs of the teachers in the sense that, it appears that the expertise of the teachers was not considered to be sufficient enough to do the conversion in any other way.

In short, the perceptions of reasons for converting were because of the financial incentive that was attached to it; the LA and its services were going to be non-existent; the LA advised the case study schools that it was the best way forward; all the other schools in the area were converting and they did not want to be left out; there was fear of the unknown; and they wanted the freedom of choosing their own services and controlling their own budgets. However,

findings from both academies also showed the decision to convert was made by the HTs and the governors.

Chapter 6: Autonomy and accountability of the academy HT

6.1: Introduction

This chapter is a progression from more descriptive themes of conversion and consultation in chapter 5 to refocusing on DL and on the research questions. There is an interpretative/ analytical process as follows:

Descriptive themes (precarity, consultation, money) (chapter 5)

To

A focus on the tension between autonomy and accountability at the second academy (as they shape the leadership cultures) (now)

To

A discussion of the potential for DL within schools where heads are trying to reconcile autonomy and accountability within their leadership culture (coming).

The chapter will briefly revisit the policy context as it applied to the schools in question. It will then discuss the different autonomies that the academies were given and the accountabilities to different stakeholders which include the DfE, Ofsted, governors, teachers, pupils and parents. The chapter will also discuss whether the second academy HT's leadership practice under the academy's business model was able to be reconciled with DL. It will discuss whether the autonomies that were promised by the Academies Act (2010) were successfully implemented at this academy. The next section will discuss the government's policy context regarding academies conversion in order to understand autonomy and accountability that will be discussed throughout this chapter.

6.1.1. The policy context: Conversion to academies

The tension between accountability and autonomy is central to many of the issues in the findings in this study, and critically that it shapes leadership cultures. When the then Coalition

government was voted into power in 2010, Michael Gove who was the then Secretary of State for Education introduced the CAs and their freedoms. Gove introduced the academy bill to the Members of Parliament in 2010 as follows:

> Today's second reading marks the first legislative step towards the fulfilment of our manifesto commitment to improve England's education system. It grants greater autonomy to individual schools, it gives more freedom to teachers and it injects a new level of dynamism into a programme that has been proven to raise standards for all children and for the disadvantaged most of all (Gove, 2010: online).

The above quotation contradicts with the realities in the academies in question because of the accountabilities to different stake holders as discussed in this chapter and the other chapters. Gove's statement above seems to suggest that when schools are given greater autonomy and are able to operate without major interference from government, they choose their own curriculum and set their own working policies, and in turn raise standards. This implies a degree of trust on the part of government that schools can operate autonomously, or a belief in the free market as the basis of educational planning and provision. Both suggestions have implications for leadership strategies and cultures: leaders can choose to distribute leadership or to be autocratic. Nonetheless, this marketisation of schools is known as neo liberalisation, which was introduced in Britain by Thatcher when she came into power in 1979, according to Maisuria (2014). As cited before in chapter 2, some of the characteristics of neoliberalism in education include concepts of marketisation and autonomy, parents' ability to make choices of best schools for their children, schools ability to make independent decisions without control from the local authority, teachers' salaries being performance related, risk-based approaches to performance management and educational outcomes; the use of data to drive responsible activity; and the re-purposing of education for human capital development' (Hall and Pulsford, 2019: online). The other elements of neoliberalism according to Thompson (2017) include competition between schools, league tables for the whole nation and diversity of provision.

Based on Gove's narrative above where he said 'it gives more freedom to teachers'; this means that the freedom is extended to teachers who are encouraged to be innovative in the way they teach. This therefore means that depending on the leadership strategies, teachers should be able to freely implement their ideas and be trusted to share them with the rest of the staff or other schools. Also, because of this freedom in schools, there should be an increase in up-coming leaders through the support and encouragement of school leaders. However, Boyask (2016) argues that governmental power has continued to be exercised in academies, even when they are outside LA control, and are ostensibly autonomous. Against this backdrop, the next section discusses the tensions between the autonomy that was promised by Gove and the multiple accountabilities that conversion to academy status has brought.

6.1.2. Central government (DfE) position

When schools were converted from being administered by LAs into new CAs, many powers were transferred to these academies. The HTs were given the autonomy to: use their funds in the way that suited them; choose their school holidays and time of their school days; choose their own curriculum; and also decide teachers' pay, according to the Academies Act (2010). However, the interviews that were carried out with the HT and her staff in the second CA presented a different and more complex picture. Naomi, one of the HODs explained that:

> *We are still accountable to DfE and Ofsted* (Naome, HOD).

Also, Tasha the HT of the second academy expressed that:

> *We are accountable to Ofsted and the parents... We are accountable to the DfE. However, the disadvantages are as I've said before we are not allowed to run at a deficit* (Tasha).

Although the academies were given this autonomy, they were also accountable to different stakeholders: central government (DfE) which directly controls academies, Ofsted, parents, pupils, governors, and other agencies. Also, analysis of the interviews indicated that there were non-negotiable policies that came from the DfE and Ofsted that were imposed in these academies (to be discussed in detail in the next section). This shows that although the Academy Act was clearly defined, the way it was interpreted varied. There was a difference in what was stipulated in the Act and what was being practised in schools. The 2010 Academy Act did not mention this practice of non-negotiable policies in autonomous academies which was to emerge in practice. Instead, the Act talked about the rhetoric of autonomy in converted academies and empowering the HTs and governors. This shows a mismatch between political rhetoric, the substance of the Act, and its implementation in practice.

The DfE (2013) in *Academies: Autonomy, accountability, quality and evidence* report argues that autonomy and accountability are more effective in academy schools when they are combined together:

> Autonomy and accountability are the two key pillars of academies reform' (DfE, 2013:2) and that 'international evidence shows that greater autonomy drives up educational standards and is most effective when coupled with accountability (DfE, 2013:1) …But these freedoms are granted within a robust accountability system. The department has toughened accountability for all schools. But academies and free schools are subject to a higher level of scrutiny through the rigour and transparency of their governance arrangements (DfE, 2013:36).

It is clear in the above quotation that the DfE is arguing that good leadership is about the ability to balance autonomy and accountability in academies, and this is what leads to high quality or drives up standards. This means that the HTs in academies are supposed to be able to reconcile tensions between autonomy and accountability. However, this was found to be the

opposite in this study, because in reality, the non-negotiable policies could not be balanced with autonomy, and as a result, accountabilities outweighed the granted autonomy. Furthermore, the DfE (2016:1) also suggests that 'autonomy driven from the bottom up is better than state-led policies'. In subsequent DfE guidance, the emphasis on accountability and standards is even more pronounced, expressing that, 'we will take swift, robust action against signs of underperformance' (DfE, 2016:1). What emerged in the interviews with school leaders in the CAs was that in practice, while ministers and the DfE employ the rhetoric of school leaders knowing best, they were in fact accountable to multiple stakeholders and that the DfE was not prepared to tolerate any failures. This accountability to DfE and the swift measures that the DfE takes against underperformance, defeats the autonomy that these academies were given.

This also resonates with Ingham and Dias (2015) who postulate that autonomy and freedom that existed during the Labour government has been compromised by the heavy layers of accountability during the then Coalition years and later Conservative government. The impact of accountability pressures on academy governance have also been acknowledged by the DfE (2019) who observed that external pressures of accountability and change lead to difficulties in managing schools, especially in schools that have a 'Needs Improvement' Ofsted grade. These external factors can generate pressure that is conveyed to teachers; thus, 'HTs can take actions that create workload and stress for teachers because they feel they have no choice, becoming more likely to over-control, over-track data and create defensive evidence to protect their school' (DfE, 2019:8). The next section will discuss the academy's accountability to the DfE.

6. 2 Precariousness and accountability to DfE

As discussed before, Tasha the HT of the second academy explained how accountable the academy was to the DfE as expressed below*:*

> *We are still accountable, rather than being accountable to the LA and the LA to the DfE,* we *are accountable directly to the DfE.* (Tasha)*.*

The above extract clearly shows that there is a tension between autonomy and accountability; academies are still not independent to make their own decisions without the intervention of the DfE. Tasha's emphasis on the words '*still*' and '*accountable*' in her narrative brings a sense that there were new accountabilities, like in finances and also, more accountabilities to different stake holders. These accountabilities can bring a lot of pressure and precariousness on HTs and staff as evidenced by this statement from Tasha the headteacher:

> *Certainly, my job as HT of an academy, I am very mindful of the fact that my job is quite precarious because I can be gone at the stroke of a pen if required. So that is quite a bit of pressure* (Tasha, HT).

The phrase '*I am very mindful of the fact that my job is quite precarious'* demonstrates that Tasha views the system as harsh and authoritarian. The argument is that such tendencies can bring an atmosphere of uncertainty, as displayed in the HT's excerpt, '*I can be gone at the stroke of a pen'*. The use of the phrase *'stroke of a pen*' brings a sense that Tasha's perception of the power of the DfE and that they focus predominantly on good examination results; therefore, failure to produce these results and a good Ofsted report might result in instant dismissal. Such fears are not unfounded as research by Bradbury (2019) has found that this precariousness even affects the headteachers who have a Good Ofsted grade, and that equally feeling insecure are headteachers who only have one set of lower SATs results as this could lead to DfE/Ofsted intervention with a headteacher being replaced and/or sacked. Due to this precariousness, HTs dedicate most of their time in preparation of SATs and achieving continuous positive attainment results (Burnitt 2016) instead of concentrating on whole school teaching and learning (Bradbury 2019). Notably the immense pressure felt by Tasha (HT) could have resulted in her school underperforming or the other way round, or even both.

There is evidence in Tasha's (HT) excerpt above that autonomy is not a meaningful term in practice, given the depth of accountability and pressures that are mounted on the HT. The people in the precariat group, according to Standing (2011) are those people who have some related and often overlapping insecurities which include labour market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security, and representation security. The HT at the second academy was experiencing precariousness as a kind of work-related condition. She felt that she was at greater risk because of the accountabilities which included surveillance and performance review. This was a specific kind of precarity which was different from the kind of precarity experienced by teaching assistants because of financial cutbacks, or the disappearance of other kinds of work because of automation or services going online. This view is supported by Bradbury (2018) who argues that the change of policy under the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 has caused this precariousness in headteachers.

The feeling of precariousness reported by the second case study HT, Tasha showed that the autonomy was outweighed by accountabilities. The balancing of these two factors could be very difficult where academies' accountability has been toughened and is subject to higher scrutiny, as expressed by the DfE (2016). The argument here is that the academies are confronted with a lot of external interference as illustrated in Tasha's narrative. This contradicts with Gibb's (2017) speech on '*The power of greater freedom and autonomy for schools';* he explained that:

> By combining greater autonomy, raised expectations and a level playing field for all, the school system has gone from strength to strength. Where appropriate, the government has stepped back, with teachers, schools and MATs having control over their destiny (Gibb, 2017: Online).

This could be seen as a political speech and rhetoric because the precariousness and the accountability that Tasha was talking about, did not show that the government had stepped back. To further show the tension between autonomy and accountability, Tasha narrated that:

> *…in terms of health and safety if I am deemed to be negligent, I can go to prison and it needn't be my negligence, but I am responsible in terms of the whole organisation... But there are certain things we have to do which is statutorily imposed upon us like the safeguarding policies (*Tasha, HT, second academy).

This is a very clear example of the tensions between autonomy and accountability and how this HT saw things that could be distributed but did not do so. She saw those things as being her responsibility because of the fear of job insecurity and it also highlights the hierarchical, non-distributed leadership. This shows some of the effects of neoliberalism which the Conservative government has always employed. Lynch (2017) explains that neoliberalism is centred on privatising citizens, and they should be able to take care of their own risks whilst being accountable for their failure and success. Lynch's perspective would seem to be a view shared by Tasha, the HT. Safeguarding should be a collective responsibility, but this HT saw it as an 'I' rather than a 'we'. The evidence from the above extract demonstrates the pressure that the HT was going through, due to being accountable to statutory policies that were imposed by external stakeholders. The use of the term '*prison*' could be interpreted to mean that there was no room for the HT and staff to make mistakes, which is a very good example of precariousness. According to Tasha's perception, even if the teachers made the mistakes, she was accountable for those mistakes and she was the one who could go to prison. The HT misconstrued what was being said by the DfE. According to the DfE (2016) *Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges,* explains that:

> Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their

> families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children... All school and college staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. Every school and college should have a designated safeguarding lead who will provide support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services such as children's social care (DfE, 2016:5).

The above policy demonstrates how DL could have included every staff member in safeguarding children and not the HT only. However, Tasha the HT used the word '*we*' not for DL purposes but to explain the statutory imposed policies. In this case she meant that the whole staff of the second academy had the responsibility to observe the safeguarding rules which were imposed from above. DfE (2016) makes clear that it was not the responsibility of the head only, which meant that if one of the members of staff failed to apply this policy, that staff would be answerable, instead of the HT. Moreover, DL is inclusive and had it been applied by the HT, this would have allowed her to choose a designated safeguarding lead or a team of leaders as part of distributing the leadership, who supported everyone and liaised with the outside agents, which included Ofsted and the DfE. This would have meant that when Ofsted visited the academy, they would have spoken to the safeguarding leader on issues concerning safeguarding, presumably if it was not the HT who had the responsibility for safeguarding. Tasha the HT explained that she would go to prison if she was deemed to be negligent, hence the use of '*I*'. This could be interpreted to be her perception because the DfE (2016) safeguarding guidance does not mention that. Although she was accountable, she could not go to prison because of another teacher's mistake. The DfE (2016) guidance explains that the member of staff who is facing an allegation can either be suspended or reported to the police depending on the seriousness of the case. It explains that:

> The procedures for dealing with allegations need to be applied with common sense and judgement. Many cases may well either not meet

> the criteria set out above or may do so without warranting consideration of either a police investigation or enquiries by local authority children's social care services. In these cases, local arrangements should be followed to resolve cases without delay (DfE, 2016:40).

The above quotation shows that it is not every case that will warrant either a safeguarding allegation being investigated and/or a member of staff being prosecuted or going to prison, as it depends on the case. However, the HT of the second academy could have thought that she could go to prison because of the accountabilities that surrounded her and the precariousness she felt of losing her job. This demonstrated the changing role of an academy head who was now ultimately accountable for all the activities of the whole organisation and how fearful she was to make mistakes. The DfE (2016) stipulates the procedure to follow if it is the HT who is the subject of an allegation; it says that the chair of governors immediately discusses the allegation with the designated officer(s). From their discussion they decide the course of action depending on the seriousness of the case. This also shows that the HT does not just go to prison for every safeguarding case. Even if she loses her job, it does not mean that she goes to prison.

This accountability brought a lot of pressure on the HT, as echoed by Tasha (HT) who said: '*...so that is quite a bit of pressure'.* That pressure could have affected her leadership practice and could explain why she used autocratic leadership as a means of managing her staff. It is important to observe that autocratic headteachers do not focus on improving a vision for their school organisations or creating relationships, but they focus on achieving their tasks and to do so effectively (Wynn, 2019). More notable was the contrast between autonomy and the statutory policies that were *'imposed upon'* the HT and staff, as echoed by Tasha. As stated before, whilst the DfE has given the academies freedom, they appear not to trust them to achieve these freedoms, therefore, they have made DfE arrangements and accountability in meeting them much tighter, as cited in DfE (2013). These are some of the tensions between autonomy and accountability in academies. This was illustrated by interviews in the academy

conversion section which suggested that when the idea of academies was presented to the second academy school, the academy head, governors and staff did not fully understand how academies function in real practice. This resonates with Don, the HT of the first academy school who explained that, '…*academy conversion was new to us and the whole school community. It was scary to us.* The HTs of both academies and their teachers did not know what academy status was going to mean, especially in terms of limited freedom, and having a lot of accountabilities. This demonstrates the government's rhetoric as opposed to policy and practice. The next section will discuss the HTs' accountability to Ofsted and non-negotiable policies.

6.3 Accountability to Ofsted and non-negotiable policies

Discussions with the HTs of these two academies indicated that they were also accountable to Ofsted which was there to monitor the standards of these schools. According to Jackson (2017) the Ofsted inspection is data-driven and risk-based, and the frequency of schools' inspection depends on their performance. Jackson further explained that the overall judgement of a school's effectiveness is based on the pupils' performance, the teaching quality, pupil behaviour and safety, and the quality of its leadership and management. Whilst acknowledging that staff understood some of the required standards in running an academy, interviews from the HTs reflected that there were some polices that were imposed on them which were non-negotiable. They further stated that due to this kind of pressure being imposed on them by Ofsted, they ended up being autocratic and imposing certain things on teachers. These policies had resonance with the second academy HT who provided an insight into how policies from Ofsted were imposed on them. In her narrative Tasha explained that:

> *Some things from Ofsted, I have no choice over and they have to be done a certain way. I have to be autocratic because that's how it has to be for all of us.* (Tasha, HT of the second academy).

Nancy from the first academy explained the HT's autocratic practice which was driven by external forces in the excerpt below:

> *If Ofsted is coming, then the approach he is going to take is going to be very different, because he must, so things will change. He is autocratic at times* (Nancy, HOD).

Don from the first academy also expressed that:

> *There are certain things that are non-negotiable (shaking his head and shifting his sitting position). We are not an exam factory, but we will know that exam results and what drives Ofsted and what drives the standards agenda and what drives the judgement you get. I think staff need to understand and they do understand that numbers of students that apply to come to the school will be linked to Ofsted, and that links to the budget, which links to how much capitation we get to spend in a school. So, there are things that are not negotiable, and staff understand that* (Don, HT).

The use of such phrases as '*non-negotiable'* from Don's interview and '*no choice'* from Tasha's (HT) interview could be interpreted as a perception by the HTs whose focus may be on achieving the standards of Ofsted whilst overriding the interest and values of their staff. However, 'for many teachers across the UK, the term 'Ofsted' is met with mixed reactions. Ofsted has the ability to provoke feelings of anxiety for educators, and the authority to paint schools in a negative or positive light' (Study International Staff, 2019:1). This is demonstrated with Don's (HT) interview when he said that '*we will know that there are exam results, and what drives Ofsted and what drives the standard agenda, and what drives the judgement you get'.* This shows the tension between rhetoric of autonomy and realities of high accountability, and changes in leadership approach from DL. What Don is talking about in the above excerpt resonates with some educational policy reforms that were introduced in 2015

and implemented in 2017 which include the introduction of a new curriculum and changed qualifications at GCSE and A level, with the qualification assessments removed from coursework to exams, with the introduction of a new grading scale of 9–1(*Ibid*).

These non-negotiable policy reforms are passed down to teachers by headteachers through new managerialism, which is affecting the teachers' well-being and professionalism (Open Access Government, 2019). On the other hand, it could be argued that HTs use the apparent non-negotiability of stakeholders like Ofsted to actually manage staff. Although there were some statutory policies that were highlighted by Tasha (HT), which were non-negotiable such as the safeguarding policy, some of the Ofsted policies could not be viewed as non-negotiable; they had a choice because they were not statutory. This means that some of Don's (HT) Ofsted underpinnings that he mentioned in his excerpt which include, budgets, the standards agenda and exams could be negotiable according to the DfE (2014) *Statutory policies for schools.*

Although the 2010 Academies Act gives freedom to the school to teach what it wants, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 still holds schools accountable for teaching whatever it is they choose to teach (DfE, 2020). It can be argued that there is a real lack of freedom from accountability caused by the Ofsted framework. Some of these impositions and non-negotiability were not coming from the school or the HT; they were coming from the external structures, such as the DfE and Ofsted. If the academy did not meet its exam expectations, it could have gone into special measures, as explained by Don (HT) in the above excerpt about the exams and Ofsted. This shows that there was no autonomy in these non-negotiable policies which were imposed on staff without their contribution or ownership. Nonetheless, from Don's perspective, what was non-negotiable was the need to improve student attainment, both the numbers and the grades students achieved, which was necessary to address the government's standards agenda.

This is the reason why the HT said that '…*staff need to understand, and they do understand…'.* These exam results informed Ofsted inspections and improvement measures enforced.

Therefore, in the above excerpt the HT wanted his staff to understand that student recruitment (and presumably student retention) was informed by student attainment outcomes which they used to market their academy, and these outcomes also impacted on school league tables. The HT also wanted his staff to understand that the school budget and what can be spent on staffing/school resources was linked to student numbers. This means that if this academy had low numbers, it potentially meant that there was a shortfall in the budget and this had implications for staffing, school resources and school maintenance.

Although the HT was trained as a leader during the then New Labour government by NCSL as indicated in table one, when DL was the driving philosophy, the above excerpt suggests that in an academy school, it was not easy for the HT to apply DL principles when he was controlled by central government and accountable to Ofsted. Crawford (2012) one of the critics of DL supports the above statement by explaining that if school leaders are accountable to external agents for externally mandated targets, DL may have distinct application limits in the school organisation, regardless of it being rhetorically part and parcel of practice. This is demonstrated in the HT's excerpt where he could not practice DL because the external factors mitigated against it. Consequently, although DL could have been preferred as part of the good leadership practice, in this case, it was difficult to reconcile it with the external demands of this academy which are listed in the above excerpt. If the academy had complete autonomy without Ofsted and the DfE accountabilities, the HT would not have been concerned about Ofsted, the standards agenda and judgement of the school as expressed in the excerpt above. He was not going to focus more on the external forces; he was going to make his decisions with his staff on what works well within their academy.

Nevertheless, because of the accountabilities which were attached to this academy, the HT had no power over these non-negotiable policies, he had to impose them. This resonates with Wrigley and Kalambouka (2012) who express that the academy heads are under great

pressure to raise attainment scores, and this has produced a spurious improvement in results to satisfy the political masters, but with questionable benefit to students. Also, Gunter (2011) observes that the new converted academies HTs are under pressure to persuade a variety of individuals, professional organisations and government that, from the day of opening, they would be sustainably successful.

Although School Self-Evaluation (SSE) was discontinued by the former Coalition government, it could be suggested as a way forward. According to Park (2013), Christine Blower, the General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers raised the issues of accountability in schools, and she argued that Ofsted was not the answer. She suggested a rigorous system of SSE with a light touch of external moderation to check whether the schools were assessing properly. This resonates with Spielman's (2017) Ofsted Annual report for 2017 where she expressed her support of the school-led self-improving system. She observed that much of the improvement of education standards in recent years emanated from the school system itself, and not from central or local government and Ofsted. However, Spielman acknowledged that there was a real challenge for both policymakers and for the school system to do more to break down the strongholds and appreciate the full potential of a self-improving system. The SSE system supports the DL principles which are inclusive and transparent.

Nancy (HOD) from the first academy also explained a different source of the HT's autocratic practice which was driven by external forces when she said that, '*if Ofsted is coming, then the approach he is going to take is going to be very different, because he must, so things will change. He is autocratic at times'.* This demonstrates how precarious the HT was and the accountability that he had to Ofsted. One would query why the HT would change his approach when Ofsted visited the academy? The above quotation suggests that although at times the HT tried to apply DL, he would find himself taking the autocratic or top-down route because of the outside pressures that were beyond his control. Gunter (2011) echoed the same sentiments when he explains that HTs are accountable to different outside groups which include Ofsted

and central government. The most interesting thing was that the teachers understood this change of leadership practice, as explained by Nancy that '*because he must',* meaning that they understood the pressures that were caused by Ofsted visits. This means that the teachers were also under pressure because they were afraid to fail the Ofsted inspection; that is why they understood the change of leadership from the HT.

The fear and accountability to Ofsted are in contrast with the autonomy that academies were given. According to Oduro's (2004) pull and push factors, in order to successfully implement DL, there should be a reduction of external pressure on school organisations. Oduro further suggests that greater autonomy should be bestowed in schools so that they may freely decide where they want to be, how and when they want to get there. However, there is a conflict of interest in the sense that the then Coalition government and the Conservative government's CAs' agenda, which is running academies like businesses, has to be successful, thereby causing pressure on HTs in order to fulfil this political agenda. The head was trying to use different leadership styles that suited different situations. In this case, he was directing the school towards good inspection outcomes, so he needed to change his leadership styles in order to meet Ofsted requirements. That is why the teachers understood his actions because they wanted to achieve an outcome that was desirable.

6.3.1. 'Every day is an Ofsted day'

Due to the demands of Ofsted and turning around the school from 'needs improvement' to a 'Good' grade, Tasha HT of the second academy explained how she viewed every school day in the excerpt below.

> *Every day is an Ofsted day, we shouldn't be doing things special for Ofsted, but obviously with our school, we have actually got to get ourselves to that position where every day is an Ofsted day* (Tasha, HT).

Evidence from Tasha's extract shows how precarious she was. The use of '*we have actually got to get ourselves to that position where every day is an Ofsted day',* can be taken to be a very bold statement which underpins the magnitude of the pressure that was created at this academy as a result of the requirements of Ofsted. Ofsted inspectors visit schools 'to inspect teachers' lessons, data, school leadership and the running of the school, and then they rate the schools' performance with a scale from satisfactory to excellent' (Study International Staff, 2019:1). In the extract, Tasha repeated the word *'we'* whenever she was referring to the expectations of Ofsted. This can be interpreted to mean that the pressure and precariousness in this academy was multi-layered and it was affecting everyone from top to bottom but in different ways. The head was precarious in a different way to her staff. This form of precarity where the HT was afraid of Ofsted concurs with Lepkowska's (2014) observation that there is constant fear in academy heads that one failure of an Ofsted inspection could lead to the end of their career. In addition, Lepkowska reports that HTs who have two years of experience or more are afraid of being replaced.

It can be proposed therefore, that such pressure and precariousness can lead to low staff morale and work intensification, which can result in staff underperforming, thereby defeating the expectation of Ofsted. More so, it could be argued that this type of practice could affect the work life balance of all the staff at this school because of the pressure. These findings are supported by Ofsted's (2019) report which explained that the teachers' stress was caused by these inspections, which were increasing the administrative workload, and an extreme concentration on data and exam results, which were reducing the teachers' focus to exams results instead of concentrating on quality education. This is also supported by Ferguson's (2019) survey, which shows that teachers are not happy with Ofsted, as these teachers expressed that Ofsted had a negative effect on them because of the fears, worries and anxiety that it brings with it in schools. Nonetheless, the staff could focus on Ofsted's demands and compromise their teaching and learning because of treating every day as an Ofsted day. This

resonates with the observation of the new Ofsted's (2019) inspection framework which explains that:

> Accountability is important, but the system as currently constructed can divert schools from the real substance of education. An industry has arisen around data. What young people learn is too often coming second to delivering performance table data. This data focus also leads to unnecessary workload for teachers, diverting them from the reason they chose to enter the profession. Teaching to the test and narrowing have had the greatest negative effect on those we care about the most: the most disadvantaged and the least able children. It is therefore time for Ofsted to stop making separate judgements about pupil outcomes. Any conversation about pupil outcomes should be part of a larger conversation about the quality of education they receive (Ofsted, 2019: slide 15).

The above new Ofsted framework supports Ofsted's report by Chief Inspector Spielman (2017) who pointed out that one of their strategies was to be responsible and fair; they wanted to be engaged and responsive and using their influence with care, not as a sledgehammer. This means that they did not want to use a heavy hand, like removing HTs when their schools fail an Ofsted inspection. Instead of the HT having confidence in her teachers as part of DL, she was using Ofsted to instil fear in them, as a way of managing them by keeping them in a constant state of alert, which is part of new managerialism, even though Ofsted were more flexible and supportive than what she suggested. This new managerialism is designed to drive up educational standards, mostly within single school organisations and in which headteachers, who are viewed as single leaders within schools are expected to perform this vital role (Hall *et al,* 2013). Drawing from this, the above-mentioned Ofsted (2019) inspection framework could solve this Ofsted problem because it aims to focus on quality of education instead of the data that they were focusing on. Thus, refocusing more on how schools are

achieving results and less pressure to produce assessment information. The framework also wants to reduce the workload for teachers and leaders.

Reflecting on the account of Tasha about treating '*every day as an Ofsted day'*, it can be postulated that the HT and staff were not supposed to be pressurised into thinking along such philosophies, because Ofsted inspectors phone when they want to visit a school. This gives schools adequate time to prepare and be ready to be inspected. Also, it can be argued that if Tasha (HT) was doing the right thing of moving the school forward from 'needs improvement' to 'Good', she and her staff were not supposed to panic and work under such pressure. On the contrary, it can be suggested that Tasha could have been using this tactic as a way of policing and controlling her staff, so that they would work hard to achieve results. This fear and precariousness shaped the way she led this academy. Ofsted was her focus and she saw it as her preparation for her accountability. Also, all her teachers were constantly on the edge because they were all brought into this accountability culture. This made their job to be precarious and under pressure, as explained by Bertha from the second academy that:

> …*they* [governors] *are both getting pressure from Ofsted and DfE and a lot of it flows down to her* [the HT]*, down through to staff and the pressure on the staff is a result of the pressure on them* (Bertha, HOD).

The above excerpt demonstrates the multi-layered pressure at this academy because there was a leadership and accountability culture which was using these in particular ways. It can be suggested that the HT's leadership could have been better with more security and more support for risk, instead of feeling precarious. However, the standards agenda, improving outcomes and notions of accountability were accompanied by pressure and precarious experience, as suggested in the interviews. There is a contradiction between Spielman's annual 2017/2018 speech, who is the Ofsted Chief Inspector and the interviews in this section. According to Study International Staff (2019), Spielman explained that:

> I have seen a really positive response to the focus we are bringing on the substance of the education – the curriculum. Across all the sectors we inspect and regulate, there is a real understanding that we need to regain our focus on substance: to teach an academic curriculum, to improve social care practice, to open up a range of future careers to young people (Study International Staff, 2019:1).

However, Spielman's above speech according to the Study International Staff, was in contrast with the teachers' survey that they carried out, which showed that teachers' impending stress was due to Ofsted inspections. This also resonates with the interviews in this study that reflects that they were getting a lot of pressure and stress from Ofsted. Following these comments made by Spielman it is likely that they will result in a paradigm shift, however, research is required to assess whether a shift occurred and if yes, the nature of it. One of the HODs explained how they were given a lot of unnecessary work which was spurious for the sake of Ofsted.

> *I think we do too many things not well enough where we should be doing fewer things, focusing on what goes on in the classroom much more. We have a lot of spurious tasks that we do around lessons, documenting things, some of which are for Ofsted reasons* (Archie).

The above excerpt demonstrates the culture of this academy where the teachers spent a lot of their teaching time doing '*spurious tasks'.* The word *'spurious'* suggests that the whole staff spent a lot of time writing documents as evidence for Ofsted which did not reflect their practice. This was considered a waste of valuable teaching time. This view is supported by the DfE (2018) and Ferguson (2019) who reiterated that teachers complained that they had an added workload because they were asked to tick a lot of boxes on unnecessary things that had nothing to do with teaching and learning, in order to impress Ofsted inspectors. Furthermore, Ferguson' s findings show that headteachers and teachers did not feel supported by Ofsted,

but they felt that the system was vindictive because Ofsted was just coming to look for faults and failing the schools, without giving them solutions and putting support systems in place. However, Archie (HOD) felt they were doing too many things which meant they were not doing them sufficiently well. Rather they should have done fewer things, paying attention to teaching and learning in the classroom. This quotation '*I think we do too many things not well enough where we should be doing fewer things, focusing on what goes on in the classroom much more,'* suggest the reason why this school had a 'needs improvement' grade. It suggests that they did not concentrate much on teaching and learning because of focusing on irrelevant spurious clerical work of filling in a lot of documents for Ofsted, and yet Ofsted wanted to see evidence of good teaching and learning, as explained before. However, the HT of the second academy was implementing a particular form of leadership because of her perceptions of accountabilities and precarity.

The experiences shared by Archie (HOD) might be a reflection of what is happening in other academies as explained by Park (2013) who observes that schools which are expecting an Ofsted visit are spending most of their time concentrating on the areas where the inspectors usually focus on, instead of teaching and learning in the classrooms. As a result of this, Park explained that this might lead to over drilling in some subjects at the expense of others, which is a sheer waste of time on both the part of the teachers and pupils. Instead of pretending to do the things that they did not normally do when Ofsted visited the school, the HT and the staff could have united as a team and just concentrated on what they usually did; teaching and learning. At the second academy, teachers also experienced a lot of pressure due to this Ofsted preparation as explained in the excerpt below. One of the teachers complained that:

> *Well it's the pressure from Ofsted, it's all these things happening and then things given to you that you didn't know are going to happen and so are not part of the plan initially and everything has to be done to such high standard. I just think that we are all working so hard and we are burning out. I am not prepared, I don't want to drop dead, I have a*

few more years ahead of me please. I just think, is it worth the hassle?

(Tecla, teacher without a leadership position).

This is another form of precarity and some of the pressures that the teachers were experiencing under the leadership of this HT, because of the pressure that was coming from Ofsted which is part of managerialism. It can therefore be argued that the new managerialism in education shows that commitment to work is inconsistent because of the stress that it brings on staff and some of them are not confident to take leadership roles (Busher and Saran, 2013) as exemplified by Tecla, a teacher who had 36 years teaching experience, and was eligible for a leadership position, but she had none. The problem here also is that the teachers according to Tecla, were '*not part of the plan'*. This means that they were not involved in policy and decision making. However, these teachers were the ones who were supposed to do all the work. This resulted in overworking the teachers to the extent that they could not take it anymore, as stated by Tecla who complained that, '*I don't want to drop dead'.* The most devastating thing was that the things that the teachers were expected to do were deemed not worth the hassle, and they '*had to be done to such high standard,'* as expressed by Tecla. This was the clerical or administrative work which had nothing to do with their teaching and learning. The heavy workload issues and other pressures from DfE and Ofsted were some of the things that were pushing teachers out of the profession; this resonates with the DfE (2019:12) who expressed that 'the challenge of retaining early career teachers has been getting worse in recent years. Over 20% of new teachers leave the profession within their first 2 years of teaching, and 33% leave within their first 5 years'.

Also, the DfE (2019) introduced guidance for leaders on reducing teacher workload which includes using technology effectively, avoiding unnecessary marking and feedback, eliminating unnecessary workload around planning and teaching resources, considering the design of data management systems and avoiding unnecessary communication by reducing meeting times. This high standard was supposed to be displayed in teaching and learning, instead of doi*ng 'spurious things'* for Ofsted. However, these teachers could not complain because of their

precariousness. According to Standing (2014), the precariat have rights insecurity because their rights are fewer than others. This was demonstrated in this academy where teachers were just given work that they were not told about before and given administrative work which had nothing to do with teaching and learning.

Arguably, if Ofsted was working together with the whole school community as a team, the HT could have employed positive leadership styles that were inclusive like the DL model, instead of autocratic leadership. Also, teachers could have focused their attention on teaching and learning and could have produced better results, instead of diverting their teaching and learning attention to writing '*spurious'* documents, in order to tick Ofsted boxes. They could have united as a team and spoke with one voice, instead of the HT telling teachers what to do. This is about trust; she could have distributed the leadership to the staff in order to turn the school around, and it could have even reduced the precariousness and pressure of Ofsted from the whole school organisation. The DfE (2018) suggested that:

> Improving in-school support for teachers – greater levels of support and understanding from SLT was needed, for example, in terms of the management of pupil behaviour, and the ability to have open and honest conversations. This would help support teachers' relationships with their SLT and reduce feelings of pressure in terms of scrutiny, accountability and workload. Considerations would be how the message to senior leaders and teachers can be strengthened to dispel the myths around inspection and the commitment to reduce workload (DfE, 2018:6).

However, Tecla's excerpt demonstrates the HT's approach of using an external Ofsted threat to develop a particular leadership approach.

Although Tasha was under pressure due to Ofsted demands, she believed that she was going to turn around the school, as explained below:

> *I am determined that we are going to get that Ofsted 'Good', there are times when it worries me and I think I don't want to do it anymore, but because it means so much to many people and if we don't, I'm going to be so devastated because we have all put so much into it* (Tasha, HT).

The excerpt shows that everyone had worked hard, and they all wanted to get a 'Good' grade when Ofsted inspectors visited them, but her use of '*we*' was just used as rhetoric and was not DL related but it was focused on her because there was no teamwork as demonstrated in the use of 'I'. Tasha (HT) was being autocratic in the way she led the academy, as she mentioned it before, because she wanted the whole school to pull through their Ofsted inspection. This can be related to her previous excerpt where she again used 'we' and 'I' to explain the statutory imposed policies when she said '…*but there are certain things we have to do which is statutorily imposed upon us like the safeguarding policies',* but she said that she can go to prison if they break the statutory rules. Tasha used '*we*' as a form of control in order for everyone to observe the statutory policies. When it came to accountability, Tasha used '*I*' to explain that she was the one who was responsible if anything went wrong and it also positions her in a place of power.

It is evident in the above extracts that there was a lot of pressure that was being experienced by the HT and staff by the desire to meet Ofsted standards. This is because this academy had a 'needs improvement' grade. The use of the phrase '*I think I don't want to do it anymore'* portrays the dejection and weariness of all the things that the HT was encountering. However, on the other hand the HT showed enthusiasm to continue in her role, and it could be concluded that the push factor was the desire to satisfy the whole school community when she said, '*because it means so much to many people'* and also '*I am determined that we are going to get that Ofsted 'Good'.* Contrastingly, the dejection sentiments were reiterated by Matty, one of the HODs who stated that '*I am dissatisfied with the job, I have decided to leave'.* By using the above phrase, it could be assumed that he was leaving because his needs were not met.

Probably, part of the dissatisfaction included the Ofsted expectation pressure which Tasha was talking about. This resonates with Park's (2013) suggestion that many staff and HTs cannot tolerate the pressure of negative judgements that is exerted by Ofsted, rather, they choose to quit than to bear the pressure.

Furthermore, evidence from the interviews showed that where there is a failing school, HTs and staff will find themselves in a predicament that undermines their autonomy. Also, Ofsted was perceived to be an enemy of these academies, as demonstrated in the use of statements like, '*Ofsted is an agency, a really punitive, they're not here to help really'* by Sam. It can be argued that it could not have been an accurate perception, but the HT used Ofsted to ensure their leadership was effective. This was shown in what Sam expressed as an '*astronomical'* amount of time that the teachers were spending on gathering evidence for Ofsted, which could have been because of the fear that was instilled by Ofsted on HTs and staff. This resonates with Ferguson's survey which showed that:

> Schools should be held accountable, but they should be supported as well as evaluated, ideally by other school leaders with local expertise, as part of a continuous improvement process. Context matters and, unlike Ofsted inspectors, local teachers will understand the school's demographic and its history over the years. Schools should be told: these are your strengths, these are your weaknesses and these are some brilliant schools in your geographical area, we're going to support you to work together collaboratively (Ferguson, 2019: Online).

If schools are supported with school leaders with local expertise and if teachers and schools are told their weaknesses and strengths as argued by Ferguson (2019) there would be less fear, stress and pressure because they would get support and work collaboratively in creating change. Nonetheless, Jackson (2017) argues that the Regional school commissioners which

act on behalf of the DfE (2010a) issue formal warning notices, setting out required improvements with deadlines to underperforming schools. If the academy does not improve, they close it. The next section will discuss academy networking.

6.3.2 Academy networking

Networking between CAs is encouraged in order to attain collective goals, exchange ideas, share resources, for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities and reduce uncertainty. It can be noted that although the case study academies appeared to be operating in isolation, the HTs were networking with other heads, though not as established by the NCSL during the then New Labour government. Tasha, the headteacher of the second academy explained how academy heads were networking:

> *Many heads will talk about Ofsted, from mid-day on a Monday through to 2pm on a Wednesday. The blood pressure goes up then it comes down and that's the way to live* (Tasha, HT).

This excerpt demonstrates the level of pressure that the HTs were subjected to because of the fear of Ofsted. The phrase *'the blood pressure goes up', shows the* impact on the second case study HT's health and well-being. Tasha's excerpt shows that despite networking with other HTs most of the HTs were unsettled and they did not have a peace of mind. She went even further to elaborate that *'that's the way to live',* which suggested that it was an ongoing process. This is similar to '*every day is an Ofsted day*' in 6.3.1 This is a very difficult situation for HTs to work under such conditions. This shows the tensions between external pressures and the accountabilities of headship (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2013); these Ofsted tensions are driving away head teachers from their jobs and causing difficulties in recruiting and retaining headteachers (Busby 2019; Turner 2018). The excerpt also suggests that instead of discussing the running of academies or the business framework, the academy heads talked more about Ofsted inspections and student attainment, and how to prepare for Ofsted, as these were the common issues. They seemed not to draw from each other's expertise, and yet networking is

about heads and teachers from different schools coming together and trying to resolve teaching and learning issues that they were encountering. They could also exchange good practice and how they might apply it in their schools. However, the Ofsted matter was the common concerns of HTs, rather than any more exciting or innovative practice, as portrayed in the above excerpt.

During the then New Labour government, the people who were doing the networking were not necessarily HTs but were middle managers or curriculum managers, and they were talking to other curriculum managers. The benefits of this networking according to NCSL (2005) are as follows: the learning opportunities that are available for pupils; improving the expertise of teachers and sharing their practice; provision of diversity, opportunities and flexibility from different schools that are not offered by a standalone school; encourage creativity, risk-taking and innovation in order to improve teaching and learning; promotes teachers' professional development and schools are given the opportunities to learn from one another's experience; thus, working smarter together rather than harder alone.

However, in this period of a Conservative government, the HTs in academies as demonstrated in the above excerpt talked about how to manage Ofsted, instead of getting middle management or teachers who are interested in networking, as part of DL practice. This resonates with Diamond and Spillane (2016) who gave an example of two schools which introduced the position of full-time mathematics coach, and from that time the interaction patterns between these two schools regarding mathematics improved a lot. Some of these traits of networking which used to exist during the New Labour government are now found in Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) because all schools in a MAT network together and they try to solve problems collectively. However, these two schools in this study were not in a MAT and were not benefiting from networking. Instead, they were spending their time talking about Ofsted and finances. The next section will discuss autonomy of the curriculum.

6.4 Autonomy of the curriculum and accountability to different stakeholders including DfE and Ofsted

This section will discuss staff perceptions at the second case study academy of the HT's views with regards to autonomy of the curriculum as stipulated by the DfE (2010). As discussed before, converter academies were given the autonomy to operate on their own which included the autonomy to choose their own curriculum. The richness of the phenomenography research allowed people to freely bring out their different experiences. For example, Derrick (Head of Year) at the second academy referring to the HT responsible for the school becoming an academy, thought that since the new HT was coming from an independent school, he wanted to use the converter academy autonomy to change the school into a semi-independent school as explained below:

> *There were certainly personal reasons by the existing head at the time, because he came from the independent sector where he was before. So, by making the academy semi-independent gave him more autonomy to actually take the school wherever he wanted to* (Derrick, head of year).

Although this HT from the second academy came from a private school, he did not stay at this school after the conversion. It can be suggested that he probably realised that he would not have the autonomy that was promised. The DfE (2010a) explained that academies are given freedom over budgets, the curriculum, hiring staff, term times and the length of school days. This could be one of the perceived reasons why the HT rushed the consultation and even made the decision to convert before consultation, as demonstrated in the teachers' extracts. Derrick's extract could be interpreted to mean that this HT thought that he was able to change things and run the school in the same way that he used to in a private school that he was in before. However, it did not turn out in their favour because of the accountabilities of academies, which were discussed earlier on in this chapter. According to Ball (2013) the change of

accountability and powers reflects a policy trend known as ‘reregulation’ and there is a creation of new models of centralised control. Instead of the rhetoric of autonomy in academies, according to DfE (2010a) the LA duties were substituted by Regional Commissioners who were appointed by central government to oversee academies. The autonomy that this academy was promised turned out to be rhetoric; they were not flexible to do whatever they wanted.

Despite the absence of autonomy in practice, it was evident the school governors believed they could change the curriculum as argued a deputy governor who suggested that they had some curriculum ideas that they wanted to implement:

> *We were offered some academic freedoms around the curriculum and those kinds of things. We had some ideas to do with that, which offered opportunities that we wouldn't have had in the mainstream funding* (Ben, deputy governor).

However, evidence from the staff showed that this second academy did not grab this opportunity of curriculum change which was on offer. Below is a very good example of the academy not taking the curriculum autonomy, which was offered to academies, as explained by Matty:

> *I am obviously aware of the academy process that it would allow schools to have a lot of autonomy. But it was something that was particularly a main issue, and really a lot of the freedoms for instance the design of the curriculum and things like that. The ability to choose subjects and topics within subjects hasn’t been explored within this academy* (Matty, HOD).

The above extract demonstrates the risk aversion by the HT (Tasha - who took over after the HT responsible for the conversion left) of changing the curriculum; there were tensions between the head and the staff because Matty was aware that academies were able to exercise their freedoms to change their curriculum without any hindrance, but it was not

happening. The use of the phrase '*hasn't been explored within this academy*' can be translated to mean that teachers have not been given the autonomy to change the curriculum by the HT. This may be reflective of the HT's perception of precariousness and risk avoidance strategies, considering that this was a new academy which was used to the traditional management within LA schools. There is a sense that the HT could have been taking a cautious approach to change, due to lack of confidence, as demonstrated in Matty's narrative when he described the HT as:

> *Having lack of a clear vision, lack of ability as well as a few personality defects* (raising his voice and quite emotional*). Lack of sort of ability to value the work of others and lack of confidence in her own ability* (Matty, HOD).

Matty had insights into the HT's leadership rather than just going along with their approaches of Ofsted threats, as mentioned before. It can be argued that the lack of confidence and trust by the HT in her staffs' ability were likely to create an atmosphere which might have caused teachers to reluctantly apply their expertise. Matty as a HOD had high expectations of curriculum change, and was looking forward to adapting his subject curriculum, but his dream of exercising his power to influence change in his subject curriculum was held back because of the risk avoidance and accountability culture at this academy.

Concurrently, what Matty seemed to be critical about was the HT's lack of applying autonomy separately from accountability. This was the reason why Matty raised his voice when he explained the above excerpt and he was quite emotional about it. These gestures could be interpreted to mean that Matty was quite affected by the HT's inability to change the curriculum and to give autonomy to the HODs. Critically, accountability juxtaposed with autonomy may at times yield productive results, as supported by the DfE (2010); that is if one is not overriding the other. However, although in theory it seemed possible for an academy to change their curriculum to suit their academy requirements, in practice, it proved difficult because of the

uncertainty and limited type of autonomy prescribed by the DfE which led to risk avoidance by the HT. Matty perceived this risk avoidance by the HT as lack of a clear vision, ability and confidence. The HT of the second academy defended not changing the curriculum when she said that:

> *We don't have to teach the national curriculum if we do not want to, but we are still accountable directly to the DfE (*Tasha).

Reflecting on the account of Tasha, it would seem that she had two oppositional sides. The first part of the above excerpt '*We don't have to teach the national curriculum if we do not want to'* can be interpreted to mean that the HT was aware of the curriculum freedom that was given to academies and she acknowledged that she had the freedom to make choices. However, the phrase '*but we are still accountable directly to the DfE*' defeats that power of choice, which means that the autonomy here was distracted or overpowered by the accountability to the DfE. This brings a sharp contrast between autonomy and accountability in academies and makes it difficult to reconcile these two entities. It can be assumed that developing their own curriculum might have led this academy to another failure to meet Ofsted standards. Furthermore, they needed the exam results which were a DfE requirement, in order to move the school forward.

Drawing on this, it can be claimed that all this educational rhetoric from the then former Coalition government about schools having their freedom and autonomy, setting their own curriculum and setting their own criteria was about advertising the government's agenda of academy conversion to the HTs. Furthermore, as stated before, this accountability practice removed the notion of autonomy and instead, it took the centre stage. To reinforce Tasha's ideas, Bertha one of the HODs from the second academy further cited that:

> *We have chosen as an academy to follow the national curriculum although we obviously have the scope to go our way. I know so in maths we are following the new curriculum for maths* (Bertha, HOD).

This extract added an interesting dimension to the curriculum autonomy of this academy in that the academy staff preferred to follow the national curriculum instead of changing it. The use of the word '*we'* by both Tasha and Bertha can be translated to mean that the whole school community agreed to follow the national curriculum, even if they were aware of the autonomy option. On the contrary, it can also be argued that '*we*' can mean two or a few people; in this case, the HT and the HOD who could have made the decision for the whole school to follow the national curriculum. This is demonstrated in Matty's excerpt above who could not understand why the academy was not changing the curriculum. This could be viewed as an autocratic practice, thereby undermining the principle of autonomy and DL.

It could be postulated that at this academy it was difficult to change the curriculum because of the DfE's (2010) expectations, which included achieving the key stages in SATS in English and maths and the published league tables. This is supported by Mansell (2016) who observes that:

> It is questionable how much freedom academies currently enjoy over assessments, with statutory assessments defined for primary schools at the end of key stages 1 and 2 and even English secondary schools, while having a choice of exams for pupils at age 16 and 18 through competing exam boards, having to choose between externally-designed qualifications, rather than designing them themselves. There is more autonomy for English academies in terms of the curriculum but in reality, this can be restricted by the assessment regime (Mansell, 2016, p.8).

If all schools are expected to adhere to the statutory assessments for primary and secondary schools, it means that there is limited curriculum autonomy in academies. Drawing on this, it shows that there were tensions between this academy's curriculum accountability to DfE and Ofsted, and the freedom and flexibility that were promised by DfE as a key aspect of driving

up standards for all students; particularly for those who were struggling. As discussed before, this academy was struggling because it had a 'needs improvement' grade. The evidence from the above extracts shows the difficulties in implementing these freedoms, and it can be asserted that these freedoms were political rhetoric or political and ministerial speech. On the other hand, Matty's perception of Ofsted was different from the above statement; he perceived that the HT was using Ofsted in order to enforce her own policies:

> *I think Ofsted have got less power than it's actually said. I think their name is quite often branded about as a kind of stick to enforce her [the HT's] policies* (Matty, HOD).

The above excerpt clearly indicates that despite Ofsted having inspection control over academies, in reality the HT could have been using Ofsted as a smokescreen to achieve her agenda. The use of '*less power'* brings a sense that the HT may have been exaggerating the requirements of Ofsted as a management tool. This could be an indication that the HT could have been considered by staff to be an obstruction to DL or a reflection of the HT's precariousness. This obstruction could mean that teachers were unable to introduce their own innovations. In view of this, the HT could have been exercising an autocratic type of leadership in a subtle way. This observation is supported by Dahri who argues that with autocratic leadership, 'quality and efficiency' may increase but it also 'results in frustration and suffocation among senior and committed employees' (Dahri, 2015: 4). By using the phrase *'often branded about as a kind of stick to enforce policies',* can be translated to mean that culturally, the name Ofsted is often associated with tough measures taken against schools. Meanwhile, Matty's use of such phrases as '*got less than it's actually said',* could mean that Ofsted had less power than the HT stated. Arguably, this means that the HT was using Ofsted to underpin her risk avoidance strategies because she had to meet external measures of performance and accountability. The next section will discuss the HT's accountability to the governors.

6.5 Accountable to the governors

This section will discuss a new dimension of accountability as expressed in the HT of the second academy interview. Narrations by the HT showed that despite being accountable to Ofsted and DfE, the HT was also accountable to governors. Although the HT was expected to have the autonomy to lead the academy, evidence from the interviews indicated that governors had the ultimate responsibility of running the affairs of the academy. This means that the HT was accountable to them as explained below:

> *I also am very much accountable to the governing body. If things appear to not be going as well, I am really challenged by them and held fully accountable for that* (Tasha, the HT).

In a follow up question Tasha further noted that there was more control from the governing body and as a result she had to ensure that budgets were maintained to the last penny. In her explanation she said:

> *It's the governing body who are ultimately responsible for the deployment, the effective resourcing, and financial resources within the school. I have a sign off of £5000, but obviously if I kept buying things for £4999.99 or whatever it must be, then the alarm bells have to start ringing because again we have got really strict financial reports and control from central government…The governing body would be meeting sometime in September (2014) to think about where we go in terms of our vision and our strategic direction as a school, and of course, we will feed that back in to the staff, as for feedback* (Tasha).

The governor also expressed that:

> *As an academy school, we're the employer for the staff, as well as looking after the school* (Ben).

It is clear in the above excerpts that the HT could not completely make decisions without consulting the governing body of the academy. By using such phrases as *'very much accountable'* and '*ultimately responsible'* in her statements, can be interpreted to suggest that there was little room for her to make some independent decisions. The governors' ultimate power was also demonstrated when the HT of the second academy explained about the governors meeting to make a decision on the academy's mission and strategic direction. The statement '*I am really challenged by them and held fully accountable*' could be translated to mean that the governors were results oriented and this put pressure on both the HT and staff. The involvement of governors might have prevented the HT from bringing in new ideas that could improve the school as they could have been a difference of interest in some areas between the two partners. These differences would occur in the sense that the HT's focus could have been on buying resources for the teachers as she explained that '*if I kept buying things for £4999.99',* whilst the governors could be focusing on tightening the budget, as suggested by Tasha that they had strict budgets. However, according to DfE (2017) the purpose of governance is:

> To provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. …Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent (DfE, 2017, p.9).

On the other hand, from the above excerpt, the involvement of the governors brought the notion of shared responsibility. Based on this view, this would then mean that pressure on the HT would be reduced and would enable her to focus more on the leadership of the academic side of the school and this would move the academy forward. Evidence from Tasha's narratives clearly indicated that control was not only coming from governors but also from central

government. This can be seen as having a lot of bureaucratic red tape within the system which can at times act negatively to the outcomes of the school. This control and the bureaucratic red tape are in contrast with DL practice. At this academy, the HT and the governors oversaw distributing the funds as expressed by Sam:

> *We have governors and the HT who will proportion the funding in which every way they feel they want to* (Sam).

Sam's perception was that funding was controlled by the HT and governors and this contradicted with what Tasha stated in her excerpt. This contradiction in the views of the HT and Sam could mean that the teachers might have had little awareness about the academy's administrative structure. Therefore, it could be suggested that there was need for the HT to explain to her staff about how the academy was run. The use of the phrase '*proportion the funding in which every way they feel they want to*' can be interpreted to mean that there was lack of DL in the distribution of funds. According to Sam, only Tasha and the governors had the authority to make the decisions on funding, which meant that the HODs and their staff were not consulted. This practice contradicts with the DL practice where everyone is consulted and there is trust and transparency as explained by Oduro (2004) and Harris (2014) that genuine DL involves high levels of trust, transparency and mutual respect. The next section will discuss the autonomy of enrolling pupils and accountability to parents.

6.6 Autonomy of enrolling pupils and accountability to parents

Academies were granted the autonomy to enrol pupils as explained below by staff who participated in this study.

6.6.1 Enrolling pupils

Another aspect of the autonomy that was given to academies was the freedom of enrolling pupils. This autonomy was however associated with competition between local schools as explained by Naomi one of the HODs at the second academy:

> *There is a sort of competition-based theme locally with other schools who are competing for numbers and status and to get a lot of pupils in and which has some good effects and some bad effects sometimes* (Naomi).

The above competition could have brought some pressure on the HT of this academy because of its 'needs improvement' Ofsted grade which was mentioned in the interviews before. These competitions are part of the elements of neoliberalism, which is a business model, that leads to education being viewed as a commodity, with the value of schools determined by league tables, Ofsted inspection assessment, school examination results outcomes of which are used to attract more students (Thompson, 2017). Parents look for well-qualified teachers, community links, location, discipline, exam results and the effectiveness of the school's senior leadership team when looking for schools for their children, according to Sec Ed (2015). They also look for Ofsted reports which include the overall grade and parents' views, according to The School Run (2018). This means that this academy could have been at a disadvantage and their enrolment could have been low because of its '*status*' which was 'needs improvement'. This could have impacted on the amount of funding that they were given by central government and could also have impacted on staff recruitment.

It could be argued that this competition that was raised by Naomi in the excerpt above, seemed to be unfair for some pupils who might be less privileged or academically challenged. This is because they might end up being enrolled in the failing schools whilst the academically able in successful schools, although academies are supposed to care for every need. Moreover, they were expected to drive the concept of community or the 'Big Society' which was introduced by the Conservative party in 2010 (Hall and Pulsford, 2019). However, there are noted disadvantages of converter academies in that they may not be inclusive in the sense that they tend to favour their own particular group interest, resulting in grouping certain classes of children in different schools (Morris and Perry, 2019). This resonates with Boyask (2016) who observes that 'the fundamental flaw in an education system built upon market values is that,

as in any competitive marketplace, there will be winners and losers. I support Boyask who argues that 'a just society should not write off a proportion of its children' (Boyask, 2016:120). Furthermore, this academy might have attracted pupils with challenging behaviour who were expelled from other schools, because they did not have much choice. They were trying to boost their enrolment level; this could have affected the school's attainment results. That could be one of the reasons why Naomi in the above excerpt pointed out that the competition had '*some good and bad effects'*.

The above excerpt from Naomi resonates with Pearson/RSA (2013) who observes that:

> There is an increase in competition and unfair admissions practices in academies; they are more likely to be socially selective than community schools because they control their own admissions, regardless of all schools including academies, having to follow a statutory Admissions Code (Pearson/RSA, 2013: 65).

It can be suggested that academies could work as a team, collaboratively and networking, in order to come up with a lasting solution of fair distribution of pupils in their area, instead of competing for pupils. This is what the Networked Learning Communities and Education Action Zones did under the then New Labour government as part of the same initiatives with DL, as explained by Leithwood *et al* (2004). They explained how network leaders were applying more distributed forms of leadership, and how their commitment to DL was promoting the growth of middle leadership roles. Academies could return to these initiatives in order to support each other and work with the community instead of competing. This is supported by the former shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg, who suggested in the Independent (2013) that it is better to introduce academies in places where provision is lacking, and to promote partnership and collaboration rather than competition. Nevertheless, due to funding and accountability, they might prefer the competition and parents might want to choose the schools that they want.

The next section will discuss the consultation of children since they were the central focus of the academy. The HT was accountable to pupils and for their learning as well. Since these were the centre of focus, they were the primary stakeholders, that is, the ultimate beneficiaries who were supposed to be consulted in policy making.

6.6.2 Consultation of children.

Tasha (second academy HT) explained how she consulted the pupils at her academy:

> *When I was working on the vision of the school, I also consulted the children. So, when we put together the teaching and learning terms, we use the staff, the children and the governing body. We actually thought in terms of the teaching and learning, it was possibly the teachers and the pupils who were perhaps the most relevant stakeholders* (Tasha, HT).

The above excerpt suggests how important it was for the HT to involve the pupils in policy making because they were '*the most relevant stakeholders'*. It could be argued that involving pupils in the vision of the school could make the pupils understand their teaching and learning and they could feel valued. The pupils were supposed to be consulted during the academy conversion and in all matters that concerned them, since they were the ones who were directly involved and 'the *most relevant stakeholders'*. However, this academy conversion was just imposed on these pupils without their consent as evidenced by the excerpts in the consultation section where the HT consulted the parents and the staff only. If pupils were consulted through their student council which was there before conversion, they might have chosen to remain with the LA or to convert. One of the HODs observed that the HT shifted her focus from the children to Ofsted requirements:

> *We thought a CA was going to be best suited to the children. Unfortunately, when the HT who converted the school into an academy left, his replacement [Tasha] has gradually sort of moved away from*

that kind of process and everything has become very dated and shifted from the idea of child centric focus, child comes first. Now everything is being driven by data, evidence and proof for Ofsted (Matty, HOD).

The above excerpt demonstrates the distinct difference between a risk taker HT who supported others in taking risks and innovating, and a risk avoidance one. The former HT of the second academy, as explained in the excerpt above, decided to focus on the children, as opposed to Tasha who is said to have focused on Ofsted. It could be suggested that probably it was still the early days of conversion of academies, and the former HT was used to the LA system where they focused on pupils. However, as mentioned in the staffs' excerpts, this HT left this academy in a 'needs improvement' state which Tasha (HT) inherited. This could be the reason why there was this sharp contrast that Tasha decided to focus on Ofsted, where everything was '*driven by data and evidence and proof for Ofsted*', as stated in the above excerpt. These are some of the effects of neoliberalism in these academies, where data is used to measure the performance of schools, as echoed by Hall and Pulsford (2019).

It can be suggested that academies should remove their focus on data and concentrate on teaching and learning, and also include all the stakeholders in decision making. Nonetheless, Matty's quotation is one of the things that is being addressed by the new Ofsted (2019) inspection framework. Matty's perception of the HT demonstrates the HT's precariousness because of the academy which needed a 'Good' Ofsted grade, and how she shifted from child centred teaching to the preparations of evidence for Ofsted. However, parents are very important academy stakeholders; the next section will discuss HTs being accountable to parents.

6.6.3 Accountable to parents

HTs are accountable to parents as they are part of the school community. They are accountable to parents in terms of the pupils' outcomes or results because when HTs enrol pupils, they make a commitment to the community of fulfilling pupils' potential. As discussed

before in chapter 5, the first school consulted the parents about the conversion of the school into an academy although there was a low turnout. This demonstrates the importance of parents to the school community. However, Tasha the HT of the second academy seemed not to consult parents in things that involved teaching and learning as she explained that:

> *The group we did not involve in those two occasions were actually the parents, but we actually thought in terms of the teaching and learning it was possibly the teachers and the pupils who were perhaps the most relevant stakeholders* (Tasha, HT)*.*

From the above excerpt, the HT's commitment to parents was less as compared to Ofsted. If the HT was working in the interest of the parents, he could have consulted them on the things that involved their children. Also, parents' involvement in school affairs was one of Ofsted's requirements. Furthermore, HTs were supposed to make sure that the parents were valued, and their ideas were taken into consideration. This also resonates with the Parents Union (2016) who are worried about the lack of parental involvement in the education debate, and yet they are directly involved in their children's lives than the accountability system under which a school operates. The next section will discuss accountability for teachers' pay.

6.6.4 Accountable for the teachers' pay and performance management (PM)

In these academies, HTs were accountable for teachers' pay and their PM. The Coalition government introduced performance-related pay for teachers in England since September 2013, which means that teachers are paid according to their performance (Maisuria, 2014). These academies HTs were supposed to negotiate the teachers' pay as part of a more general budgeting procedure, since it was their responsibility. Tasha, the HT of the second academy explained that:

> *In terms of most other policies there is some kind of feedback, some kind of negotiation. For example: the pay policy, the*

performance managemet policy, the feedback and marking policy. We will ask people for their involvement (Tasha).

The above evidence demonstrates that teachers negotiated the above policies to some extent, and the decisions were up to the HT because she used the phrase '*some kind of'.* The Academies Act (2010) is not clear on policies that should be negotiated and non-negotiable policies. It gives more freedom to teachers, which means that the head and teachers have got the freedom to negotiate the above policies. School 'administrators' are now paying teachers based on 'performance' and risk-based approaches to performance management and educational outcomes (Hall and Pulsford, 2019: online). The replacement of pay scales with this performance related pay is demoralising headteachers and teachers and undermining their profession (Maisuria, 2014). This means that the school staff are being forced to work extra hard in order to meet their targets and get a pay rise (*Ibid*). Nevertheless, the head in the above excerpt explained that there was some kind of negotiation. Based on this, the account of the HT could be interpreted as meaning that there was no genuine negotiation and feedback. This can also be perceived as if Tasha was admitting that she did not give feedback or negotiate some of the policies because of the phrase '*In terms of most other policies',* and where she stated that *'kind of gave feedback...kind of negotiated'.*

The above excerpt sheds some insight on how policy making in these academies was conducted; this implies that there were some policies that could be '*kind of*' negotiated whilst others were not. This kind of practice is contrary to the principles of DL which are not hierarchical but inclusive, transparent and negotiating at every level in the school organisation. This is evidenced by Solly (2018) who explained that DL empowers teachers to lead in their teams and give them ownership by granting them the opportunity to drive forward their strategies that contribute towards the priorities of the whole school. In contrast, from the literature above, at this academy the trust seemed to be lacking, as demonstrated in the above excerpt where there was some kind of negotiation. In the absence of negotiation, authoritarian practice might take place.

Nevertheless, the above policies in the excerpt seemed to create an opportunity for the HT to employ DL at an academy where there were a lot of accountabilities. In this case there was no need for limited DL as seen in the above excerpt, but this could have been the chance to make it up with her staff who thought that she was autocratic, and were angry with her as a result, as discussed in other sections. DL is suggested as a good leadership model because it is viewed as possibly substituting the former leadership forms like heroic, transformational, charismatic, collegial, top-down and transactional that were criticised because these leadership styles focused on single leaders (Gronn, 2000; Spillane *et al*, 2001; Hall *et al*, 2013). Though critiques of DL like Lumby (2019) argues that although DL practice spread swiftly in the early 2000's and was approved by many people, the nature of this leadership remains unclear, DL still remains the better choice than the above-mentioned leadership styles because of its inclusiveness of formal and informal leaders who have got the needed expertise. Conversely, the evidence in the excerpt demonstrates that the HT was leaning more on the autocratic models even if a window of DL had been opened. This type of practice reflects the shift from DL culture to a business model which reflects neoliberalism and new managerialism which is applied in academies. Still that phrase '*some kind of*' might suggest that because of the lack of clear DL, the consultation and feedback could have been superficial or rhetoric in order to tick some boxes, and yet the decisions could have been made already. The next section will discuss the autonomy to choose staff and accountability to promote them.

6.6.5 Autonomy to choose staff

The academies were also given the autonomy to choose their own staff. At this second academy, the HT explained that she was recruiting a lot of trainee teachers so that they could bring new ideas:

> *…also, again to bring in as many trainees as I can, because I think that it is important to bring in new blood. Again, you can allocate old teaching staff to them as mentors. This will make these old teachers*

think about their own practise and really to start looking at things in a different capacity as well (Tasha).

The above narrative clearly shows that Tasha understood the importance and advantages of recruiting new staff. This is evident in her use of such phrases as 'to *bring in as many trainees as I can*'. It can be claimed that recruitment of new staff will not only bring new ideas but also challenges the proficiency of 'old' or experienced staff. It is evident in Tasha's narrative that whilst new teachers require guidance from 'old' staff, the process of mentoring will encourage the 'old' staff to reflect on their practice and this is likely to motivate them to continue to look for staff development programs. More so, the issue of giving 'old' teachers responsibility to mentor new teachers suggests that Tasha was aware of the importance of achieving the best outcomes through the distribution of responsibilities. This is supported by Diamond and Spillane (2016) who believe that principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders have the knowledge that is needed to help teachers improve knowledge of specific content, how to deliver that content and how to develop teachers.

Since the school had a 'needs improvement' Ofsted grade, the trainee teachers were needed to inject new ideas and it might have resulted in better performance of the academy. However, it can be argued that the HT may have lost confidence in the 'old' staff which may mean that she had failed to motivate them to achieve better outcomes. These views are clear in Tasha's statement when she demonstrated how the process of mentoring new teachers would bring a paradigm shift and how the 'old' teachers would '*start looking at things in a different capacity as well*'. This could be seen as a way of pressurising these 'old' teachers so that they could either work harder or resign, which is part of new managerialism. According to Skinner *et al* (2021:1), 'managerialism can relate to a loss of commitment, professional identity, self-confidence and vulnerability to stress, anxiety and depression'. Issues such as school staff workload, reforms in educational policies, and a lack of managerial support from headteachers can remove the experienced teachers' professional identity and their commitment to the job, which in turn can bring stress and worry to school staff (*Ibid*). Some of these issues could bring

stress to these experienced teachers and they could decide to quit the job. Although the HT brought a sense that she had autonomous powers to make decisions, conversely, she might have viewed the recruitment of trainee teachers as an opportunity to replace the 'old' teachers in order to cut costs and achieve better results.

On the contrary, it can be argued that there was a danger that having inexperienced staff could have resulted in underperformance of the academy. However, the DfE (2016) explained that academies have the freedom to make decisions on how best to raise standards and are free to choose the expertise that they like and who can help in running their schools. The DfE further recommended the academies to choose the best teachers according to merit, rather than following the formal procedure of qualified teacher status; they can give them the pay that they want (*Ibid*). This freedom gives academies the right to recruit untrained teachers and executive officers from the business world to lead in schools, who were never trained in the teaching profession. Although academies have the autonomy and the flexibility to bring unqualified staff that they can train in school, it can be argued that they might have risked losing senior teachers that had lots of experience, as seen at this academy where there was high staff turnover, as explained in the extracts below. This could have defeated the idea of using experienced teachers to mentor the trainee teachers whom Tasha talked about in her excerpt above. One of the teachers from the second academy explained that:

> *I think more people are leaving or considering leaving than I have ever known it. I am seriously considering going. I don't think I want to do this anymore* (Tecla, teacher without a leadership position).

Also, another head of year from the second academy reiterated that:

> *We have quite high staff turnover, I would say. I think it's sometimes having staff teaching in areas they are not comfortable with. Not being comfortable in the job and feeling under pressure in the job because I had some people removed through procedures* (Archie).

The above evidence supports the idea that there was a high staff turnover which could be the reason why Tasha wanted to recruit a lot of trainee teachers. It could be argued that the demands of new managerialism from the government, through the headteachers are affecting the teachers and overshadowing their dedication to their work (Fernet *et al*, 2014), hence, the high staff turnover. Also, the DfE (2018) observed some of the triggers that caused staff turnover as heavy workload, stress, ill health, school leadership, government policy, constant curriculum changes, assessment changes, performance management and some teachers felt unappreciated. This high staff turnover suggests that the HT could have been authoritative in her leadership and causing pressure on her staff to teach subjects they were not qualified or had sufficient knowledge to teach. This is evidenced by Archie's narrative where he talked about teachers who were teaching in areas that they were not comfortable with. Given the fact that the academy was supposed to get a 'Good' Ofsted grade, this was not the time to give teachers the subjects that they were not comfortable with. That would have potentially led them to another failure. On the other hand, it can be assumed that the head could have been putting pressure on these 'old' teachers in order to push them out, so that she could employ these trainee teachers who were not expensive. Furthermore, these new trainee teachers could not challenge the authoritative leadership and the allocation of subjects that they were given because of the fear of losing their jobs. The next section will discuss another accountability of staffing

6.6.6 Accountability for management of staffing and progression

Instead of removing the experienced teachers by procedures or resigning because of pressure as explained in the above excerpt, the HT could have promoted these teachers who had reached their Upper Pay Scale (UPS). Tasha, the HT of the second academy explained it in the excerpt below:

> *At the moment, a teacher hits the Upper Pay Scale, and the expectation is that they would take an additional leadership within the school. So, they are not just a classroom teacher, they are encouraging other*

colleagues and supporting in a different way; but I don't think distributing this leadership is as high as it needs to be (Tasha, HT).

Giving these teachers additional leadership positions as explained in the above excerpt could have been a great opportunity to distribute more leadership to teachers who did not hold formal leadership positions. This is supported by Diamond and Spillane (2016) who explain that distributing leadership responsibility extends to the school staff with no formal leadership roles. The DfE (2019:6) explained that 'careers in teaching must be able to reflect the different lives and aspirations of teachers. We will build on the Early Career Framework, ensuring that it provides the foundation for further professional development and clearer career pathways for teachers, including those who want to stay and excel in the classroom'. The DfE also wanted school leaders to identify teachers who had expertise in leadership to take the leadership pathway and HTs were encouraged to support them and pave the way for them. These senior teachers could have in turn supported other teachers including the trainee teachers whom the HT desired to employ. In addition, these teachers who had reached the UPS could have been given challenging roles like SLT roles which included deputising for the head or sitting in the executive board and being part of decision and policy making, since they were experienced teachers. Nevertheless, this was just an '*expectation'* as echoed in the above excerpt, but the reality was that most of these senior teachers were not promoted, as expressed by Tasha that '*but I don't think distributing this leadership is as high as it needs to be'*. However, Fernet *et al* (2014) argue that school staff are passionate and committed to work when they are given autonomy to lead in different initiatives in their schools, but they are not committed when they are controlled by their work activities. One of the reasons of lack of distributing leadership to these UPS could have been funding, as observed by Oduro (2003) that budgetary constraints were some of the push factors which were affecting the implementation of DL, because the HTs did not have the resources to create an environment where teachers participated in leadership.

However, the heads in the case study academies were aware of DL and they talked about it, as seen in the above excerpt, but they seemed not to apply it that much because of lack of funding as discussed before. They ended up applying autocratic leadership as highlighted by Tasha before. Nonetheless, DL does not mean that the teachers had to be paid for that role, but that recognition and implementation of their ideas could have been important for them. According to Lumby (2019) DL weakens the power of the single leader and paves way for school staff to assume leadership roles. However, with this academy, it was different, the leadership was not distributed across the school because of the HT's accountabilities and the precariousness of losing her job, as evidenced by the interviews of the teachers and the HT. The next section will discuss how leadership roles were reduced after the conversion.

6.7 Implication of leadership roles for DL practice

There were tensions in leadership roles; when the school was converted into an academy, instead of increasing the leadership roles as part of DL practice, the formal roles in different subjects were reduced in order to save money, as cited by Matty, one of the HODs in the excerpt below.

> *The leadership structure changed, basically again that was a financial decision, we were told it was a financial decision. Basically, it meant I took on an additional department. So, rather than teaching or being responsible for history and RE, I took on the responsibility for geography* (Matty).

Also, Lora, one of the HODs reiterated that:

> *There has been a massive change after conversion when they decided to combine together leaderships, so instead of people being in charge of one department, they were in charge of combined departments. They combined those subjects together in order to save money. It's been quite brutal for people involved* (Lora).

The above excerpts demonstrate the reduction of DL involvement as part of a shift in school culture, and it showed that leadership change was managed by the HT instead of all the staff. This is why Lora expressed that '*It's been quite brutal for people involved',* and also it could have been quite stressful for the affected teachers. Combining leadership subjects meant that the HODs' leadership allowances were gone, and their take home salary was reduced. Before this school was converted into an academy, the middle leadership structure supported the culture of assigning a HOD per each subject and this distribution of leadership gave opportunities for many teachers to lead. Also, Bonneville (2017) stresses the importance of understanding the significance of school culture and how it can foster teamwork, and in DL, an effective shared commitment is essential.

However, after the conversion, this leadership culture changed; the leadership was streamlined, and leadership roles were now for the few, as shown in the above excerpts. This business practice in academies is contrary to DL principles which create more leadership roles and accommodate different leaders, whether formal or informal for different tasks. These could be some of the reasons why Skinner *et al* (2021) argue that 'the managerialist approach to education by government and headteachers leaves teachers feeling that their expertise is useful only for the schools' accountability statistics, rather than for the pupils' learning and that they are no longer allowed to be professionals. They feel their knowledge is no longer their own; it has been commodified' (Skinner, 2021:13). In addition, FASNA (2015) observes that every school faces increased staff costs because of the pay rises and the increase in employer's contributions to national insurance and pensions for teachers and support staff. Such budgetary constraints seem to justify the lack of promotions given to staff. These were some of the pressures that the HT faced at this academy. The above literature also resonates with Adams (2015) who reports that budget pressures are pushing more than half of schools in England towards cutting staff, with most preparing for big reductions to balance their books.

This could be the reason why the HT admitted that the distribution of leadership in the school was not much. It can be argued that instead of overloading the few HODS with more work by merging the departments, the HT could have distributed some of the responsibilities to the UPS 3 teachers, although they were meant to progress to a higher pay scale without taking on more responsibility. This was a window of opportunity for the HT to employ DL practice which she said she might not have been distributing enough. Harris (2008:173) observes that, 'while many people have the potential to exercise leadership in any organisation, the key to success will be the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated, and supported'. Despite the fact that this academy head still had a significant role in a DL model, she could have empowered others and provided them with the necessary support, as it was her responsibility.

Instead, the HT chose to reduce the posts at the expense of the wellbeing of the teachers, which was presumably undermined by heavier workloads. This was one of the push factors which Oduro (2004) highlighted that workload pressure was another inhibitor which defeated the motivation of DL. It can also be argued that if HODs are overloaded with work from different departments, there is a risk of compromising the work because of pressure to do the work quickly. Furthermore, a HOD might be a specialist of one subject and has little knowledge on the other subject that she/he is asked to lead, which is in contrast with DL practice, and further exacerbates teacher workload. The next section will discuss the funding autonomy.

6.8 Autonomy in funding but accountability to the Education Funding Agency

Neo liberalisation is seen in the introduction of converter academy schools in 2010, which are run like businesses, and have been liberated from local authority, and given the freedom to run on their own. Following conversion, the second academy was on its own without the help of the LA, but in terms of its funding, it was accountable to the Education Funding Agency which was regulating its funds, as explained by the HT of the second academy below:

> *Both, we are a business and a charity; whereas in the past the school would have had the support and the backing of the LA; in terms of*

> *finance, in terms of procurement. We are very much on our own with our governors, so one of the biggest changes for us is really gearing ourselves up in terms of being autonomous. So that we are responsible for our own finance, for our own resourcing, for our own payroll and so on and so forth. So, we subcontract out, we are not allowed to run at a loss; any deficit budget has to be approved by the Education Funding Agency* (Tasha, HT).

When Tasha explained that they were a business and a charity, it could be interpreted to mean that this academy was following a business model of running this academy, in terms of managing and being accountable for their finances. This means that they were expected to adapt their budgets in line with the austerity measures so that they would not exceed beyond their allocated budgets. In terms of being a charity, she meant that their academy was a non profit making business unlike other businesses, but it was there to provide education for the students. However, they were allowed to make some profit through fundraising projects: that was not the major aim for academies, they were learning institutions.

Although the academy had the freedom to manage their finances, subcontracting their own services and deciding the teachers' pay, they were accountable to the EFA who monitored and managed their funding. According to Roda (2013) the audit and accountability by the Government in schools is done in order to undermine the autonomy that schools were given when they were still run by LAs, with the consequence that choice and freedom are only offered to academies and free schools. This demonstrates that they were not alone as such, but it was just a change of governance from LA to central government as explained in the Academies Act (2010). However, the loneliness that they felt was the absence of help that they used to receive from the LA; that is the reason why the HT said that, '*We are very much on our own…'.* The above quotation suggests that all the services that were being offered by the LA were now done at this academy. This is supported by NCSL (2011:5) who explains the 'changes in terms of governance for all schools that convert to academy status, in terms of being independent

from the local authority, which would affect the nature and degree of collaboration with other schools'. It seems as if the academy HTs and governors did not know the amount of financial work that they were going to do when they decided to convert into an academy. The next section will discuss autonomy to change the leadership titles in academies.

6.9 Autonomy to change leadership titles in academies in order to suit the business model

One of the reasons for converting into academies was because of huge funding and the autonomy to manage it, as stated in the conversion section excerpts and the Academies Act (2010). This academy conversion gave the school leaders the right to change their job titles to business titles like accountant, executive or director and the academy was run like a business. This can be viewed as part of the new managerialism, which Lynch (2014) described as not an ordinary management approach, but is politically motivated, which came about because of a drastic change in the organisation of capitalism. 'As such, it is embedded in a complex series of social, political and economic organisational changes that are tied to neoliberalism in particular' (Lynch, 2014:2), as demonstrated in these academies which are run like businesses. Tasha, the HT of the second academy stated:

> *I'm also accounting officer and that's a change as a result of the academisation. So, I'm required to ensure that the school adheres to its funding agreement and that the school is run pretty much as a business. So, effectively I suppose I am an executive as such, but I am a director of a company to all intents and purposes* (Tasha).

Also, one of the HODs of the second academy reiterated that:

> '…. *we have to run the school in a business sense' (*Naomi).

This autonomy of changing from a 'mere' HT to an executive director of the academy empowered Tasha to run this academy and its funds with the governors without the

interference of the LA. She was now accountable for the business (academy) which is an expectation of new managerialism (Lynch, 2014); as she stated that she was the director. The phrases '*accounting officer, executive and director of a company'* could be interpreted to mean that the HT had more powers to control and make decisions for the entire academy school, which also included the financial decisions. These findings had resonance with NCSL (2011:5) who observes that 'converting to academy status has implications for school leadership and management and in this regard, sponsorship, governance and the relationship with the local authority are important contextual factors'. Although it appeared to be a successful autonomy which gave the HT some business titles or roles, these titles came with huge responsibilities and accountabilities to different stakeholders as discussed before. This resonates with Cirin (2014) who observes that academies were complaining about the substantial weight on head teachers because of the financial accountability. One of the HTs echoed these sentiments:

> It would be helpful for the DfE to be aware that the gains made by having academy freedoms are equally balanced out by financial reporting and process accountability, which, at the moment, are demanding. Although we value the freedoms academy status has given us, the back-office *procurement* workloads and stresses have been considerable. There appears to be audit after audit after audit. We understand the reasons, but we weren't made aware at the start of our journey. The role of the accounting officer needs to be reviewed as there appear to be conflicting messages (Cirin, 2014:52).

The above quotation also resonates with Tasha's excerpt where she said that they were now lonely, and they had to do all the work on their own that the LA used to do. This is supported by Skinner (2021) who observes that the introduction of a business model in education may be intimidatory to teaching because headteachers and teachers are assessed in various ways, by different methods and through the employment of various frameworks. Tasha did not see all these financial accountabilities coming. There was not much freedom at this academy, but it

was only a change of administration from LA to central government which had more accountability. In practice, according to The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) (2014), the role of the accounting officer is to link the accountability and governance structures of the academy and she/he ensures that the legislative policies, national policies and local requirements are adhered to. However, the CIPFA explained that the accounting officer does not perform all these responsibilities on his/her own, but he/she should delegate them to members of staff; these include drafting policies, running finance systems and processes, and HR support.

This above practice shows some similarities with distributed practice where HTs distribute responsibilities to members of staff and implement the staffs' ideas. With distributed leadership practice, HTs do not abuse their position of power as directors to oppress their subordinates, but they value them and take them on board. However, in practice, this was in opposition with the reality at this academy where the teachers complained that the HT was doing her own things and she told teachers what to do without consulting them. It seemed as if she lacked trust in her teachers. Lora HOD from the second academy explained that:

> *There is no DL*; *I don't think SLT really trust us at the moment to do our jobs properly. I think they take a little bit too much on themselves than we probably do ourselves (*Lora, HOD)*.*

Lack of distributing leadership at this academy could have been caused by the accountabilities to DfE and Ofsted, or the business culture that was introduced in academies. That could be the reason why Tasha explained that '...*the school is run pretty much as a business'.* This academy had a 'needs improvement' grade and the director (HT) had to make some quick decisions in order to turn around the school. Nevertheless, the academies were also given the autonomy to choose the length of school days and holidays as discussed in the next section.

6.10 Autonomy to choose the length of school days and holidays

Another freedom that academies gained was flexibility in setting school holidays and the length of school days. The HT of the second academy explained that:

> *…by actually tweaking the training days, having the segregated training day, we can actually free up that day to have a long weekend in December, when people are absolutely so exhausted. We also finish early just before Christmas and just before summer* (Tasha).

This was a good incentive for the teachers, and it was different from LA schools which were not given long Christmas shopping weekends or able to finish early on the last day of the term. This good gesture shows one of the advantages of being an academy. However, Mansell (2016) argues that the academies might face some difficulties in trying to employ the freedom of varying the school day or term. This is because other local schools might not have changed, and the parents with children at academies might also have other children attending those local schools. It might inconvenience these parents and they might choose to remove their children from these academies, and this might have a negative effect on the intake level. This is one of the tensions that can work against the autonomy of academies. This might be different in an area where all schools changed into academies and they could collaborate and network in choosing their school days and holidays. Instead of HTs talking about Ofsted, this might be the opportunity to come together and suggest the times of their school days and school holidays in their area.

What Mansell suggested above might be the same case with this second academy because in their interviews, the staff explained that they converted into an academy because all the other schools in their area were converting into academies. Therefore, networking between the academies in the same area was the way forward as part of DL, in order to enjoy their autonomy of choosing their own school holidays and school days, instead of doing it as individual schools. This autonomy could have been positive if it maintained all the school holidays that they used to enjoy before conversion, but it could have affected their wellbeing if the school holidays were reduced. The wellbeing of teachers will be discussed in the next section.

6.10.1 Staff wellbeing accountability

Although the HT was accountable for the wellbeing of the staff, she explained how difficult it was at times to consider it. In the excerpt below the HT of the second academy highlighted that:

> *I do consider the wellbeing of the staff. We do our very best to look at those staff who maybe wavering or struggling. It's not always possible because again this is the harsh part of being an academy; we are a business and we have to be mindful of that as well* (Tasha).

Although the above extract demonstrates the willingness of the HT to support the wellbeing of her staff, there were barriers which were caused by this business model, as demonstrated by the HT's use of the phrase '*harsh part of being an academy'.* These are some of the effects of neo liberalism whereby the interests of the business (school) are prioritised over that of individual staff (Skinner 2021). The working conditions at this academy had qualitatively changed because of academy conversion. Tasha's statement which she explained that '*we are a business and we have to be mindful of that as well',* suggests that she prioritised the budget over staff wellbeing. This means that in as much as the HT would have liked to support every teacher whenever they were under pressure, like bringing in supply teachers to help with the workload, it was not feasible. This is because paying supply teachers would be an additional teaching cost, which would mean that the school would run at a loss, since it was a business. Also, the teachers were expected to work hard and produce positive results or outcomes, as one of the DfE and Ofsted expectations; otherwise, the head could have lost her job because they were operating like a business, as indicated in the excerpt above. A consequence however of trying to comply with the expected high quality standards deemed by government that headteachers and subsequently teachers should achieve, can affect the teachers' mental health and emotional well-being (McCarthy and Dragouni, 2020). The HT of the second academy further explained that:

> *We do consider the wellbeing of our staff I don't know whether or not our staff appreciate that, but we do. It's about finding a balance*

between Ofsted demands and staff wellbeing (Tasha).

This staff wellbeing and autonomy seemed to be rhetoric because there were other accountabilities that seemed more important. For the HT to be seen as a good leader, she needed to be able to balance the accountabilities of Ofsted, the DfE and staff wellbeing. However, from the staffs' interviews, it appears as if the HT preferred to address the demands of the DfE and Ofsted over the staff wellbeing. As discussed before, she had pressures of moving the school to a 'Good' grade. One of the head of years in the second academy complained that:

> *... the workload is too great; the expectation is too high and there is no work life balance* (Pretty).

The above demonstrates the pressures that were experienced by teachers at this academy and confirms the HT's statement that, '*this is the harsh part of being an academy'*. In this case this statement was referring to lack of a work life balance and the heavy workloads given to staff, as demonstrated above. This is supported by Ofsted's (2019) inspection framework which highlighted that the focus on data leads to unjustified workload for teachers, which demotivates them from their teaching profession. The HT had to make some very tough decisions because of the accountabilities to different stakeholders. '*The high expectation'* which Pretty talked about was not only coming from the head, but also from Ofsted. According to Open access Government (2019), new managerialism practice shifts the staffs' focus from teaching and learning and from leadership progression because of continuous changes in curriculum, performance management, unnecessary paperwork, pressure to raise student attainment outcomes, heavy workloads and other organisational changes.

Under such conditions where there were big workloads and high expectations, teachers were likely to manage their own pressure due to lack of support, or they could just resign if they felt that they could not cope, as indicated by the HT's excerpt. However, this wellbeing issue was also experienced when teachers were off sick as explained in the next section. However, this

wellbeing of teachers could be addressed by the new Ofsted (2019) inspection framework which focuses on reducing the workload and pressures on teachers, especially those pressures that are associated with inspection.

6.10.2 Changes in teachers' sick leave and wellbeing of staff

Autonomy in academies brought some changes in sick leave which was not favourable to the staff. It was difficult for the staff to go on a long sick leave because their pay would be reduced, and it was expensive to cover the sick leave. Naomi, one of the HODs at the second academy explained that:

> *You know you have someone who is off sick for a while and in an academy, they are a lot more stringent as in, "why have you been off sick? This is the most sickness pay you've got". Whereas in an LA school people seem to have lots of time off sick and there is some sort of pot out there which is supposed to cover it* (Naomi).

Some of the academy freedoms were affecting the staff in a negative way, as seen in the excerpt above. The sick leave changes could have been beneficial on the budget side of the academy in terms of cutting costs, but it was in opposition with the wellbeing of the staff. As discussed before, the teachers seemed to feel guilty of going for sick leave because it was costly since the academy did not have sufficient funding to cover lots of staff being on sick leave, which was different to how it was when they were run by the LA. The excerpt above portrays the advantages of being an LA school where the wellbeing of teachers was respected, and their sick leave pay was granted.

However, this autonomy that alters the teachers' sick leave pay and conditions, according to Bassett *et al* (2012:4) 'may need to be weighed against legislation preventing changes when institutions change control, or against many HTs' unwillingness to provoke a confrontation with teacher unions. It can be argued that the autonomy of these academies was that the unions were weak, and the LA was not involved, and they make their own decisions. According to the

above excerpt, the HT at this academy could not give everyone a long sick leave because of their tight budgets. When the school was under LA control it was dependent and how its resources were used was dictated by the LA and central government. Academies are responsible for the budgets they have. This academy HT had different levels of accountabilities; some of these were easy to manage whilst others were clearly very difficult, like the wellbeing one. The HT had to make some tough decisions of letting that sick teacher resign in order to maintain her budget, although it was working against the staff wellbeing. To maximise profits, salaries are kept low through employment of newly qualified. It seemed to have affected the quality of teacher retention which was discussed in the teacher recruitment section above. This resonates with DfE, 2019 and Burge *et al* (2021) who observe that there has been an ongoing problem of teacher retention and it is difficult for teachers to take on leadership roles because of heavy workload. The next section will discuss the staff's perceptions about their wellbeing.

6.10.3 The staffs' perceptions about their wellbeing

The staff at the second academy felt that they were overworked, and they were burning out. As cited before, Tecla explained that:

> *Well it's the pressure from above its all these things happening and then things given to you that you didn't know are going to happen and so are not part of the plan initially and everything has to be done to such high standard …we are all working so hard and we are burning out…*(Tecla, teacher without a leadership position).

On the same note Archie echoed the following sentiments:

> *There is a lot of surface work life balance online, filling in things like that but the actual reality of that is quite different. You get more and more tasks layered upon you from above and a lot of things that get in the way of effective teaching in my opinion, because I spend most of my*

> *day teaching and too many obstacles to that. It's a desire from above to document and evidence everything you do in a classroom and it ends up with a situation where some people put more energy to documenting what they do than actually teaching. The focus and the work and the drive should be going into teaching children. But what people will be doing is putting things onto a datasheet on a webpage or whatever grid sheet to evidence what they do even when they have done it or not* (Archie, Head of Year).

The above excerpts highlight the authoritarian culture where the teachers' wellbeing was compromised; instead, they were given more work which was not part of their initial plan. Like what Tecla and Archie have explained, this was caused by pressure from above; thus, Ofsted and DfE whom the HT was accountable to. According to DfE (2018) some government policies which included exams, data-driven ethos and frequent curriculum changes were some of the factors that were affecting the wellbeing of teachers and retention. Some teachers felt that the accountability of data, results, recording progress figures and too many tests and examinations to the government was the centre of focus instead of focusing on teaching and learning (*Ibid*). This was putting a lot of pressure on teachers, resulting into heavy workloads (DfE, 2018). The HT of the second academy was quite aware of how precarious her job was, and she did not want to risk losing her job. According to MacBeath (2003), politicians and their agencies, like Ofsted, should give more freedom to schools in order to represent themselves by taking more responsibility for their own accountability, instead of pressurising them to be accountable to extreme external agencies. At this academy, Ofsted was the centre stage and it did not give this school the freedom to take their own responsibility; instead, it was pressurising them, as mentioned by Tasha earlier on in her excerpts. Although they had a 'needs improvement' Ofsted grade, they were not supposed to focus on filling in a lot of documents, but they were supposed to focus on teaching and learning, as suggested by Archie.

As discussed before, the HT compromised the wellbeing of teachers by employing the authoritative leadership style and micromanagement than to lose her job. She preferred ticking every box at the expense of considering the work life balance of her teachers and also teaching and learning, as raised in the above excerpts. This type of practice affected the teachers' morale and they were burning out, which resonates with Burge *et al*'s (2021:viii) study which revealed that some teachers regularly worked from a fifth to nearly 50% more than their contract hours and a third from 51-100% more'. Also, the essence of teaching was replaced by filling in a lot of documents for Ofsted and ticking the boxes. It is quite interesting that the boxes were ticked whether they had achieved that objective or did not even do that task, as explained by Archie. This can be argued that it was a negative practice because it could have led to failure of pupils because of this compromise. Evidence from the above excerpt demonstrates that teachers were doing clerical work instead of teaching and learning, which was unfair for the children who were supposed to be the centre of focus. The teachers' workload was affecting most of the teachers in different schools which also resonates with Harris (2016) who reiterated that:

> Workload has, despite all the rhetoric from the government, become worse – something we all know. I now visit a wide variety of schools regularly. They have many differences, but they all have one thing in common: the members of staff say that they cannot carry on like this. A recent survey of 4,000 teachers supported this view. Some 82 per cent of those interviewed said that the workload expected of them was unmanageable. This is unsustainable. The effect on teacher wellbeing is there for us all to see, and 73 per cent of those interviewed said that their health had been affected (Harris, 2016: online).

From the teachers' interviews, the staffs' wellbeing survey and feedback at this academy was rhetoric because it was totally different from the reality that was taking place, as also supported by the above literature. The layering of workload and the burning out of teachers defeated the

whole purpose of considering the wellbeing of staff. The HT thought that she was doing a lot in terms of the staffs' wellbeing when she explained about the wellbeing surveys, staff absence protection and medical support, but it did not remove the low morale of teachers, the heavy loads and their views of burning out. Regardless of the surveys and the insurance, the teachers did not stop complaining about the poor leadership of the HT and the pressures that they faced.

However, evidence shows that some of this workload was caused by poor planning which affected the entire staff and the HT did not try to balance the workload of her teachers as explained by Matty one of the HODs below:

> *The work life balance here is appalling, basically there is very little attempt to try and balance it. There are colleagues who are working here till 7.30pm and this is not unusual, this is quite a large number of colleagues that are working that sort of length of time. I myself have to effectively work an extra day a week on a Sunday just to keep on time. There is very little advance warning of the tasks that are going to be required over sort of medium-term period... There is a lot of last-minute changes to alterations, simply last-minute activities that happen out of the blue, that really knock people's work life balance. As a head of a department, I find this is a common experience of several other department heads (*Matty*).*

The above extract portrays the absence of staff wellbeing at this academy and how heavy loaded the teachers were. This was the normal pattern at this academy, as explained by Matty. If the responsibilities were distributed amongst the staff and teachers were free to challenge the HT to reduce or spread out the workload, the teachers were not going to work for those long hours. Evidence from the head's interview suggested that she lacked confidence in her staff's ability to do the job. Rather than lacking confidence it might be as Duignan (2006) and Hairon and Goh (2015) observe which is that a lot of HTs do all the leadership duties on their

own and yet there are more opportunities to give freedom to teachers, as part of the teacher professionalism because of the participatory element in DL. Where there is proper planning, there is not much room for last minute changes unless an unforeseen circumstance occurs. As part of DL, all the planning could have been done by different teams in different departments. Teachers who were struggling or falling behind were going to have opportunities to discuss and share their burdens with their departments and they were going to be supported instead of burning out. However, the reality was the opposite of this, they had heavy loads and they were burning out. Moreover, the HT was putting more pressure in order to tick all the Ofsted boxes because she wanted to turn the school around, as suggested by the staff in their interviews. The staff lacked support that they needed most as explained in the next section.

6.10.4 Lack of support from the HT and wellbeing

The HT had opportunities to support her staff as part of their wellbeing, but the staff complained that she chose to avoid it. Naomi explained that:

> *I think there are cases where she doesn't get people on her side because she doesn't allow people some flexibility where she could allow it. I could think of a case involving me fairly recently, where there was no reason for her to actually say no and she said no. I know that is an issue for staff because people become very negative and therefore, are less inclined to do over and above the job, because they can't understand the other point of view* (Naomi).

The reported rigidity of the HT created some tensions between her and the staff. Another head of year had a similar case where she felt that there was no staff wellbeing at this academy because she felt that she was not taken care of when she returned from her long sick leave. She explained that:

> *The head does not consider the wellbeing of her teachers. After being very ill for a long time, not once since all the time I've been back has*

> *she ever asked me once how I was. She's never once asked me if I was okay, and she made a deliberate attempt to undermine me in meetings with human resources and she's been completely unpleasant and unsupportive. I don't think she cares about the wellbeing of her staff* (Pretty: Head of year).

The above excerpts revealed the tensions between the head and her staff. They were neither working as a team nor in agreement, as explained by Naomi about not giving some flexibility to the teachers. It appeared as if this conflict was caused by risk avoidance, accountability and rigidity. The head was concentrating on fulfilling the Ofsted requirements and was perceived to be ignoring her staffs' wellbeing, as indicated by Pretty. She could have handled things differently by considering the wellbeing of teachers.

This practice could have shown a good gesture and good leadership practice. It could have alleviated the conflict between the head and her staff and could have boosted their morale. However, this purported negative attitude of the HT toward her staff, lowered the teachers' morale, and in reaction to that, the teachers '*become very negative and therefore, were less inclined to do over and above the job',* according to Naomi. This was because if the teachers who were supposed to deliver the teaching were affected and were not doing their job properly, learning would not take place in such an environment. Also, when teachers' morale was low, it could have affected their innovations and willingness to undertake innovations. According to the DfE (2019), teachers need more and genuine support from HTs and all SLT in teaching and learning, and they also want HTs to create a platform where everyone has open and truthful conversations. This creates a good relationship between teachers and their school leaders, and can reduce some pressure in scrutiny, accountability and workload (*Ibid*).

Evidence from the teachers' interviews showed the pressures that the second academy HT was experiencing. This pressure got to the point where the HT was ignoring the teachers who were convalescing and even undermining them in the presence of human resources

personnel, instead of giving them all the support that they needed. The teachers' health was important at this deemed failing academy because without good health, they could not be able to turn the school around. They needed to be fit and strong, and to have a sound mind in order to teach effectively and get good results which would impact on Ofsted results. This was the reason why they needed the support and encouragement from the HT instead of being ignored.

Naomi also argued that the work life balance at this academy was superficial because the staffs' surveys did not address the real issues that they were facing, and she thought her responses could have been interpreted in a different way because of a lack of clarity. Although these surveys appeared to be a 'bottom-up' approach which is supported by DL, it was not realised in practice. As highlighted in the excerpt below, there was no point of filling in the online staff wellbeing survey because the teachers felt that there was no change. The other reason which was cited by Naomi from the second academy for work life balance being perceived as superficial was that the HT always wrote in the weekly bulletin to teachers to:

> *Do this, do that, but her final sentence is go and have a lovely weekend with your family, which you can't do if you are going to do this, do that. She only wanted the staff to fill in the wellbeing survey and you wonder which box shall I tick? You think well, you haven't asked me enough, you could interpret that tick list this way and you could interpret that tick list that way and that seems to be the answer, and I don't think again it brought the staff on board. I don't think there are very many responses compared to the number of staff because probably people think what's the point…but in terms of your wellbeing it's the pressure of the job that is just more and more overloaded without consideration of your wellbeing and that's none of us can do this and maintain a family life* (Naomi).

Also, Lora one of the HODs from the second academy expressed the same

sentiments below:

> *A lot of things about wellbeing are said, however, decisions that are made show that maybe she doesn't think about the wellbeing of her staff. But she does make noises to make it look like she does, but then her decisions and her actions prove otherwise* (Lora).

Tom from the second academy reiterated what the other HODs above said by explaining that:

> *Last year we did the survey and I don't think the views were taken on board* (Tom, head of year).

The above evidence demonstrates the rhetoric of staff wellbeing which was not there and the contradiction between what the HT from the second academy practised and how she encouraged her staff to rest during the weekend. The teachers were failing to balance family life with their workload. The encouragement that she wrote in the staff bulletin was just rhetoric because it was totally different from the reality at this academy, as indicated in the excerpts above. This was the same complaint that was raised by Matty earlier on where he explained that the teachers were working up to 7:30pm and even on Sundays in order to keep pace with the workload. This suggests that the HT was not considering the work life balance of teachers although she said the opposite in trying to justify her actions. As demonstrated in the teachers' extracts, it is quite interesting how the HT made '*noises to make it look like she does but then her decisions and her actions prove otherwise'*, which is part of new managerialism.

The use of the staff wellbeing survey could have been a good idea if the responses of the teachers were taken into consideration. The HT could have used the survey to address the teachers' wellbeing concerns and to take them on board. She could even have asked the teachers to choose a wellbeing committee which could bridge between the senior leadership team and the rest of the staff. This team would have consulted or liaised with the head and the

teachers and checked whether the staffs' ideas were implemented, and they could constantly give feedback to the whole school community. However, like what Tom explained in the above excerpt, the HT did not take the views from the survey on board. That could be the reason why Naomi suggested that the work life balance at this academy was superficial because it seemed as if it was only there to tick boxes, but it was not put into practice. Nonetheless, there were some instances where democratic leadership was employed as discussed below.

6.11: Democratic leadership

The teachers expressed their views on how the HT of the first academy employed democratic leadership in the excerpts below:

> *I think he shares a lot of information; he asks departments to do certain tasks and he'll ask the head of department obviously to feedback particular information. He asks for our feelings and opinions generally with a questionnaire...* (Pat, HOD).

Nancy explained that:

> *I think he would describe himself as democratic and he delegates things to team leaders. He is very transparent as to why things have to change and to things like that, so, if there's something for the budget let's say that will affect the teachers or affect the school, he is very transparent about that* (Nancy, HOD).

Trish reiterated that:

> *The HT is very people orientated, he likes to discuss, he likes to talk about any changes that are going to happen and give people time to think about them. He's very approachable, he is definitely not someone who says we're going to do this; he is always discussing, giving ideas and then moving on and saying, 'let's do this'. So, he does it by*

consultation, he does by discussing, and he does it by personal talking to each other, rather than just putting something in an email. Yes, he is very personal in the way that he approaches people. There are no instances of autocratic that I know of (Trish, HOD).

The above excerpts demonstrate the other side of the HT who knows the principles of DL. This is the reason why the HT explained that he varied his leadership skills. There were some instances like these ones where the staff were consulted and given the opportunity to have a say about the overall policy direction of the school. This DL practice depended on the situation. The above leadership practice is what should be demonstrated at these academies according to the autonomy that they were promised. The above excerpts show that the HT understood democratic principles and he knew how to distribute leadership and to be transparent. Woods and Gronn (2009) believe that democracy paves the way for organisational capacity which is demonstrated through distributing leadership by sharing of ideas, creativity and skills and energies which introduce and sustain change in a school organisation. This resonates with Harris (2003) who views DL which is part of democracy as: 'learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively… It does not imply a leader/follower divide…' (Harris, 2003:314). DL principles cross over boundaries and includes everyone instead of selective distribution of leadership. However, these interviews show that this democracy was not employed all the time because of the accountabilities and pressures from the external agencies, as the HT explained about the non-negotiable policies, which are part of the 'new managerial pragmatism'. On the other hand, these non-negotiable policies could have been about the HT's personal philosophy of education.

Trish's excerpt suggests that she never experienced any autocracy from the HT and did not witness it being applied to other teachers. It can be suggested that Trish might be one of the staff members who were in the 'inner circle' and was always consulted by the HT because she had something to offer. This possibly explains why she never experienced any instance of autocratic leadership from the HT, though the HT cited that he sometimes employed autocracy.

It takes us back to the HT's leadership skills where he said that he varied his leadership depending on the teachers. This is a good example where he varied his leadership. His 'buy-in' approach was working, hence the difference in experience. Trish never experienced any autocratic leadership whilst Nancy and Pat experienced it. This explains how phenomenon is experienced in different ways in phenomenographic studies. Trish explained one of the multifaceted leadership styles of this academy HT.

6.12: Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the different aspects of the autonomy that the government promised in academy schools and how difficult some of these autonomies were to apply because of competing accountabilities. The HT of the second case study academy school adopted a particular set of leadership strategies which concentrated on power and decision making, which depicts new managerial practices which are embedded in educational neoliberalism. She accentuated the 'quality' and accountability rhetoric even when there was room for manoeuvre and distribution. The HT offered only superficial opportunities for innovation where DL approaches could be used.

Although some of these freedoms were exemplified in some areas like closing early in December and the summer term, and also the teachers' pay and conditions, in other areas, it appeared as if it was rhetoric because of the academy's accountability to central government and Ofsted. These areas included the curriculum choice where it was difficult to alter because of the public exams that were statutory. Also, some of the freedoms benefited the academy at the expense of the teachers and these included the staff wellbeing and teachers' sick leave which affected the teachers negatively because of the alteration of their pay. The precarious HT chose risk avoidance instead of risk taking. This brings us to the way in which the HT described and rationalised her leadership as 'pragmatic', a kind of new managerialism, which I renamed it as 'new managerial pragmatism' because of the negative practice. It will be discussed in Chapter 7. This 'new managerial pragmatism' is driven by the need to reconcile

the multiple accountabilities with the rhetoric of autonomy, against a background of a business/market model. This raises an interesting question as to whether DL could address this desire for ‘pragmatism’.

Chapter 7.0: 'New Managerial Pragmatism' and the views of teachers about the HT's leadership

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss 'new managerial pragmatism' as one of the leadership practices that was employed by the two headteachers. This practice was employed in the schools' budgets and innovations. The chapter will also discuss perceptions of teachers regarding the HTs' 'new managerial pragmatism'. Micromanagement will be discussed in this chapter as part of the new managerial practice that one of the HTs was said to be using at the academy by her teachers. Though the HT felt that she was employing 'pragmatism', this was in sharp contrast with the teachers' narratives in this chapter.

7.2 'New managerial pragmatism': Tight budgets

As the HTs had changed their leadership titles to financial directors or executive officers, they were now in charge of the finances of their academies. They were supposed to run these academies as businesses as discussed before and academies were not allowed to run at a loss. However, the HTs were supposed to supply the teachers with teaching resources and at the same time they were accountable for the maintenance of their school budgets. Tasha from the second academy explained how she balanced the two in the excerpt below:

> *Sometimes I have to be quite pragmatic*; *people will come to me and ask for various things, and the bottom line is there is only so much money in the bank, and I cannot overstep that. It can lead to some people being very unhappy with me, but the bottom line is if the money is not there, it is not there* (Tasha).

Getty's excerpt, from the first academy, also demonstrates this 'new managerial pragmatism' because of the tight budgets:

> *There are certain things, yes that the head and governors make a decision on... It may be financial decisions. I'm gonna always say I want more staff, more everything else…* (Getty the deputy head).

The above excerpts from the two academies demonstrate the introduction of a new leadership culture of 'pragmatism' in academies because of accountability and the business model. The word '*pragmatism*' can be interpreted to mean that the HTs had to come up with decisions which they thought would work best for their academies. However, as explained above by Tasha, these decisions would not satisfy everyone because some teachers were '*unhappy with her*'. Since these headteachers assumed a new role of executive and finance officer, they had the pressure of managing the budget that they were allocated by the school governors from central government; that is why they had to be pragmatic. The HTs were expected to provide the required resources for their staff, which in turn had a bearing on learning outcomes (pupils) and potentially Ofsted inspection outcomes, since the second academy had a 'needs improvement' Ofsted grade.

Getty's excerpt suggests that as the deputy head, she was not involved in crucial matters and decisions which included financial issues. This is typical of this academy school, where decisions were made by the top executive board which included the head and the governors, who made financial decisions albeit without the deputy heads, as explained before by Trish from the first academy that '*ultimately the governors are the ones who are in charge of the school because they have so much power'.* These decisions were just passed down to the staff for implementation. As academies are run like businesses, the financial decision was not a consultative issue because academies are not supposed to go over their budgets according to the Academies Act (2010). Nonetheless, if DL was employed, the HTs could have consulted and got suggestions from different departments about their prioritised resources, instead of imposing them. Harris (2014) argues that:

> If we think about leadership as being confined to only those in positions of authority, then we are willfully ignoring the leadership talent and capability of many others. If leadership is fundamentally about influence, then within any school there are many sources of influence, both formal and informal (Harris, 2014:1).

This is where a really well-developed culture of DL would allow budget setting within parameters, agreed by everyone. Thus, with participatory DL practice, the academies would have benefited from choosing expertise from the staff, as explained by Harris above, who were able to budget big funds, and prioritise the most important activities in each subject, which would move the school forward. These experts would achieve this by evaluations and consultations in different subjects, and then present their outcomes to the executive board, which is the SLT and the governors. This could give ownership to all the staff, as part of DL as it encompasses democratic principles and emphasises team working (Aruzie *et al,* 2018, Chapman, 2003; Machumu and Kaitila, 2014) instead of the HT making decisions for the whole school. It is quite interesting that Getty who deputised for the HT and who was part of the SLT, was left out of important meetings. From the excerpt above Getty could not be given a chance to present her budget because she was deemed to be expensive. It can be suggested that there was a kind of underlying distrust of teachers as though they would all descend into squabbling and competition. Yet competition is an important aspect of neo-liberal market philosophies and one that the UK government emphasises in converter academy new managerial provision and considers essential to improving student outcomes (Vogt, 2002; Archer, 2018). In this type of setting, DL would not reconcile with the entrepreneurial and political leadership; they could not complement each other. Furthermore, the fact that the top executive made decisions for the staff, was already hierarchical, and in total contrast with DL practice. The autonomy that was promised to all staff in academies, which is part of democracy, was replaced with autocracy.

Democratic communities:

> facilitate the development and sustainability of schools, as well as societies designed to promote a way of living that requires the open flow and critique of ideas with an authentic concern for the interest of the individual as well as the common good...Concepts such as distributed leadership, inclusion, learning communities and student voice appear to resonate with democracy (Woods and O'Hair, 2009: 427-428).

The above quotation is in total contrast with the leadership that was employed at this second academy. There were tensions here in these academies which were run like businesses; the HTs had to work according to budgets, and they could not afford to have losses. On the other hand, the staffs' perceptions were that the HTs and the governors did not consult them because they did not want any demands that involved money from the staff. This came as a result of their tight budgets which were controlled from central government. It appears as if the autonomy and flexibility of this academy school was limited because their budgets were tight and controlled by central government. According to the NCSL (2011) the excitement of converting into an academy was affected by the reduction of funding due to austerity measures because of the recession. This might be the reason why the HT and governors of the first academy did not want to include any staff in the financial matters, as Getty suggested in the above interview. This is typical of new managerial pragmatism which supports autocracy.

In this case, it appeared as if the political austerity policies were interfering with the school leadership in the sense that the HT and the governors had to exclude the rest of the staff in their financial budgets and decisions, so that they would stay in tune with the cuts and avoid overspending. Further, the promise of more funds in academies was more rhetoric than reality because the teachers were not enjoying the much talked about promised funds in academies, as explained by Getty about her limited budget. This resonates with the NCSL (2011) who expressed that CAs' major challenges were funding and financial resources, and buying in support services, though their inspiration for becoming an academy was financial autonomy.

The other autocracy that was employed by the HT was through the buying in of teachers as discussed below.

Although the head of the second academy chose the 'pragmatic' route, the teachers were not in agreement with that practice as echoed by Naomi:

> *I think the head needs to be more understanding of what the staff wants. Sometimes the staff can be quite cross about particular things, and nothing is done about it* (Naomi, HOD).

There were tensions here in the sense that the HT was trying to explain in her interview that *'I cannot overstep that',* which meant that she could not go over the stipulated budget in trying to supply the required resources. On the other hand, the teachers did not see it that way, but they thought their views were not addressed and they were angry with her. The HT was the one who was prioritising the resources by being 'pragmatic' and did not take the staff on board. That is why the other teachers were not happy with her because they felt that they were being excluded and the HT was failing to engage with them. Being pragmatic, ordinarily is seen as a good practice because leaders are adapting to situations using a range of things. However, in this academy school context, it was seen very negatively; hence, calling it 'new managerial pragmatism' but the staff called it autocratic, micromanagement and 'dictatorship' because they were not taken on board.

There were some commonalities in the financial pressure and leadership practice between the two academies, as explained before in the first academy school, Getty the deputy head of the first academy school stated that *there are certain things that the head and governors make a decision on because they have to. It may be financial decisions that I, you know, because obviously I'm gonna always say I want more staff.* The financial pressure in these academies was emanating from the insufficient funding from central government. This pressure was also passed down to the teachers who could not get some of the resources that they needed. The outcomes that were expected in these academies would only be successful if they had the

required resources, especially this second academy which had a 'needs improvement' Ofsted grade. Nevertheless, appropriate resourcing remained problematic according to the research which was carried out by National Education Union (NUT) (2018):

> The accounts of the 32-school Greenwood Academies Trust state that there remains significant uncertainty regarding future years' funding allocations, and the desire to move to a national funding formula provides uncertainty and hence risk. ...The David Ross accounts also say financial risks include…uncertainty over the distribution of funding to academies from 2018/19 onwards (NUT, 2018: Online).

This quotation demonstrates the root of this 'new managerial pragmatism' in these academies. There were tensions between the desire to turn around the academy to a 'Good' Ofsted grade and the budget pressure, which were difficult to reconcile in business-like academies where they were not allowed to overspend and were directly monitored by the EFA. In order to balance these two entities, the HTs had to make tough decisions to maintain their allocated school budgets by employing this 'new managerial pragmatic' leadership. The issue of tight budgets is supported by the National Audit Office (NAO) (2016) report which observes that schools are not certain about the amount of funding that they will receive each year, and the DfE's approach to managing the risks to schools' financial sustainability needs to be improved because it is not effective and is not providing good value for money. This was also reiterated by the Freedom and Autonomy for Schools National Association (FASNA) (2015) who observes that budgets in schools will continue to be hard pressed during the next few years.

Due to these budget pressures, the academy HT and governors had to take a risk to invite the local MPs from different parties in the County in order to challenge them about their rhetoric pledges and showed them the reality at their academy. The MPs were taken for a learning walk around the classes by the HT and the governors in order to show them the reality of this

academy. The HT of the second academy explained how they risked inviting the local MPs in the excerpt below:

> *The governors and I had to come out of our comfort zone, and we invited the local MPs from different parties in the County. The MPs from the Liberal Democratic Party (Lib Dem) and the Conservative Party came, and we took them on a tour around the school in different classes to see what was going on. We then had a meeting with them and challenged them about their pledges. We told them about our underfunded academies and our struggles. Our governors have never been political before - they feel we have no option but to be so now* (Tasha).

The excerpt above suggests the risk taken and how proactive the head and the governors were in raising the funding issues with their local MPs who represented them in Parliament. Although the academies were directly accountable to central government, they saw it fit to address their concerns through their MPs' so that they would probably debate it in Parliament. Inviting the MPs to this academy was a good idea so that they could see the reality at this academy, which is the democratic way, as compared to their political rhetoric. This was a worthy cause regardless of the time that was taken to invite these MPs. It showed democracy in action, which Woods (2020) explains that in practice, the concept of democratic leadership is viewed as a distributed and developing phenomenon which involves various people who participate in leadership through everyday collaborations. This is a view shared by Ogunyinka and Adedoyin (2013) and Ch *et al* (2017) who contend that democratic leadership involving group discussions enables headteachers to effectively work with their staff as a team and through respecting each other's contributions deliver good school outcomes.

These MPs saw the real situation and they had a clear idea of the effects of cuts in schools from the visit that they had at this academy. It can be suggested that if academies were working

in partnership with their local MPs in sharing their concerns and the MPs raising these concerns in Parliament, which is supported by DL practice, they could come up with a lasting solution and move their academies forward. The academies would not carry their burdens on their own but would share the accountabilities with their MPs. This practice could reduce the precariousness in HTs. Probably this could avoid the 'new managerial pragmatism' leadership which is negative and autocratic in nature, and also reduce the micromanagement and risk avoidance. The HTs would be able to take risks and innovate more and might choose to distribute leadership.

However, it could be argued that pragmatism was not the only way to solve the budget problem; instead, there were other better inclusive methods that could have been employed. They could have chosen the DL model which allowed transparency, risk taking, consultation and inclusion. This resonates with the Adventure Associates (2015) who explain that DL allows small teams to decide how they want to achieve their goals, as opposed to simply implementing the commands of a single leader. If the HTs were transparent with their school funding and budgets, teachers would not have blamed them for not supplying the staff with adequate resources but would have blamed the system.

This 'new managerial pragmatic' route that the HT chose was in opposition with DL which allowed people to negotiate and to be part of the decision making. Distributing leadership across these academies to all those who had expertise was the way forward. I disagree with Timperley (2005:417) who argues that 'distributed leadership over more people is a risky business and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence'. It can be argued that leadership is distributed to people with expertise, and there is greater wisdom and ideas in many people with expertise than a few senior leaders or HTs who do not have expertise in everything, hence, the distribution of leadership. This is supported by Solly (2018: online) who suggested that 'by empowering others to lead and by investing in your staff by developing them as leaders, there is the inherent risk that sometimes things will go wrong, or they won't work'. Through discussion and sharing of ideas as practised in DL, they could have planned how the

budget was spent together with the staff or departmental leaders, suggesting their budgets and resources. The tensions between the head and the teachers could have been avoided. This also resonates with Cottrell (2009) who suggests the idea of including teachers in decision-making of proposed changes in the school because their ownership will increase their motivation, initiative and dedication. However, because of this 'new managerial pragmatic' leadership practice, the HT ended up delegating small innovations which will be discussed in the next section.

7.2.1 'New managerial pragmatism' through delegation of small innovations

Due to this new managerial pragmatism, the HT of the second academy did not trust her staff with big innovations. Tom highlighted that the HT delegated small innovations:

> ...*but some small things maybe can be delegated out to HODs… She does autocratic and micromanagement, she says we've got to do this* (Tom, head of year).

On the other hand, the HT explained how she delegated some innovations to teachers.

> *I am more than happy for people to come up with different ideas and different suggestions because again, if it comes from the staff body or even from the student body, there are likely to be more successful and people are likely to take more ownership. The marking stamp, we've gone from stamps to actually now stickers which I delegated to one of the HODs* (Tasha).

The above excerpts display the limited and trivial innovations that the HT distributed, and she only gave one example because the distribution was limited, as she explained earlier own. This demonstrates the risk avoidance of delegating meaningful innovations to her staff, like the financial innovations that were highlighted by CIPFA. This is in contrast with Gibb (2017) who stated that by freeing schools to innovate, the government has set the profession free to self-

improve. He also supports academisation because of its autonomy that can stimulate innovation and sharing, which encourages improvement. However, the excerpts above show that the HT was giving small innovations to her staff. All these things were mediated through the 'new managerial pragmatic' practices of reporting, checking on each other, spot checks and micromanagement regulations, as highlighted by Tom in the above excerpt. The introduction of academies brought some changes which removed the public welfare type of education that focused on interactions, care and dedication to the job and staff, then moved to a new postmodern, private sector type of education (Sahlberg, 2012). These changes may be intimidatory to schools because headteachers and teachers are assessed in various ways, by different methods (Skinner, 2021). These requirements will cause headteachers to micromanage so that they will be in control of everything. This surveillance culture of micromanagement could gradually stop innovations and high-risk innovations, although the head teacher said that she was happy to entertain innovations from teachers. This leadership culture was a result of a 'needs improvement' grade that they got and accountability to Ofsted and central government. Micromanagement will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

It can be suggested that the HT was getting people into a mind-set and it was self-discipline. Rather than having a group of teachers who wanted to innovate, there was a set of external constraints which the HT was saying that the teachers could innovate, but it was too expensive and '*there is only so much money in the bank and I cannot overstep that'.* She was using this strategy as a control measure; this could be seen as a form of risk evasion which came as a result of accountability. This is demonstrated in Matty's extract from the second academy:

> *There is no participation in the sense that everything is dictated… you receive it and you're required to act on it, rather than it been any sort of negotiated element* (Matty, HOD).

This type of leadership can be interpreted as autocratic. Spillane (2006) discourages headteachers to run the school organisation on their own while they only delegate some

responsibilities to teachers. Headteachers who operate autocratically suggests they do not trust their staff to work independently (Dahri, 2015). There is a mismatch between the teachers' expectations from the HT and what the HT believed to be delegating. She believed that she was delegating some of the innovations to staff, and the members of staff were complaining that she was dictating to them or delegating small things to HODs only. It can be argued that these were just small pockets of DL in an autocratic leadership culture. These leadership contentions were hindering potential innovations from teachers as echoed by Bertha from the second academy who complained that:

> *I know the way she is doing; it doesn't bring us along with her. It's very superficial in some way. She micromanages in some way, so everything is in fine details but a lot of it is superficially involving us and you have a say, but at the end of the day it doesn't really happen* (Bertha, HOD).

The head was using 'new managerial pragmatism' which was interpreted by the staff to be 'dictatorship', authoritarian, autocratic and micromanagement, in order to avoid the risk of distributing innovations to her staff because of her accountabilities. This notion is supported by Nadarasa (2014) and Amedome (2018) who believe that autocratic leadership has a negative effect on staffs' job contentment. Due to this, it is deemed that headteachers find it difficult to apply this leadership style and to have good relationships with their staff because they impose things and force their staff to do them (Ogunyinka and Adeboyin, 2013). In this respect, staff have no ownership of school activities and sense of belonging because of the imposition of policies and procedures by the headteacher (*Ibid*). This is demonstrated in this second academy where the HT could not tell the teachers directly that she did not trust them with high-risk innovations, but she was just using the tight budget as an excuse, as seen in her excerpt. In other words, the HT was trying to tell her staff that they should think about the risks of overspending, if their initiatives involved some funding for classroom resources. This practice contradicts Chartered Institute of Public Finance and accountancy's (CIPFA) (2014)

expectations who explained that the financial director should not run the financial duties alone but should distribute them to the members of staff. These duties include the running of finance systems and processes.

The teachers complained that they were given false hopes as echoed by Bertha in the above excerpt. They were aware that the HT did not mean what she said; hence, the use of the word '*superficial*'. She appeared to be involving teachers and yet she was micromanaging them. They could be given some small innovations, but they were expected to report to the HT, as echoed by Bertha that '*It's very superficial in some way'.* If teachers wanted to embark on high-risk innovations which needed some funding for resources, the HT would tell them that it was too expensive, and she could not give them the money, as indicated in her interview that she had to be 'pragmatic'. Although this is the reality of what was happening at this academy, it is contradicting with what the government has published about the research findings that were carried by the DfE (2014) on how academies' autonomy was used to support other schools. The DfE (2014) explained that the academies have used their autonomy to innovate and improve, and two-thirds of the academies believe that these changes have improved attainment. This is different from the reality of this second academy as seen in the teachers' excerpts.

However, the HT expressed her desires in the excerpt below:

> *I'm very mindful of the fact that we need to develop our leaders as well, so really looking at involving staff as much as we can and obviously as much as they want to be involved. I would like more colleagues to take on more leadership; I would like to step back a bit…I want people to step up; I want people to become whole leaders… I want people to take more initiative in terms of introducing things, supporting other people. I really want to empower teachers because I think if you can empower staff and give them that responsibility which then they can respond to,*

> *I think they become far more efficient, they feel more valued, and the school will be a much better place for it as well* (Tasha).

The HT was aware of the principles and benefits of distributing leadership to the staff. However, it did not materialise; it was rhetoric. Instead, she did the opposite of what she desired to do, as explained in the teachers' excerpts. This could be as a result of her precariousness; the pressures of turning around the school and the accountabilities, as explained before. It was difficult to distribute big challenging initiatives which she mentioned in the above excerpt; she probably felt safe to delegate trivial initiatives. The statement '…*looking at involving staff as much as we can and obviously as much as they want to be involved'* could be interpreted to mean that the teachers were not taking opportunities that the HT extended to them. However, the teachers did not see it that way but according to the excerpts above, they viewed the HT as an authoritarian who did not want to distribute but only told them what to do. She could have wished to involve the teachers but that was not happening at this academy. The HT thought that the teachers were reluctant to give her some feedback:

> *I will always be open with staff and actually with our staff and I'm really quite disappointed at how much feedback I don't get. We will put things out to staff and ask for feedback and I am underwhelmed often by the fact that there is very little feedback that comes through, I am happy to listen to staff, I don't know whether they think it's a done deal. That is never the case* (Tasha).

The above excerpt demonstrates the tensions between the head and her staff. Tasha was supposed to understand the message that the teachers were trying to put across, when they were not giving any feedback. This shows that there was no transparency. She was aware that the teachers were not going to respond when she passed the following comment '*looking at involving staff...as much as they want to be involved'.* Tasha could have created a good rapport with them and discussed their concerns instead of being risk averse and avoiding consultation.

The way forward in these academies that are led like businesses is that since the academies' budgets are tight due to government cuts, innovations can still be encouraged through capacity building which is part of DL. Thus, the HTs should have identified some potential teachers and sent them for different courses for big innovations according to the academies' needs, like behaviour management, challenge and differentiation, data analysis, finance and budgets, mentoring, health and safety, staff wellbeing and others. Then these trained teachers can now be used to train other teachers in their academies, instead of buying in expensive services which were mentioned in the findings.

This is supported by Harris' (2014) who states that, 'the implication for those in formal leadership roles is that they have a key role to play in creating the conditions for DL to occur. They have to create the opportunities for others to lead' (Harris, 2014:1). This inhouse training, which is part of DL, can save a lot of money in the long run in innovations and simultaneously empowering teachers to train up-coming leaders and taking initiatives. Above all, these academies can use their facilities to train other teachers from other schools, whilst they charge a training fee and they can make more money, since academies can generate profit. This in turn might bring satisfaction and ownership to all staff than being 'pragmatic' and streamlining leadership, which demoralise teachers and discourage innovations. This was different from the teachers' perceptions who felt that the HT was not taking their ideas as discussed below.

7.2.2 'New managerial pragmatism': The rhetoric of democratic leadership

The headteacher of the first academy explained that he used different leadership styles at his academy. He described his leadership as follows:

> *I try to vary; I don't believe in HT from one style of leadership. I think it's important to have different styles because there are 150 adults at the school. They require different styles of leadership. I am quite keen on working with people. So, I try to avoid things like coercive leadership. I would much rather be affiliative or democratic and working and coaching with people rather than*

> *forcing the agenda and telling them what to do, because I think it's not just about me, it's about all the leaders in the school. There are lots of leaders. There are senior or middle leaders, and they need to be empowered to lead in their particular area* (Don the HT).

Since the HT received his leadership training from the NCSL, as indicated in Appendix 7, during the then New Labour government which believed in DL, he had the DL leadership language such as 'empowering other leaders' to lead in their departments, 'collaborative', 'affiliative', 'democratic' and 'working and coaching' with people (NCSL, 2006). As explained in the excerpt above, the HT was aware of the different personalities that he was leading; that was the reason why he varied his leadership styles according to different teachers. It can be argued that the application of different leadership styles on different teachers could have been used as an exclusion tool where he chose to be democratic to the teachers who supported his agenda and autocratic to the teachers who challenged his policies. On the other hand, it could be that he wanted to address every teacher's individual needs through different leadership styles which suited them, which is part of democracy. Alam (2017) views a good democratic school leader as one who promotes participation and uses wisdom to distribute responsibilities, but at the same time acknowledging that he/she has the ultimate leadership responsibilities of the school organisation. In the same view, it is important to note that democratic leadership implies that school leadership should not treat people as merely followers of leaders, but they should be included in their leadership (Woods, 2020; Yalçınkaya *et al*, 2021).

Nevertheless, the HT chose not to force his agenda, as described in the excerpt above, which suggests that he knew that there would be resistance since he was dealing with adults and leaders. This democratic practice conflicts with what the HT explained earlier on that he does not need to consult every teacher and he buys in a group of teachers who supported his agenda. Also, Pat and Getty highlighted that there were some policies that the HT and governors made, and they just imposed them on teachers. The other conflicting statement was when the HT claimed to be *'quite keen on working with people,'* and yet he said that he buys

in a group of people to work with (to be discussed). Which means that he was only keen to work with people who supported his agenda and he was depriving the other ones who were not in his 'inner circle'.

If it was DL, he would include all those who had the expertise of carrying out the initiatives that were there, regardless of whether they supported his agenda or not. He also explained that '…*it's about all the leaders in the school... There are senior or middle leaders, and they need to be empowered to lead in their particular area'.* This leadership practice is supported by DL because it opens spaces for individual growth through reflection while affording other leaders the opportunity to lead independently in their departments (Woods and Gronn, 2009), and support school staff to access and meaningfully discuss teaching and learning (Fenton, 2002). However, this practice conflicted with the HT's statement which he said that he did not need to consult everyone (to be discussed). This means that he did not empower every leader. This also was demonstrated in Getty's excerpt where she explained that she was not included in decision making and the policies were just imposed on her. The above conflicting statements show the rhetoric of democracy that the HT was claiming to employ, because it was different from the reality that was being experienced by some of his staff, and also his leadership practice at this academy. This is one of the advantages of the phenomenography approach; people talk freely about their experiences at this academy, as seen above.

7.2.3: 'New managerial pragmatism': Headteacher not taking staffs' ideas

New managerial pragmatism is also reflected in the excerpts of the staff who complained that Tasha, the headteacher of the second academy was not taking their ideas on board. According to the teachers, they said that if they gave their feedback, Tasha, the HT did not consider it because she would have concluded already, so they did not want to waste their time giving feedback. The deputy head explained that:

> *If the head has already made up her mind, she won't listen. But if she has not yet decided, she might take some of the views, otherwise she*

is very rigid. She puts on a smile to blind staff, but she is hard inside. She is an autocratic or authoritarian leader (Felie).

One of the HODs also explained that:

*She does not listen to the views of teachers. …People who are more critical of how the school is run can be ignored (*Billy, HOD).

This practice eroded the teachers' willingness to innovate because they knew that it was not worth trying, as echoed by Pretty who said that:

I never reply to anything anymore…because there's no point, no I don't feel listened to, I don't feel valued at all (Pretty, Head of year).

The above excerpt reflects the anger and dejection that was experienced by Pretty. The other teachers also had the same complaint of not being listed to in the excerpts below:

The HT does not listen to the views of teachers, but her particular supporters, if they were to make suggestions on a particular policy, she listens. But people who are perhaps more critical of how the school is run make exactly the same policy, it can be ignored (Matty, HOD).

One of the heads of year echoed the same sentiments:

*Our views are not implemented by the HT. I think the head has a particular view and a particular desire to develop the school in a certain way, that's her vision, that's what she's gonna do (*Archie, Head of Year*).*

The above excerpts demonstrate a mismatch between what the HT desired to do and the real situation on the ground. There was a culture of selective listening by the HT and she avoided confrontation with the teachers who challenged her decisions. This has some commonalities with the first academy school HT who explained that he only chose the teachers who supported

his policies. This practice created mistrust between the head and the staff, as they complained that their views were not taken into consideration. This support Open Access Government's (2019) claim that school staff feel that they are not included in policy making by the headteachers and they are not provided with the resources to implement these polices. These complaints from the staff do not reflect how an executive or accounting officer should execute her duties, as explained by CIPFA (2014). This is totally different from the excerpts above where the teachers' views were not taken on board. These excerpts above expose the gap between the literature of executive directors of academies and the reality of leadership practice in the academies. Instead, the heads are seen as super heads and yet they are said to be 'dictators' or authoritarian, according to the teachers' interviews.

Pretty's contradictory excerpt is a response to the HT's complaint about teachers not giving feedback to her suggestions. There is evidence that the teachers were not valued, and their ideas were not considered. This practice contradicts with Allen (2017) who recommends democratic participative approaches in academies' governance in order to ensure meaningful accountability. This participatory governance according to Allen, should recognise the expertise and interests of the people within the school organisation and create a system that actively encourages and values their participation. If the teachers were not listened to or not valued, there was no reason for them to have given any feedback because it was not going to be applied. That was the posture of these teachers at this academy, and the HT's response was said to be 'dictatorial' or authoritative. With authoritarian leadership, which is part of the new managerialism, Karabina (2016) explains that tasks are imposed on staff by headteachers, and they do not want their ideas to be opposed; they expect compliance and submission from their subordinates. In a sense, authoritarian leadership has a negative impact on staff as seen in Dinham (2008) who explains that authoritarian leaders in schools do not appreciate their staff or give them constructive feedback, instead they sometimes get discouraging remarks from their leaders. The teachers felt that they were not included in decision making.

7.2.4 Deputy headteachers and HODs not included in decision making

Although the HT claimed that '*she would rather lead people with her rather than tell them they have got to do it',* the teachers perceived this as rhetoric as they claimed in the excerpts below that she was doing the opposite. Felie, the deputy head of the second academy explained that:

> *Most of the things are done by the HT, the governors and the finance manager. They have written a lot of policies, but no one inspects them. I am not included in most of these policies* (Felie).

This was reiterated by the deputy head of the first academy school who echoed that:

> *I'm not part of that decision-making body, and so, I wasn't involved*… (Getty).

Even Pat, the HOD echoed the same sentiments:

> *Sometimes there are policies which our HT obviously makes the decision himself and then he'll just go about telling us these are the changes that I've made* (Pat).

The excerpts above suggest how leadership culture has changed in these two academies where the deputies were no longer powerful and effective. It demonstrates the level of 'new managerial pragmatism' which is perceived as autocratic by teachers in these academies and shows that even if the deputies were part of the SLT they were not consulted by their HTs. Thus, the HTs were not 'leading with them'; they were left out in decision making. If these policies were not inspected, it could mean that they could be oppressive to the staff. This type of new pragmatic managerialism was reiterated by Duignan (2006) who observes that some authoritarian headteachers do all the leadership duties on their own, instead of distributing it to the expertise around the school. This type of leadership can be seen as having a stifling effect on staff as noted by Spillane (2006) who discourages headteachers to run the school organisation on their own while they only delegate some responsibilities to teachers. This is

what these two headteachers were doing, leading on their own to the extent of not even involving their deputy headteachers. The staff did not have any ownership of these policies, which meant that they were just imposed on them.

Even if the staff did not agree with these policies because of a lack of consultation, they did not have the platform to air out their views because of what the HTs termed as being 'pragmatic'. Policies were just imposed on teachers. This means that the headteachers do not trust their staff to work independently (Dahri, 2015). With such a working atmosphere, the staff do not enjoy their work and there is no job contentment (Ch *et al*, 2017). This is seen in Pat's excerpt where the HT made changes and just told the teachers about them. This is in total opposition with DL practice which is transparent and includes everyone. Also, Allen (2017) advocates for a democratic system in academies which promotes a bottom-up structure that involves everyone to participate in decision-making processes, and all participants listen to each other and generates group choices. If the above DL practice had been employed, the teachers were going to take ownership and be actively involved in the school decision making polices. There was also 'pragmatism' in buying in services as discussed in the next section.

7.2.5 Pragmatism in buying in services

As this academy was on its own as indicated in the excerpt above, they had the autonomy to buy in services and because of that, the HT was accountable for the budget since she was now one of the financial managers. She was 'pragmatic' in choosing the services that she wanted. The services were now more expensive than the LA services that they had before, as explained by Naomi in the excerpt below:

> *Buying in services can be more expensive. If you are an academy, you need specialist mental health services and whatever it is, could be very expensive to buy in rather than going into the LA system* (Naomi).

Although it was expensive, the HT had to fulfil the statutory responsibilities of buying in the mental health specialists and other special services. There was an expectation of getting large

additional sums of money in academies as explained by the staff in the academy conversion section, but after the conversion, they realised that they did not have enough funds to cover all their needs after the deductions of the teachers' pay and buying in of services, as explained by the two heads in their interviews. That is why Tasha explained in her interview that '*sometimes I have to be quite 'pragmatic'* due to the tight budget. Naomi also explained how the academies were now paying for the consultants that used to be supplied for free by the LA.

> *You could go on a course that the council was running, and I think it's probably free of charge or we had English consultants whom you could ask to come in for a day to look at planning or marking and work together. Once we became an academy everything had to be paid for, which of course it's an issue because they got rid of most of the consultants. They used to be a whole team of English specialists. Obviously, school have got other priorities, heads might have other priorities for the money and therefore, you can't have this person in who costs X amount of money…there are courses being run where you could go on* (Naomi).

The above excerpt demonstrates a shift in school culture from LA schools where teachers used to enjoy effectively free services that benefited teaching and learning, to an academies culture where they pay for every service, but have got to prioritise because of tight budgets, even if the academy is on a 'needs improvement' Ofsted grade. However, although they changed into an academy, they were supposed to have the consultants as their priority, since they were specialists who were working with different subject departments, as explained in the above excerpt. These consultants were helpful in moving the school forward by working in partnership with teachers as part of their CPD and empowerment. This is in contrast with the new academies practice which prioritises the services due to affordability or because of tight budgets, as indicated in the above excerpt. According to Boyask (2016) the freedom that has

been given to academies from the control of LAs has affected educational services that were being offered by the LAs.

Nonetheless, the head talked about buying in different services which included the staff absence protection insurance, as her way of balancing her 'pragmatism' in the excerpt below:

> *The opportunities to have that top slice money brought directly into school and the opportunity then to negotiate, to purchase our own services…We buy in staff absence protection insurance...*(Tasha).

The HT was prioritising, and she invested in buying in services. She invested in the things that she thought were important by employing her 'new managerial pragmatic' strategy which was not supported by the teachers. This is a good example of autocratic leadership which has been noted as having a negative effect on staffs' job contentment (Nadarasa, 2014; Amedome, 2018). Consequently, it is deemed that headteachers find it difficult to apply this leadership style and to have good relationship with their staff because they impose things and force their staff to do them (Ogunyinka and Adeboyin, 2013). In this respect, staff have no ownership of school activities and sense of belonging because of the imposition of policies and procedures by the headteacher (*Ibid*).

From the above excerpt, it is not clear whom the HT negotiated with. She might have been talking about negotiating with the staff, but it was contradicting with the staffs' excerpts. Alternatively, she could have been referring to the service providers where she bought the academy's services. She also talked about having a '*top slice money brought directly into school*' which could be interpreted as having the satisfaction of having the autonomy to use school funds and the power to distribute it as the financial director; though in a 'new managerial pragmatic' way.

However, the HT was faced with challenges of prioritising and balancing the distribution of funds since they were not allowed to have a deficit. She had to manage staff expectations like training and conferences that involved buying in services. These seemed to be some of the

challenges because of what seemed to be additional funds which turned out not to be enough, then they realised that their perception did not match the reality. It can be argued that these HTs were constrained by what they could not do through the DfE arrangements; they were constrained by the DfE expectations; Ofsted expectations; and the DfE and Ofsted rules were non-negotiable, as explained by the two HTs in the accountability section. These are some of the effects of neoliberalism in the education sector where academies are accountable to DfE and Ofsted with non-negotiable polices. Sahlberg (2012) explains some of these neoliberalism changes as including the removal of the public welfare services such as health which converted academies became responsible for as evident in these case studies. There was the rhetoric of additional funding and the autonomy to spend it in academies and yet HTs had non-negotiable costs which included health and safety, safeguarding and other accountabilities. If the academy heads did not meet a certain criterion in accountabilities such as health and safety, according to DfE (2014) *Statutory Schools Policies*, they would be held responsible by the DfE, and there were costs to it, for example a leaking roof and SEN pupils' exams which could incur extra costs. This was a statutory requirement because the academies must have assessors and the assessments must be done. However, the teachers' perceptions of the second academy HT's leadership were autocratic and 'dictatorship' as discussed in the next section.

7.3 New managerial pragmatism: Teachers' perceptions of the HTs as autocratic and a 'dictator'

This section presents three different aspects of autocratic leadership which were part of the new managerial pragmatism that were used by the HTs. One source was the internal one where they imposed their policies without consulting anyone, and the other form of internal-driven autocracy was the one where one of the HTs achieved through 'buying in' a group of people who supported his ideas. The third type of autocracy was driven by an external source which was Ofsted. The HT of the first school admitted that when he wanted things to be done, he did not allow discussions, in the interview, saying, and raising his voice:

> *Sometimes you have to have things done. But we said earlier, no there is no discussion, it has to happen* (Don, HT).

The above excerpt demonstrates the internal autocratic leadership practice that the HT experienced at this first academy. The phrase '*no there is no discussion, it has to happen',* can be interpreted to be an oppressive way of leadership, where teachers were not given an opportunity to contribute their ideas. '*It has to happen,'* sounds forceful and there is no choice. In this case, they are just told what to do and they are not allowed to contribute their ideas or to challenge the HT. There was no consultation nor ownership of the policies, as explained by Don in the excerpt above. This is a typical example of new managerial pragmatism which is portrayed by the HT at this academy where the staff are just told what to do. It is important to observe that autocratic headteachers do not focus on improving a vision for their school organisations or creating relationships, but they focus on achieving their tasks and to do so effectively (Wynn, 2019). In fact, authoritarian leadership is known for its intolerance of diversity and challenge (MacBeath, 2003). Indeed, authoritarian leaders strengthen control and authority by confirming themselves as the leaders who have the ultimate power over their staff (Dinham, 2008).

Such autocratic leadership behaviour however, contradicts with the political promises that the then Secretary of State for education Gove (2010) gave to academies considering conversion, that the government was going to give teachers more freedom and injects a new level of dynamism into a programme that has been proven to raise standards for all children including the disadvantaged. However, the HT's imposition of policies on teachers did not demonstrate the freedoms that these academies teachers were given. It can be argued that if policies are imposed, the teachers might reluctantly implement them and there might not be that dynamism which was explained above; also, the standards for children might not be raised because of such practice. In this respect, there are fewer opportunities for risk taking and innovation in authoritarian schools and this may prevent the identification of expertise in these schools; teachers need the headteacher's approval in order to do their tasks (Dinham and Scott, 2008;

Wynn, 2019). Authoritarian leaders tend to focus on the operational at the expense of the strategic (Dinham and Scott, 2008).

The HT's autocracy in this first academy is also demonstrated in the buying in of teachers who supported his policies, as explained below:

> *I don't need to consult all teachers, but I would consult those people whom I think have something to offer'… I think it's important to have buy in. If I have a policy that I want to bring in, before I get to that stage where it's either approved or not approved, I try to buy in a group of people that are going to support it, I buy in a powerful coalition of people (*Don, HT).

Getty explained that:

> *… I am not part of that decision-making body and so, I wasn't involved in that' (*Getty, deputy headteacher*).*

Don's excerpt explains the strategy that he employed when he wanted to introduce his policies. The quotation '*I try to buy in a group of people that are going to support it, I buy in a powerful coalition of people',* can be interpreted to mean that the HT only consulted the teachers who did not challenge him or oppose his ideas. This also resonates with MacBeath (2003) who observes that authoritarian leadership does not accept criticism or challenge but needs obedience and conformity. The HT avoided the risk of being confronted by the teachers who did not support his policies. If it was the case of avoiding criticism, it might be argued that the academy school could not be run by people who supported the head's agenda only.

He also said that '*I don't need to consult all teachers, but I would consult those people whom I think have something to offer'.* This type of leadership seems to reflect some traits of cadre leadership model, where there is a tight knit group of staff members who are active in advancing the policies of the school. However, Harris (2014) states that DL involves encouraging

leadership expertise at all levels in the school in order to create more opportunities for change and to build the capacity for improvement. This is different from a cadre leadership model which has a tightly knitted group and presupposes broad agreement within it. It is quite interesting how the HT knew the right teachers who had something to offer. This is new leadership practice which is not discussed in the literature about CAs. This can be viewed as selective DL where teachers who did not support the HT's policies were left out, and only teachers who were in the 'inner circle' were consulted. This was partial selective consultation because some teachers were left out and their ideas were ignored.

Although Leo and Barton (2006) are not against the fact that DL enables the inclusion and commitment of a wider community, they want to see senior school leaders employing moral leadership, which means that there is need for a clear and sustained commitment to inclusion. However, this inclusion was not reflected in this academy where there is selective distribution of leadership. From a phenomenographic perspective some respondents viewed the HT as someone who was so transparent and included everyone in decision making, as highlighted in the democratic section, and others felt excluded and left out by the same HT. It can be argued that the reason why this HT could have used this selective DL practice was because he did not want to waste time consulting everyone with policies that were irrelevant to them, or it might be that he wanted to protect them from tough decisions.

However, from the deputy head's excerpt, she was left out, although she was part of the SLT as she explained that '…*because I am not part of that decision-making body and so, I wasn't involved in that'.* This response confirms the HT's excerpt above where he said that he would only consult people who supported his policies. It demonstrates the type of leadership that this HT practised; it was not inclusive and transparent. This selective DL that this HT was employing was supported by Gunter (2013) and Lumby (2019) who argue that although most of the DL literature shows that DL creates opportunities to all staff with expertise to participate in leadership, it does not seriously take into consideration the effects of a change in practice to include staff with different characteristics like age, experience, background including gender,

race and other identity features. The HT only distributed leadership to the staff who supported his policies and he did not consider the staff's expertise. At this academy, the reality is that the HT was doing the opposite of what DL suggests about inclusion. It can be suggested that the deputy was not included in the decision-making team probably because she was not supporting the HT's policies, or she had nothing to offer, as suggested earlier on by the HT. The other suggestion could be that the HT was an authoritarian leader who wanted to make his own decisions and he did not want people who challenged or confronted him. The political pressure from the DfE could have been a contributory factor of not including part of the SLT in decision making.

However, if the HT and governors excluded the deputy head from their 'inner circle' which was against the principles of DL, it could be suggested that they were employing autocratic leadership which is part of the new managerial pragmatism. Spillane (2006) who supports DL suggests that the HTs should not run the school organisation alone and only delegate some responsibilities to teachers. It can be argued that the rhetoric of consultation looks as if it was aligning with DL, but the practice at this academy was different. This is demonstrated in the HT's excerpt. That was not good practice where the HT selected the teachers that he wanted to consult. This is different from the principles of DL which are inclusive and have no boundaries, as cited by Harris (2008) who explains that DL is an inclusive model of leadership that does not support hierarchical structures. Although critics of DL like Hatcher (2005) and Bolden (2011) argue that in school organisations, there might be distribution of leadership but the power is often not distributed, I still maintain that distributing leadership in across the school is a better option than autocracy. It can be argued that the HT used this method in order to avoid the risk of being confronted or challenged by the teachers who did not support his policies.

DL does not encourage such type of practice, as supported by Diamond and Spillane (2016) who explained that DL is stretched over people and it involves activities tied to the main work of the organisation; these activities are designed and understood by its members, as they are

intended to influence their motivation, knowledge and practices. It can be suggested that Don's leadership practice could frustrate the teachers who were left out, and it could push them out of this academy because they did not have any ownership of the policies, as expressed by Getty. The HT's buying in practice in the above excerpt only motivated those teachers whom he was buying in and it was not stretched among all teachers, as explained by Diamond and Spillane (2016) above. This practice shows that although the HT received his leadership training from NCSL under a New Labour government who believed in DL, he was acting as an academy head under a Conservative one. He believed in varying his leadership styles depending on the situation in order to meet the requirements of both the school and the outside agents. Tasha, the HT of the second academy was also employing autocratic leadership.

Although Tasha, the HT described herself as being 'pragmatic', the teachers perceived her as an autocratic or authoritarian leader who would make her own decisions without consulting them; that is why this study has come up with this new leadership called 'new managerial pragmatism'. It can be argued that when 'new managerial pragmatism' is being employed, there is DL deficit and decisions are made using authoritative means, as employed by these HTs. Archie from the second academy expressed that:

> *She uses authoritarian. There is no real dialogue with staff*' (Archie, Head of Year).

Felie from the second academy also agreed with Archie that:

> She is *autocratic; she wants to do everything on her own* (Felie, Deputy headteacher).

Bertha from the second academy expressed that:

> *She clearly is an autocratic leader and pressurised by what is coming from the governors because they are both getting pressure from above*

> *and a lot of it flows down to her, down through to staff and the pressure on the staff is a result of the pressure on them* (Bertha, HOD).

However, Derrick from the second academy used the word 'dictator' to describe Tasha's leadership:

> *'Dictatorship' and making her own decisions are probably the fastest ways rather than taking lots and lots of people's ideas because of the pressures she is found herself in, the school needs to move from 'needs improvement' to 'Good'. There is pressure on her, there has been expectation on her from the government as to get to a certain point in a certain time. Having her own idea and driving it through like what she does is probably the fastest way* (Derrick, head of year).

Also, the deputy head from the second academy described her as a dictator in the excerpt below:

> *She is a 'dictator', she wants to do everything on her own...Even if the other senior members disagree or have suggestions, she won't change what she wants to do (*Felie*).*

The above excerpts suggest that there was a time limit to turn around the school into a 'Good' Ofsted grade and the HT chose authoritarian, autocracy, micromanagement and 'dictatorship' leadership as '*the fastest way'* of turning it around. This is supported by Aruzie *et al* (2018) who argued that democratic styles are perceived as not always effective and pragmatic in practice since ideas and contributions come from various people within the group which can make it difficult to come up with an agreed decision or consensus. Meanwhile, Woods and Gronn reiterate that:

> It is not just a matter of hours in a day or days in a year that are 'stolen' by democratic processes: the intellectual and emotional labour

> expended on these can be disruptive to the flow of organisational work. Equally seriously, if not more so, from a particular organisational view, decisions may be delayed substantially and the direction of the organisation rendered unclear by prolonged debates (Woods and Gronn, 2009:437).

However, I do not subscribe to the above views by Aruzie *et al* (2018) and Woods and Gronn (2009) because no matter how long it takes to get everyone's ideas, it pays in the end and everyone has ownership in the decision making of the academies, and there is teamwork as compared to the fast and new managerial pragmatism which is autocratic. This type of leadership practice shows that there was no trace of DL because the channels of communication were closed, as highlighted by Lora that '*nothing is really up for discussion'.* This meant that the HT instilled fear in her staff and there was no negotiation. This was in total opposition with DL which encourages collaboration, transparency, trust, mutual respect, teamwork, support and empowerment of teachers to make key decisions of the organisation (Harris and Muijs, 2005; Harris, 2014). It can be argued that all these leadership styles and strategies were employed as a result of pressure from Ofsted and the DfE, going down to the governors, HT and then the staff who were at the receiving end. Both HTs explained earlier on in their interviews that some of the policies that came from the government and Ofsted were non-negotiable and they had no control over them. This meant that 'dictatorship' came as a result of pressure from Ofsted and central government because of the deadlines set and non-negotiable polices, as evidenced by the above data. This 'dictatorship' instilled fear into the teachers to the point that they were afraid to complain to the HT, as explained below.

7.4 Teachers afraid to complain to the HT

The HT's 'new managerial pragmatic' or autocratic leadership was affecting the HODs and they were afraid to complain to her. They chose to channel their complaints to the deputy HT

who employed DL as her leadership style and played an intermediary role between the teachers and the HT, as explained below:

> *The HT is pushing a lot of papers and things to do to the HODs and she is always talking about Ofsted and HMI. Now these leaders are wearing down, but they don't complain direct to the head because they are afraid to fail their performance management or to lose their posts due to incompetency. They choose to complain to me and when I take these complaints to the HT, she always argues that they can do it because she is also doing it herself, and she wants to push the school forward to 'Good', otherwise she will lose her job* (Felie).

The precariousness of the head's job was now affecting everyone, and the middle leaders were also precarious as demonstrated in the above excerpt. These middle leaders were afraid to approach the HT and raise their concerns because of the performance management outcomes and assessments. These are some of the effects of neoliberalism which were brought by the Coalition and Conservative governments. The government recommended in 2014 that all schools should employ a performance-based system of pay progression and progress up a pay scale was no longer automatic with experience (Fullard and Zuccollo, 2021). The evidence shows that Felie, the deputy head was doing her mediation by taking on board different ideas and translating in both ways between the head and the teachers who could not talk direct to each other. This means that she had her own set of leadership practices which supported DL and were different from the HT's autocratic or 'new managerial pragmatism'.

This demonstrates that Felie was not only a deputy head but had her own set of practices which the head might have disagreed with. She was doing something different in terms of listening, being approachable, taking teachers' concerns on, thinking of what could be done, or maybe, she was experienced enough to know how she could raise a concern to the HT in a particular way. This shows how a democratic leader does. These sentiments are shared by

Yunus *et al* (2020) who explains that democratic leadership has got a considerably richer and more ambitious focus in education, and it encourages greater participation from all directions thereby reducing potential organisational conflict. Additionally, democratic leadership has positive influences on school atmosphere and teacher job contentment (Amedome, 2018; Ch *et al*, 2017, Alam, 2017). Felie understood the principles of democracy and chose that path by mediating between the HT and the middle leaders who were not speaking to each other.

Although Felie mediated between the staff and the HT, the HT did not consider the teachers' concerns, as seen in her response which was highlighted by Felie that, '*they can do it because she is also doing it herself*'. This is another gap in literature where such things are not discussed. In practice, Felie was bound by the leadership of the HT and on the other hand, she was still caught up with the DL model which hindered her ability to be in more support than just listening to what the teachers were telling her. So, Felie was a vehicle for teachers to express what was going wrong in leadership, but on the other hand, the head was giving orders of what she wanted. However, as indicated earlier on by Wynn (2019), it is important to observe that autocratic headteachers do not focus on improving a vision for their school organisations or creating relationships, but they focus on achieving their tasks and to do so effectively. This is what this HT of the second academy was doing. Even if the teachers tried to raise their concerns through the HT, she would ignore them and chose to be risk averse, as explained by Deryl in the excerpt below:

> *I have aired our concerns in public forum and staff meetings. I found there is unwillingness to listen because it is inconvenient and there are times where I've actually challenged the directed hours privately over email so that it's not causing embarrassment for her, and I have not even heard any acknowledgement of the email to say that she has received it (Deryl).*

The teachers knew that their HT had poor leadership skills and that was the reason why they described her in their interviews as a 'dictator', autocratic, authoritarian and micromanaging the staff. Although Deryl was brave enough to challenge the HT, he still did not get the results that he wanted. That is why he said that '*I found there is unwillingness to listen'.* This culture does not promote communication and that is why the teachers were reluctant to give the HT the feedback that she was complaining about earlier own. The above evidence shows that the channels of communication were blocked; there was no transparency, which is in total opposition with DL practice. This was not healthy for a school organisation where communication was supposed to flow freely in every direction in order to move the school forward as supported by DL.

Arguably, if the teachers were precarious, they could not tell their leader where she was going wrong. This notion is supported by Adamowicz (2007) who explains that some of the staff's precariousness is further exacerbated by their lack of participation in the running of the organisation and in decision making. This is demonstrated in this second academy where middle leaders reported that they could not approach their HT. That is why they decided to tell Felie as indicated in the above excerpt. This is a message for school leaders that if they unsettle their staff that much, the leaders will be on their own, as portrayed in the teachers' interviews. This was a very dangerous leadership culture where teachers felt that they could not go to the HT to raise their issues. These teachers feared losing their jobs as explained in the above excerpt, so they did not have confidence in their head. It can be argued that if teachers were empowered to raise concerns, as part of DL practice, they would freely approach their HT directly and air out their views, instead of going through the deputy head. However, these teachers were concerned about their precarity and they would not tell or challenge the leadership of the HT.

On the other hand, the head was always telling the deputy head things when they were going up the stairs to address the teachers, and she would tell the teachers that they had both agreed on those things, as echoed by Felie below:

> *At times when the head is going for a staff briefing or staff meeting with me, she tells me what she wants to tell the teachers when we are going up the stairs and when we are in the briefing or meeting, she tells the staff that the SLT has agreed to implement these policies and yet it will be her own ideas* (Felie).

The above excerpt is further reinforcing what Felie had stated in her previous statement above where she indicated how the teachers were avoiding direct consultation with the HT. Evidence from the above except demonstrates the avoidance strategy where the HT was showing her mistrust and confidence with her deputy head by not informing her about the agenda of meetings on time. This could be a deliberate action to ensure that controversy and debates were avoided, and a strategy used by the HT in order for the deputy head to just agree because of a lack of discussion time. On the other hand, it could be that the head knew that the staff trusted Felie, because they told her about their concerns, so the head used this tactic so that the staff might buy in their suggestions. Evidence from the above excerpt shows that in a situation where there was lack of trust between the HT and staff, morale and staff motivation could diminish.

This practice did not support DL which is an effective model (Harris 2008), but it demonstrated autocratic leadership and the culture of not taking other people's ideas that the teachers were talking about in their narratives. If DL practice was applied, the teachers' wellbeing would be considered. There could have been open lines of communication and transparency between the HT and the staff. The HT could have put an open-door policy in place, instead of shutting her door to everyone. According to Spillane (2006) school principals should involve both formal and informal leaders, such as shared leadership teams and department chairs, to share decision-making responsibilities and build a positive team. This is supported by Harris (2013b) who expresses that formal and informal leadership are not oppositional, but they are different parts of leadership practice. This means that the HT of the second academy school and her staff were supposed to work as a team in harmony instead of closing the lines of

communication and employing risk avoidance leadership. The other reason for the HT's risk avoidance could have been the nature and operation of academies which proved to be difficult to practice DL when the state's agenda was dominant. Although the HT was given the autonomy to run this academy, it also came with accountabilities and was controlled from the DfE which seemed difficult to implement DL in such a complicated environment. The teachers also explained that the HT was micromanaging them as seen in the next section.

7.5 Headteacher employed micromanagement

The headteacher of the second academy employed micromanagement, which is part of the new managerial pragmatism. One of the teachers explained that:

> *The HT likes to have her finger in every single pie which causes hold ups because she has to have control in everything and I suppose like what I said earlier, she feels the buck stops with her, so she has to know exactly what's going on, but I don't, I think she should delegate more. She can't do it all, that's why you have other people for. If people feel that it's more of a sharing thing, there wouldn't be the resentment* (Tecla, teacher without a leadership position).

Also, the deputy headteacher of the second academy explained that:

> *She is everywhere, and she wants to control everything because she wants to turn around the school. She is afraid of losing her job and she wants to make sure that everyone is doing what she has said because of Ofsted (Felie).*

The above narratives demonstrate the complication and precariousness of the HT's job because of accountability to the governors and government, and also the targets that were set for her in order to turn around the purported failing academy. The head was aware of how precarious her job was, which gave her pressure because she was afraid of losing her job, as

indicated before in her interview. This is supported by Standing (2011) who explains that the precariat lives with anxiety because they know that one mistake can lead to losing their job. Standing explained that these people are stressed, uncertain, desperate in their behaviour, frustrated, angry and they feel insecure. He further argued that "the precariatised mind is fed by fear and is motivated by fear" (Standing, 2011:20). The uncertainty and fear that this HT had caused her to employ micromanagement.

Arguably, micromanagement was not the best leadership style which could be employed because of its autocracy and pressures that it brought to the staff. This could be seen as poor leadership because if DL was employed, '*hold ups',* were going to be avoided. The other leaders could not do their jobs because the HT was getting in their way. This could end up weighing the HT and the staff down in the sense that the HT had a lot of extra work of inspecting every activity at this school, and yet the teachers were willing to share the responsibilities. On the other hand, the teachers seemed to live in fear all the time and were kept busy because they were aware that they were being monitored by the HT every time, as suggested in the excerpts above. Simplicio (2011) echoes the same sentiments by explaining that some of the headteachers micromanage the staff by involving themselves in every activity that is done in their school organisations, and even if they delegate some tasks, they tell the staff the way they want the work to be done and presented. This results in headteachers missing the broader picture of the most important things of the organisation that they need to attend to as leaders (Limon and Dilekçi, 2021). This micromanagement was perceived to be undermining other leaders, as discussed in the next section.

7.5.1 Micromanagement: Undermining other leaders and lack of trust

The staff with leadership responsibilities thought that the HT of the second academy was undermining their leadership and lacked trust in them because of her involvement in small details in different areas. This practice brought some confusion in teachers and undermined the HODs' work. Naomi, one of the HODs had this to say:

> *Her leadership is micro; getting very, very involved in the small detail with a number of areas actually to the detriment of our own job, not enough time to do our own job. To the detriment of the middle leaders because it undermines their effectiveness, their authority in those roles when they've been other members of department who have been told to do something by the head, which maybe in a very different direction to what the middle leader expects (Naomi).*

Also, one of the heads of year explained how he perceived the HT's leadership skills in the excerpt below:

> *I think sometimes maybe there is probably a little bit too much of micromanagement maybe delegating more to other people could be a way forward. She strikes me as a leader who wants to know all about everything and wants to control everything. But some small things maybe they can be delegated out and heads of department could be just entrusted to actually do it and be left to do it (Tom).*

Another HOD cited that:

> *She uses micromanagement to the tiny detail. Other people should be doing these jobs. We get emails and instruction, do this, do that and the other whilst we have two deputies. You shouldn't be involving yourself in all of these things. But I feel she has to know about everything, doesn't trust anybody else, doesn't trust the judgement of other people* (Bertha, HOD).

The message that came out of the above extracts suggests that the HT lacked trust in the leadership of all the other leaders who were supposed to assist her and run the different departments. That seemed to be the reason why she was controlling everything at this academy on her own. This is supported by Bucaloiu (2019) who argues that the 21st century

has seen a management style focused on extreme control and micromanagement, which removed the teachers' autonomy and reduced their intrusive and extrinsic enthusiasm to participate in the schools' decision-making process. Cândea (2008) and Sidhu (2012) describe micromanagement as surveillance, thorough management by the school leaders and strict control of staff by the school leaders on every activity which leads to unnecessary attention to detail, planning tasks to the tiniest detail, and obsessively interfering with the staff's wellbeing.

The reason why the HT of the second academy had lost trust and was micromanaging everything could be that she had poor leadership skills which did not support DL and could be an authoritarian leader who wanted to do things her own way, though there was this rhetoric of being a democratic leader from her interviews. On the other hand, it might be that she supported DL but the situation at this deemed failing CA, accountability and pressure from different stakeholders could not allow her to exercise DL; hence, she chose the easier way of micromanaging everything. One could suggest that it could also be a situation of overreaction by the HT who wanted to know what was happening everywhere; she did not want to have the same experience again of governors, which was discussed in the academy converter section, who appeared to know what they were doing, and yet once conversion happened, they knew nothing.

It appeared as if the HT wanted to have a bigger picture of all the activities at this academy, though she was focusing on her role as the HT. It was a complex situation in the sense that she was accountable to different stakeholders, and she wanted to move the school forward, hence micromanagement. It could be suggested that this micromanagement, which is part of new managerialism that is employed in schools by the headteachers, make many teachers feel that they are under continuous surveillance and pressure to produce unrealistic results, although headteachers are also under pressure to implement new government policies (DfE, 2018, Open Access Government, 2019). Also, teachers' stresses are amplified significantly by negative school cultures which include poor pupil behaviour, poor relationships with colleagues, less staff development, unwarranted data collection and micromanagement by

HTs (DfE, 2019). However, this was contrary to the deputy head and the other teachers who viewed the HT's micromanagement as poor leadership and preferred the DL strategy, as indicated in their interviews. The teachers were willing to have some of the responsibilities and to have ownership of their subject departmental policies. The DL practice could have worked because the deputy HT employed it whilst she was mediating, and all the staff consulted her with their issues. She listened to their concerns and she acted, which is what the HT could have done. However, the HT was described as a workaholic.

7.6 The headteacher is a workaholic

The teachers were surprised by the hardworking nature of the HT. They thought she was a workaholic and the HT expected everyone to work like her, which was the reason why the workload kept on increasing. Tom from the second acdademy had this to say:

> *… she strikes me as a woman who is a bit of a workaholic and maybe sometimes there are expectations that everybody should be a workaholic because she is. I don't think it's the way it should be* (Tom, Head of Year).

Although it is good to work hard but there should be a work life balance instead of being a '*workaholic'*. The downside of being a *'workaholic'* is the expectation of everyone to work like that and the unachievable standards that are set for other people who work hard but are not workaholics. The excerpt above demonstrates the staff's perception of the HT's prioritisation of work over the teachers' wellbeing; they had a life and family after work. This type of hard working was the reason why the teachers were complaining about the heavy workloads because they were not managing it the way the HT was, since they were not '*workaholics'*. A survey of 4,000 teachers by Harris (2016) has shown that teacher experience of an excessive and an 'unmanageable' workload is not confined to this case study school. It can be argued that it is not good to be a workaholic, as supported by the DfE (2019) document which explains different ways of reducing the teachers' workload, because one might burnout and end up

going off sick for a long time. This defeats the whole purpose of working so hard. This might affect the pupils' performance and the school as a whole. If teachers had a work life balance, they would have stayed healthy and produced good results because their morale would be high.

The HT should have considered the pressure and hard work that these teachers were going through. As discussed before, the evidence from the excerpts show that the head continued to add more work, probably in order to turn around the deemed failing school. She wanted to come out of this situation where she found herself in, and she probably wanted everyone to be a workaholic as suggested by Tom. However, this could be seen as poor leadership practice and she did not consider the wellbeing of teachers; hence, affecting the teachers' morale. That is why Tom disagreed with that workaholic concept. The proper way was employing DL through balancing the work and the wellbeing of everyone including herself.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the leadership practice was seen in two different cultures where on the one hand, the staff suggested a culture of DL where they wanted to be included in: decision making; continuous innovations; supported in risk taking; and trusted in leading their departments. On the other hand, the culture was driven more by the external accountability agenda, targets and Ofsted ratings, which informed a more cautious approach to innovation; thus, only innovations that were oriented towards measurable improvement, typically led or mandated by the heads, tended to go forward, as seen in the staffs' excerpts. The tension between these two was then manifested in two ways: one was the practices which were reported by both the HTs and the other one was the leadership rhetoric of 'pragmatism' which in reality was not the normal one but 'new managerial pragmatism'. This leadership practice had a new name because other teachers from the second academy interpreted it differently, like 'dictatorship', authoritarian and autocratic, and the head's involvement in every activity of the school and lack of delegation was interpreted as micromanagement. If DL had been implemented in the way that Felie had

experienced it and other HODs were suggesting, this academy could have moved forward. Lines of communication were going to be opened and everyone was going to take ownership of how the academy was run. HODs were going to effectively do their duties without fear of being micromanaged and the workloads were going to be reduced through DL.

However, findings showed that the HT of the first academy varied his leadership styles depending on the individual members of staff and the circumstance. Nonetheless, there were some conflicting ideas where the HT believed that he employed democracy in his leadership and empowered leaders to lead in their area. At the same time, he showed some autocratic traits which were part of the new managerial pragmatism, where he said that he did not consult every teacher or leader in policy making, but only consulted the staff who had something to offer and 'buy-in' staff that supported his policies. This practice suggested that there was a new leadership style that was mushrooming from this academy which was neither democratic nor autocratic. It could be viewed as selective DL or perhaps as just an eclectic leadership style which borrowed from lots of different approaches.

Another important finding was the exclusion of his deputy head in decision making, which meant that she was viewed by the HT as having nothing to offer and consequently did not support the HT's agenda. The exclusion of the deputy head by the HT could also be viewed as 'new managerial pragmatism'. Noticeably, the HT employed risk aversion in order to avoid the demands of his staff. The findings also show that Ofsted was also one of the sources of the autocracy that was employed by the HT because he always switched from operationalising democratic to autocratic leadership when Ofsted visited them. DL principles do not support such practices where the HT did not include his staff in decision and policy making. It was concluded that the business model of running this academy with its accountabilities to the external agencies do not reconcile with DL principles which are inclusive, and the promised autonomy for academies. The next chapter will discuss the conclusion of the findings.

Chapter 8: Conclusion of the findings

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will summarise the key findings of this study. It starts by summarising the key findings of the study according to the research questions. It will also summarise the findings of the conversion process which include the consultation process and the perceptions of reasons for converting into an academy. The study then spells out the contributions to knowledge, recommendations and future research, and the study strengths and limitations. The application of a phenomenographic research approach to address the study will be reflected upon. This study is important because it tells us what the HTs and teachers think about the leadership at these two academies. The research questions are as follows:

- Who has the responsibility for leadership at the CAs under study?
- What are the effects of autonomy and accountability on school leadership in the CAs under study?
- What leadership strategies do the HTs use to deal with the demands of their schools, and their roles? How does pragmatism affect CA governance?
- What role does DL play in how leadership is performed at these CAs, and can they be reconciled with the business model in academies?

8.2 Key findings according to question

The following will discuss key findings of the study.

8.2.1 Who has the responsibility for leadership at the CAs under study?

This study found that the day to day running of these two converted academies lay primarily with the HTs, and the governors were the employers and had the ultimate powers to oversee the finances and the running of these academies. However, the academies were controlled by the DfE. The HTs' roles changed from headteachers to CEOs because of the added

responsibilities which included the management of the school finances. They talked about their sole leadership role, but they were ultimately accountable to governors. The findings showed that the deputies and middle leaders were not as powerful as they used to be before conversion and the leadership following conversion was concentrated on the executives, which is part of new managerialism. Arguably, they could be powerful if they were applying DL, as articulated by Woods and Gronn (2009) and Solly (2018) who explained that with DL, power is distributed amongst the staff of the school organisation and moves forward their strategies that contribute towards the whole-school priorities.

8.2.2 What are the effects of autonomy and accountability on school leadership in the CAs under study?

The findings showed that although the academies were given the autonomy to lead their schools, accountabilities to Ofsted and the DfE overshadowed this autonomy because of their direct control. The findings suggested that although the academies were given autonomy to change their curriculum, the second academy did not implement it because of its 'Needs Improvement' Ofsted grade. Based on the findings, it was also difficult to change the curriculum at both academies because of the DfE's expectations of students passing their SATS and GCSE exams. This had some commonalities with Mansell (2016) who queried the autonomy of academies because of assessments for Key stages 1 and 2 and exams for ages 16 and 18 through competing exam boards. Arguably, if all schools were expected to adhere to the statutory assessments for primary and secondary schools, it meant that there was limited curriculum autonomy in academies.

Drawing on Mansell's statement above, it showed that there were tensions between these academies' curriculum accountability to the DfE and Ofsted, and the freedom and flexibility that were promised by the DfE as a key aspect of driving up standards for all students, particularly for those who were struggling. The findings showed that the HT of the second academy decided to follow the national curriculum. This was in contrast with the wishes of those teachers who wanted the curriculum to be changed, as highlighted by the findings. Also,

the HT believed that because of her accountability to both the DfE and Ofsted, if anything went wrong which warranted losing one's job or going to jail, she was the one who was going to be sacked or jailed. Even if the other HODs wanted to employ their own leadership styles, they were not given room for doing that because of the new managerial pragmatism tendencies.

Due to the accountabilities to the DfE (2010, 2014, 2019) and Ofsted (2019), both headteachers of the academies under study employed autocratic leadership in order to meet their demands, which they defended as being 'pragmatic'. Although these academies were given the autonomy to spend the money that they were given to convert their schools in the way they saw it fit, they were not allowed to have a deficit, which is part of neoliberal marketisation, where emphasis is given to operation of the market and generating profit. As a result, the HT of the second academy had to employ 'new managerial pragmatism' in the allocation of this money in different departments. She was the one who was prioritising the resources, rather than consulting the HODs, which was very pragmatic and one of the characteristics of 'new managerial pragmatism'.

This leadership practice did not go down well with the HODs who were not happy with that practice. It was also difficult for teachers to go off on long-term sick leave because they would risk losing their jobs because of the tight budgets which were unable to cover sickness absence, and the HTs were accountable for these budgets. This showed that HT autonomy was overshadowed by accountabilities. Further, neo-liberalism with its emphasis on profit-making led to increased and unmanageable workloads for teachers and being self-financing the case study academies did not have the resources to invest in employing more teachers in order to reduce teacher workload, or to increase the number of staff with leadership responsibilities. Teacher workload was also compounded by job precarity and the increased pressure to produce good student outcomes.

8.2.3 What leadership strategies do the HTs use to deal with the demands of their schools, and their roles? How does pragmatism affect CA governance?

The findings showed that because of the precariousness, the HT of the second academy was employing some leadership strategies that she was not comfortable with, which she described as 'pragmatic' but the staff perceived it as autocratic; that is why I decided to call it '**new managerial pragmatism'**. This was a new type of leadership which was employed in the case study academies in order to address the demands of these business-like schools and the accountabilities. This was different from the DL which was employed before the conversion. It can be suggested that this 'new managerial pragmatism' was quite reactive rather than proactive to the political situation at the time. The issue with the academies programme was that rather than decentralising leadership in education, it actually centralised it through reporting direct to central government. This resulted in this 'new managerial pragmatism' being adopted by these academies.

The findings from both schools also showed that there were **non-negotiable policies** that were imposed by the DfE through new managerialism, which made it difficult to exercise their freedoms. This type of leadership contradicts with Solly's (2018) perception who explains that leaders in different levels within a school are given the freedom to come up with key decisions in their areas of responsibility, and there is a shared responsibility. The Academies Act (2010) did not mention the non-negotiable policies which were to emerge in practice; instead, they explained the autonomy that was given to academies. This shows a mismatch between political rhetoric, the substance of the Act, and its implementation in practice.

Another leadership strategy that emerged from the study was **'avoidance',** as the HT of the second academy avoided direct communication with staff and if staff raised issues, she would not reply. She also avoided formal meetings with her deputy but told her the agenda when going up the stairs to meet the teachers. The HT of the first academy used the '**cadre' leadership strategy** where he only consulted the staff who supported his agenda or had something to offer. These new strategies were opposed to DL. It can be suggested that employing DL principles which are inclusive and flexible could have been more beneficial in enabling these academies to improve their attainment, especially the second academy that

had a ‘Needs Improvement’ Ofsted grade. This resonates with Solly (2018: online) who elucidates that DL ‘allows a school to genuinely become a more effective educational institution as a result of leaders within it collectively pulling in the same direction, guided by the same vision and values towards a common set of goals’. Also, the Ofsted (2019) inspection framework is probably moving against these ‘new managerial pragmatic’ tendencies. However, further research needs to be conducted to assess whether it has made an impact on ‘new managerial pragmatism’ in converter academy schools. This inspection framework is designed to stop Ofsted from making separate judgements about pupils’ data or outcomes, but rather discuss the data as part of an ongoing discussion of the quality of education which is delivered. This might see Ofsted working in partnership with schools as part of DL, rather than imposing their policies on schools. This is another area where further research is required to ascertain if the 2019 inspection framework leads to changes in the way that Ofsted work with school leaders.

Although the then Coalition and the current Conservative government saw CAs from a position of ‘Good’ and ‘Outstanding’ schools, this was different from the second academy which had a ‘Needs Improvement’ Ofsted grade. In this CA the HT used the threat of Ofsted inspections within her leadership strategy, and as such, ‘**treated everyday as an Ofsted day’**. This strategy was used to get a certain outcome from the teachers, and it fits with the autocratic or ‘the new managerial pragmatism’ leadership strategy. As has been pointed out earlier on, autocratic leadership has been noted as having a negative effect on staffs’ job contentment (Nadarasa, 2014; Amedome, 2018). This led the HT to micromanage her teachers using the Ofsted ‘everyday’ strategy. The HT was afraid that she could lose her job and the academy might be taken over by someone else. This has resonance with the National Audit Office (2018) report which explained that CAs that are underperforming are finding it difficult to find a sponsor and if they are unable to be sponsored, they become ‘orphaned’.

If this happened, this would mean that they are no longer part of the academy structure nor MAT (multi-academy trust). In this case, questions may be raised about the consequences for

children in these orphaned academies where no one wants to sponsor them. If we have schools that do not belong anywhere, that seems to suggest that this current CA model is not working. It seems not to be effective because we have these academies that are converting and trying to survive on their own, which defeats the objectives of CAs. That can lead us to a shortage of HTs which the HT of the second academy raised in her interview that most of the teachers do not want to be HTs.

This is supported by Lynch *et al.* (2017) who highlight the increasing difficulties of recruiting HTs, and the projections that have suggested an increased demand for executive headteacher and chief executive officer roles, early exit from headship and retirement of old HTs that will drive a substantial shortage of headteachers by 2022, if action is not taken. Probably HTs do not want to subscribe to the existing autonomous type of leadership where they are more fearful to lose their jobs, as highlighted in the findings. There are tensions between external pressures and the accountabilities of headship (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2013); these tensions are driving away head teachers from their jobs and causing difficulties in recruiting and retaining headteachers (Busby 2019; Turner 2018). This suggests that HT retention strategies are now needed in academies and a stronger pool of new HTs should be created in order to minimise the shortages. This notion is supported by the DfE (2019) who suggests some of the strategies for teacher retention as:

> Creating the right climate for headteachers and other school leaders to establish supportive school cultures. At the heart of this will be reforming the accountability system. In particular: We will radically simplify the system, consulting on making 'requires improvement' the sole trigger for an offer of support – replacing floor and coasting standards; and The Ofsted framework will have an active focus on reducing teacher workload, with inspectors: considering staff workload as part of the leadership and management judgement; looking

> unfavourably on schools that have burdensome data practices; and not looking at internal assessment data (DfE, 2019:7).

At the heart of this will be reforming the accountability system. Also, Ofsted and other authorities might benefit from encouraging other leadership strategies, such as DL. With the DL model, the headteacher uses his or her professionalism to allocate leadership while holding on to power (MacBeath, 2003). MacBeath explains that this style of leadership is inclusive, and it identifies the talents from all the teachers and delegates roles; these roles can be temporary or permanent.

Arguably, the leadership at these academies was not straightforward as I would expect. Before commencing my doctoral studies, I expected to see a DL model as compared to 'new managerial pragmatism' and autocratic leadership, since these HTs were trained during the then New Labour government which promoted it. Based on existing research, 'genuine DL requires high levels of trust, transparency and mutual respect' (Harris, 2014:1). However, both schools including the one with a 'Good' Ofsted grade experienced 'new managerial pragmatism', whereas one would expect that a school with a 'Good' Ofsted grade would be expected to have fewer leadership challenges and would be willing to employ DL. The study found that these CAs were different because of the accountabilities and the business model which was more concerned about the budget control, enrolling adequate number of pupils and recruitment of newly qualified teachers who were given low pay in order to save money.

DL focuses on sharing responsibility, decision-making and utilising the power of influence (Bonneville 2017). Nevertheless, this was not the reality in these CAs which followed the 'new managerial pragmatism', where prompt decisions needed to be made because of the deadlines that they were given. In this case, probably DL could have been viewed as time wasting because of its long consultative process which tries to reach out to every relevant stakeholder. Also, DL practice allows teachers to present different views which could be

viewed as challenging their HTs. Probably, that could be the reason why the HTs had to be 'pragmatic'; they did not want the confrontation.

However, the DL model allows a lot of staff in leadership positions; this is in contrast with the business model, which enabled the HT of the second school to cut the number of HODs, by joining two or three subjects together under one HOD. This business model of reducing the number of leadership staff is supported by Timperley (2005: 417) who argues that 'distributed leadership over more people is a risky business and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence'. However, Spillane (2006), Murphy *et al* (2009), Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) and Lumby (2019) challenge this notion by suggesting that DL needs to be distributed across the organisation wherever there is relevant expertise, instead of focusing and distributing it to formal leaders only. My doctoral findings also suggest that teachers should be given the opportunity to lead. This might raise the attainment of the students grades, move the school forward and at the same time improve teachers morale through ownership of the school policies and the running of the school. This could be an area for further research.

Notwithstanding, the HT of the second school defended the cutting down of leadership personnel at this academy as being 'pragmatic', as it supported the way she was leading the school, and also managing the budget. The HT argued that she was making financial decisions that could benefit the academy. Nevertheless, the findings showed that the HT's 'new managerial pragmatism' did not go down well with the other teachers who were unhappy with her. I should highlight that DL does not only include formal leaders but also informal leaders who can use their expertise to do certain tasks and disband afterwards (Gronn, 2003b). This has nothing to do with paid leadership roles; this means that DL can still be employed alongside austerity measures. Also, it is not mandatory for HTs to know everything that is going on in these academies, since they are not the only leaders.

The above leadership practices according to the findings, put the teachers of the second academy's wellbeing at risk due to excessive work. Their **work life balance** was affected, and

they complained that they had a lot of pressure. This showed the reality of how this academy was run, unlike the rhetoric of autonomy which the then Secretary of State Michael Gove promised. Although the HT was accountable for the wellbeing of the staff, she explained in the findings how difficult it was at times to consider staff wellbeing at an academy which was treated like a business. This was an endorsement of the new cultural change of academies, and how the HT **prioritised teaching and learning over staff wellbeing**. The findings showed that this HT expected the teachers to work hard and produce positive outcomes, otherwise the HT could have probably lost her job because the school was run like a business. According to the findings, the teachers complained that there was no work life balance at this academy. This was the reality of this academy where teachers were overworking even during weekends. This has commonalities with Harris (2002) and Oduro (2003) who cite workload as an inhibitor of DL. Moving forward, the wellbeing of teachers could be addressed by the Ofsted (2019) inspection framework which focuses on reducing the workload and pressures on teachers, especially those pressures that are associated with inspection. This diverges from the previous Ofsted (2010) framework, which focused on data and put a lot of pressure on schools, as highlighted in the findings.

8.2.4 What role does DL play in how leadership is performed at these CAs, and can they be reconciled with the business model in academies?

The study found that it was difficult to reconcile and implement DL principles in a business-like culture which had strict budgets due to austerity measures and accountabilities to DfE and Ofsted. Also, the precariousness of the HTs and staff losing their jobs was another contributory factor. This was different from the previous sponsored academy model, which was introduced during the New Labour government, where HTs were not responsible for the budget. DL worked well under New Labour because of the policy context, how schools were organised and school leadership practiced. However, DL does not work well in this period of Coalition and Conservative governance because of the 'new managerialism policies', schools managing themselves and different leadership models in converter academies, as compared to the local

authority managed schools. Furthermore, as discussed in 8.2.4, my doctoral study has found out a school managerial policy which was imposed by the second academy HT which expected teachers to 'treat everyday as an Ofsted day'.

This removed the teachers' autonomy, where they did not have any say as part of the leadership process and managerialism, so, that made a difference to the strength of DL, that is it was ineffective in these converter academies. That is why 'new managerial pragmatism' took the centre stage and teachers were even afraid to raise their concerns direct to their HT.

Even though the HT of the second academy was consciously aware of DL and said that she believed in it, she did not employ that in practice, instead, she micromanaged her staff. Serrat (2011) believes that micromanagement is a regrettable occurrence for both the school organisation and its staff, since it is viewed as a kind of bullying. Even though many school leaders delegate power and responsibilities to their staff, they also, micromanage them by trying to make them achieve their goals (Lynch, 2020). However, this is counter-productive because it makes the staff feel annoyed and lose confidence *(Ibid*). These are some of the effects of micromanagement. Meanwhile, the other HT at the first school explained that he would only consult the teachers who supported his ideas and whom he believed had something to offer. In a way, it could be argued that the head consulted and employed DL, although he was being selective, as compared to the HT from the second academy who was not involving anyone in decision making. She was just doing some minor, 'trivial' applications of DL. However, at this second academy DL was residing in specific people like the deputy head who was committed to it and was trying to mediate between the HT and the staff. This means that there were some pockets of DL in these academies but not sufficient for staff to have designated leadership roles, and as such, the academies were run very hierarchically because they adopted a 'new managerial pragmatic approach', due to forces behind them.

Research such as Gunter (2013), Jones *et al,* (2014) and Lumby (2019) observe that DL creates opportunities for all staff with expertise to participate in leadership. However, they have been critical that in practice some groups of eligible staff have been excluded from DL.

Similarly, this study found that the staff were willing to contribute their leadership ideas in their different departments, to the extent of wanting to change the curriculum, but the HTs did not give them that opportunity to innovate. Thus, the HTs were busy applying autocratic measures and ignoring the leadership talent that existed in their schools. Furthermore, the deputy HT of the second academy also complained about the HT who did not consult her and yet when they were in a meeting with the staff, the HT would tell the staff that they had both agreed on the agenda of the meeting. It could be argued that this could have been a deliberate action to ensure that controversy and debates were avoided, and a strategy used by the HT in order for the deputy head to just agree because of a lack of discussion time. On the other hand, it could be that the head knew that the staff trusted the deputy head because they told her about their concerns, which it could be argued happened owing to DL; so, the head used this tactic in order for the staff to buy into the HT's suggestions.

This leadership practice pushed away this deputy headteacher because she was not given the opportunity to exercise her expertise and to recognise, influence and/or develop the expertise of other upcoming leaders (Jones *et al,* 2014). This resonates with Harris (2014:1) who postulates that 'if we think about leadership as being confined to only those in positions of authority, then we are willfully ignoring the leadership talent and capability of many others'. It can be suggested that if DL was used, that the talent of other teaching staff would have been utilised and would have benefited the schools, especially the second one that had a 'Needs Improvement' Ofsted grade. Although Hartley (2007) argues that there is no 'conclusive evidence' that DL has a direct causal effect on the success of pupils, DL practice accepts the use of multiple sources of knowledge and expertise. Also, DL involves collective influence, and it contributes to the improvement and success of the school (Harris, 2014).

However, the HT of the second academy had some goals to achieve, and she thought that she would achieve them through the 'new managerial pragmatism' or autocratic way. She should have employed a different leadership model like DL to achieve the same goals of raising attainment and managing the budget. Arguably, this 'new managerial pragmatism' came with

the business model because these schools were given some money, and they were supposed to account for it, so, the pressure was coming from the top (DfE) going down to schools. Looking back at the history of the Conservative government role in education in the first chapter, it shows that they put in place what they are familiar with. They are well known for having a mixture of private and public education. They wanted to turn 'good' and 'outstanding' schools into academies which are not dissimilar to private schools, where HTs have a greater selection of teachers and pupils that they want. Also, they wanted to deliver education according to a range of budgets, as students are mostly fee paying, which is in contrast to converted academies who are reliant on a much smaller budget, which exacerbated their financial problems. However, DL could have been a very effective model because it would have allowed the HTs to have that thoughtful, clear beneficial approach to how they managed the conversion and the affairs of their academies. They did not apply DL and that is why they ended up having all these issues between the staff and the HTs.

8.3 Summary

In summary, the study laid out a foundation of the conversion process which included the prior consultation process and the reasons for conversion. The study found that the teachers from both academies were consulted, which is part of DL practice, although some of them suggested that the head and the governors had already made up their minds to convert their schools. Also, the parents from the first school were consulted but they chose not to participate, and there was a poor turnout. According to the findings, no one had the full picture of how these academies were going to function, since it was new and scary to everyone. The findings also suggest that although there was the conversion discussion which was going on, the teachers were more concerned about their job security and pay conditions.

The evidence showed that the HTs were able to negotiate the pay conditions of the teachers with the teachers' unions and this practice supported the DL principles of negotiating and discussing issues and considering each other's ideas. According to the findings, the staff's perceptions of reasons for converting were because of the financial incentive that was attached

to it; the LA and its services were going to be non-existent; the LA advised them that it was the best way forward; all the other schools in the area were converting and they did not want to be left out; and they wanted the freedom of choosing their own services and controlling their own budgets. The then Coalition government desired to see all state schools converted into academies (DfE, 2010a). It can be argued that the real reason for this desire was to devolve control of schools to private concerns, such as MATs and that this marks the logical conclusion of policy in which the state abrogates responsibility for education.

The findings showed the decision to convert was made by the top executives who included the HTs and the governors. The drive to conversion was because of the huge sums of money that the academies were given and there was no perception of an alternative. This was due to a lack of information about how things would be post-conversion. This brought a new culture of leadership as the head tried to make sense of the new environment and discovered that there was actually less money to work with because of the austerity measures. In this case, the DL approach seemed not to be 'fit for purpose' because the HTs had to be 'pragmatic' in order to balance the books since academies were not supposed to go over their budgets. They could have employed an open and deliberative process in order to avoid some of these problems. However, the high accountability environment of CAs made this impossible and they followed the new managerialism route.

With this Conservative government, schools employ new managerialism and 'new managerial pragmatism' is driven by market forces which can determine how education is run. The new managerialism concepts of competition, independent and self-reliance need to be challenged and replaced by systems that encourage good education, these include DL which is inclusive and values the ideas of teachers which are needed to foster good and effective school education. This is because 'new managerial pragmatism' is affecting the entire school staff in these two academies in carrying out their duties and discouraging some members of staff to consider taking leadership duties because they feel that they are not included in decision and policy making. This notion is supported by Skinner *et al* (2021) who identify accountability and

goal achievement as part of the demands of new managerialism in schools, although they have an adverse effect on staff's mental health and emotional well-being.

8.4 Recommendations and future research

As a result of the study, the following recommendations are suggested for school professionals, researchers, Ofsted and the DfE.

1. The study found that although these converted academies were given the autonomy by the DfE (2010) to run their schools, accountabilities to DfE and Ofsted overshadowed this autonomy. It is recommended that the government should give meaningful autonomy to academies through decentralising the educational system instead of centralising it. Accountability should not overshadow autonomy: thus, if an autonomous academy chooses not to assess pupils or record those assessments, it would be free to do so. Academies should be given the liberty to operate on their own without non-negotiable policies from above. The focus on data and league tables which contribute to heavy workloads on teachers should be removed; instead, the focus should be on the quality of teaching and learning. This has resonance with Gillard (2011), Pearson/RSA (2013) and the Ofsted (2019) inspection framework.

2. This doctoral study supports Ferguson's (2019) notion who argues that Ofsted should not base their inspection judgement on what they see in one or a few days because that does not represent a full school year. Further, Ofsted should shift its focus from the performance of teachers, in order to reduce the added stress, and focus on the effects of an Ofsted inspection, or these two should be balanced (*Ibid*). I suggest that Ofsted should work collaboratively with the school leaders and teachers in CAs and support them to improve their academies, instead of imposing punitive measures and non-negotiable policies. Notwithstanding, the recommendation here for Ofsted to collaborate with CAs, the former Labour Shadow Education Secretary, Rayner

(2019), suggested that she wanted to abolish Ofsted inspections because the Labour party was against the idea of awarding schools single inspection grades. This suggested abolition of Ofsted is supported by some of the participants from the second academy who reported negative experiences when they were asked by their HT to 'treat everyday as an Ofsted day'.

In seeking to abolish Ofsted, Boulsted (2019) reported that the Labour party wanted inspections to be performed by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who are comprised of experienced, experts professionals. Subsequently, however, the shadow Labour Education Secretary, Kate Green who replaced Raynar, and was appointed by Sir Keir Starmar in 2020, noticed that there were questions about the way Ofsted operates, and suggested that she needed to review and reform the Ofsted policy, instead of abolishing it (Schools Week, 2021). Importantly, the findings that Ofsted was problematically experienced by school leaders and teachers in the two academies under study support calls for Ofsted to be reformed (Schools Week, 2021). If the above proposals are implemented, academies would be able to wholeheartedly focus on teaching and learning and raising student attainment, and at the same time enjoy their promised autonomy without much stress and pressure from Ofsted bearing down on schools leaders, and/or pressure from school leaders to teachers due to schools being accountable to Ofsted.

3. It is recommended that academies should work in partnership with their local MPs in sharing their concerns and the MPs should raise these concerns in Parliament, as was the wish of the second academy. This would mean that converted academies will not carry their burdens on their own but will share the accountabilities with their MPs. This can be achieved through visits, meetings and consultations with their MPs, and having a liaison officer from the local MP's office who collaborates with the local schools, as part of DL. However, it is acknowledged that MPs may not perform the role that teachers want them to as MPs powers are quite specific, and they can only influence legislation through debating it, or possibly through select committees.

4. The study found little evidence of DL through the conversion process of these two academies. This was due to the 'new managerial pragmatism' that was employed in both academies. However, there was evidence of the deputy head at the second academy who was employing DL very well and offered some insights of the potential of DL that could be there. If these academies mirror what this deputy was doing, that could be more effective, and there is potential. However, although the teachers were willing to contribute their ideas through their different departments and in meetings with the HTs, most of them were not given a chance to participate in DL because of this 'new managerial pragmatism' leadership practice. Even when they contributed their ideas, they were not accepted. This means that the staff had some talent that was not recognised, that could have been beneficial to the schools.

   Therefore, a key recommendation of this study is that DL could be introduced to academies alongside the Ofsted (2019) inspection framework. This could be part of the solution to reduce the teachers' workload which was mentioned in this framework. It is recommended that the government commissions **further research** on this to ascertain the usefulness of DL in academy conversion. It would be worth trying it, especially where talent is recognised, and teachers should be included in decision making and in meaningful consultation. I also recommend DL because it involves crossing over or removing strong structural and cultural boundaries to accommodate formal and informal leaders with a wide variety of expertise and talents (Harris, 2008). This further research could be conducted using the same methodological framework in different academies across the UK, because this study was limited to only two academies.

5. With the austerity measures implemented in 2010 and continuing, it does not seem that things are going to change soon. So, HTs have got to think about how they are going to balance their budgets. The findings suggested that the way forward in these academies that are led like businesses is to encourage innovations through capacity building which is explained in 7.2.1 where the HTs identify some potential teachers and send them on different courses. In turn these trained teachers could be used to train

other teachers in their academies and other academies. This in-house training, which is part of DL, can generate some income and save a lot of money in the long run on services which are expensive. This in turn might bring ownership to all staff than being 'pragmatic' and streamlining leadership, which demoralises teachers and discourages innovations.

8.5 Contributions to knowledge

This thesis has contributed to knowledge through:

1) Identifying a 'New managerial pragmatism' leadership style in academy conversion driven by policy.

2) Identifying DL as a better option to use in the case study schools.
3) Developing a wider understanding about academy conversion.
4) Unique methodological contributions.

8.5.1 'New managerial pragmatism' leadership style

As a contribution to knowledge, I have defined a new policy-driven approach to leadership, which is 'new managerial pragmatism', in converted academies. It comprises 6 characteristics which were employed through autocracy and 'dictatorship', which include non-negotiable policies, 'treating everyday as an Ofsted day', avoidance and cadre leadership, budgets and streamlining subject departments and HODs, teachers' wellbeing compromised, and precariousness of teachers and HTs. Although these characteristics have been discussed as part of the leadership strategies in the findings section, they will be explained in detail as they are also the characteristics of 'new managerial pragmatism'. This 'new managerial pragmatism' is a new way of framing policy and thinking about the reality of leadership and management in converted academy schools. There is an acceptance that Ofsted and accountability measures make leaders behave in different ways (Lumby 2019). However, in this study, instead of following DL, the HTs of the two converted academies employed 'new managerial pragmatism' which staff interpreted it as autocratic, 'dictatorship' and

micromanagement because of its negative implications, and external forces such as Ofsted and the DfE which were experienced as autocratic.

As discussed before in the findings chapters, new managerialism is an extension of organisational neoliberalism (Lynch, 2014). 'It is the mode of governance designed to realise the neoliberal project through the institutionalising of market principles in the governance of organisations' (*Ibid*:1). This study supports Lynch's (2014) claim that new managerialism is not an ordinary management approach, but it is politically motivated, which came about because of a drastic change in the organisation of capitalism. As such, it is 'embedded in a complex series of social, political and economic organisational changes that are tied to neoliberalism in particular' (*Ibid*:2) and are reflected in new managerialism approaches and neo-liberal policies adopted by Conservative political leaders since Thatcher's reign in the 1970s, where she focused on the privatisation of schools. This notion is supported by Pollitt (2007) who observed that managerialism within the education sector can be perceived as a way of the Conservative government trying to enact its authority in schools as individual organisations. Due to this neo-liberalism, the academies in this study were liberalised from the control of the LA through the academy conversion process and they were given the autonomy to run their schools and raise student attainment; hence, the employment of 'new managerial pragmatism' in order to drive up standards and compete with other schools.

While researchers (e.g. Timperley 2005; Crawford, 2012; Lynch, 2014) associate academy schools with new managerialism, they not have not discussed 'new managerial pragmatism' which this doctoral study has found operating in two converter academy schools. Hence this study, has contributed to new knowledge about converter academy school leadership. That said, some of the aspects that inform 'new managerial pragmatism' such as being autocratic, is a managerial theory in itself. This doctoral study's 'new managerial pragmatism' relates specifically to the academy conversion, whilst managerial theory in itself applies to various schools and other organisational contexts. These two academy leaders under study were

pragmatic in the way they applied new managerialism in their leadership approaches because of their respective school contexts and the way they were operating within the realities of the market (e.g. cutting their budgets, no wastage) which informs the managerialism, which is about hire and fire (i.e. you will be fired if you do not perform well in your job or do not get good school results, more so, if you are at the bottom of the school league tables). These two academies under study vocalised managerialism in a negative pragmatic way, as shown in the next section regarding the characteristics of 'new managerial pragmatism'.

8.5.1.1 Characteristics of 'new managerial pragmatism'

One of the characteristics of 'new managerial pragmatism' and also a contribution to knowledge is '**non-negotiable' policies** from the DfE and Ofsted. The two HTs explained that there were some policies that were non-negotiable in their academies that were passed from the DfE and Ofsted. This was new knowledge that was not discussed in the literature of CAs; instead, they focused on the autonomy of academies, as seen in chapter 2. So, these two academies which were run like businesses, had to employ 'new managerial pragmatism' because of the external forces (DfE and Ofsted) who wanted their agenda to be implemented through non- negotiable policies. Teachers were not given the opportunity to air out their views nor were they consulted. As Lynch (2014) pointed out earlier on that new managerialism is not an ordinary management approach, but it is politically motivated, the HTs had no choice, that is why they were employing autocracy and implementing non-negotiable policies in their academies. The HT of the first academy focused on exam results and Ofsted: that is why he employed non-negotiable polices that were coming from the government. A good example of these non-negotiable government policies is found in some educational policy reforms that were introduced in 2015 and implemented in 2017 which included the introduction of a new curriculum and changed qualifications at GCSE and A level, with the qualification assessments removed from coursework to exams and introduced a new grading scale of 9–1 (Department for Education, 2011). The government could have consulted the teachers who are directly involved with the students and could have valued their views.

Nevertheless, these non-negotiable policy reforms are passed down to teachers by headteachers through new managerialism, which is affecting the teachers' well-being and professionalism (Open Access Government, 2019). Although the non-negotiable policies that were implemented by the HT of the first academy were viewed as autocratic, which is part of the 'new managerial pragmatism', the HT defended himself by explaining that the teachers understood why these policies were non-negotiable. Whether the teachers understood or not, they did not have the platform to raise their concerns because academies are run like businesses, where managerialism is rampant. Thus, 'the policy of headteacher standards reveals a hierarchical, management model which places others in a largely responsive relationship to the head's vision …the new managerial understanding of management is a generic tool, whereby private business management techniques are to be applied in the public sector' (Vogt, 2002:8-9).

The marketisation of schools and the powers that were given to academies to be autonomous through the Academy Act (DfE 2010), created an opportunity for 'new managerial pragmatism'. This empowered the HTs to introduce their autocratic and 'dictatorship' school policies and government policies which were intended to support the 'new managerial pragmatism' practice in their academies. According to Vogt (2002), headteachers are considered to be the ones who are going to carry out managerial change in schools; thus, new managerialism helped to exploit headteacher power. This shows the reason why both HTs in these academies would not consult everyone or would ignore their teachers' ideas. As discussed before, new managerialism was designed to drive up educational standards, mostly within single school organisations and in which headteachers, who were viewed as single leaders within schools, were expected to perform this vital role (Hall *et al,* 2013).

Contrary to this expectation academy schools have been less successful in improving attainment especially in lower attaining schools (Hutchings and Francis, 2018). Although new

managerialism continued with the New Labour government after Thatcher's reign, their focus was on performance target setting, improved outcomes and standards, unlike the Conservatives who prefer market forces and competition to influence educational provision and student outcomes (Vogt, 2002; Archer, 2018). Therefore, this study highlights how these two heads understood academy conversion and sought to realise DfE and Ofsted expectations. As evidenced by their interview comments and those of teachers in both academies, the HTs knew about DL but their commitment to 'new managerial pragmatism' as their leadership style made them ignore it.

New managerialism is also demonstrated in performance management underpinned by staff performance related pay which was introduced by the Conservative government. This means that teachers have to work extra hard to meet the set targets. As a result, they end up with heavy workloads, which has a negative effect on their job and health, as shown in this study's findings. Although performance management is not a characteristic of 'new managerial pragmatism', the autocracy that was employed by the HT of the second academy using this performance management, displays some tendencies of 'new managerial pragmatism'. This is the reason why the middle leaders of the second academy were afraid to bring their concerns directly to their headteacher. They were afraid of failing the performance management and of losing their leadership roles because of their HTs' use of 'new managerial pragmatism', in the form of what was purported to be dictatorship, according to the findings. These middle leaders were aware that the HT had the powers to fail and sack them or to support them with their performance targets and retain them. This notion supports Skinner *et al*'s (2021:2) observation that 'there are monitoring systems such as performativity and accountability in appraisal meetings and promotion applications'. These are some of the new managerial demands by the government to the HTs, then passed down to teachers, through 'new managerial pragmatism'. However, these demands were weighing down the teachers and affecting their mental health and dedication to their work, as evidenced by the staff's interviews in both academies.

Arguably, some of the problems that the staff experienced in these academies came as a result of the case study academies not implementing DL. As pointed out before in the findings chapters, school staff are passionate and committed to work when they are given autonomy to lead on different initiatives in their schools, but they are not committed when they are controlled by their work activities (Fernet *et al*, 2014). It can, therefore, be argued that the new managerialism in education shows that commitment to work is inconsistent because of the stress that it brings on staff (Busher and Saran, 2013). If DL was given the opportunity to work, all these problems might have come up differently. DL could have changed the people's attitude on the way they did their job. However, the reality is that the case study HTs ended up employing the 'new managerial pragmatism' because policies were dictated to them by Ofsted inspections, DfE statutory requirements, school league tables and external exams. This relates to elements of neoliberalism which include competition between schools, league tables for the whole nation and diversity of educational provision (Thompson, 2017). These were inhibitors and facilitators in terms of their managerialism. This 'new managerial pragmatism' was developing negative outcomes because it was inhibiting the development of the school, staff and pupils.

From this study, it is possible to suggest to leaders considering converting into an academy that they should think about how they are going to take the staff with them in the conversion process and the policy making. The leaders should also think about their own leadership styles and the best leadership styles for their academies, which should not inhibit the development of their staff and pupils. They should also think about the best way of consulting parents, especially about the non-negotiable policies and involving them in the life of the school, instead of just a few parents. Rather than the 'new managerial pragmatism' adopted by HTs in this study, the findings suggest that DL is a more appropriate leadership strategy to enable HTs to engage their staff and persuade them of the benefits of academy conversion. However, if their default position is the autocratic approach, they will have casualties along the way. The new leaders are supposed to have a head mentor as a policy procedure, but this has disappeared

in academies because it costs a lot of money. So, the government needs to think about how these new HTs are going to be mentored in order to move the academies forward.

Nonetheless, some of the policy issues are caused by the DfE and the inspection accountabilities, like measuring the success of the HT with the outcomes of the pupils. This brought **precariousness** on both headteachers of the academies under study, which is another characteristic of 'new managerial pragmatism' and a contribution to knowledge. These HTs' were afraid to lose their jobs because of their accountabilities and the managerialism which was driven by the government and Ofsted to academies, due to the postmodern, private sector type of education, where schools are run like businesses. This precariousness was passed down to teachers by the HTs in a 'new managerial pragmatism' approach which was very negative and intimidatory. It included autocracy and micromanagement in policies like 'treating everyday as an Ofsted day' (discussed in detail below) at the second academy which had a 'Needs Improvement' Ofsted grade', as demonstrated in the findings. This supports Standing's (2011) concern about public sector workers such as teachers and school heads being at risk of joblessness and homelessness. This is because the Conservative government removed the public welfare type of education which was employed by the New Labour government between 1997-2010, which focused on collaborations, care and dedication to the job and staff.

Such changes are evident in England whereby the introduction of a business model in education are intimidatory to teaching because headteachers and teachers are assessed in various ways, by different methods and through the employment of various frameworks (Skinner, 2021). Nevertheless, Ofsted seems to be responding to these issues through the 2019 Ofsted inspection framework which addresses some of these issues. Another policy advice is for staff to be proactive in taking and suggesting initiatives and leadership roles, whether paid or unpaid as part of DL practice and for the HTs to facilitate that. It can be argued

that DL can be achieved when people are willing to be in leadership positions and the school leaders are transparent and creating the right environment.

Another characteristic of 'new managerial pragmatism' and a contribution to knowledge from this study is a new leadership strategy known as **'treating everyday as an Ofsted day',** which was a gap in the literature of academies. 'Treating everyday as an Ofsted day' is very pragmatic. This is what the teachers of the second study academy were subjected to, as demonstrated in the findings. As a result, according to the findings, the HT employed **'dictatorship'** which is not usually used in school leadership literature; instead, they use the terms autocratic or authoritarian to describe the top-down or hierarchical leadership styles. This 'dictatorship' which is an aspect of 'new managerial pragmatism' instilled fear in the entire staff, especially at the second academy. They experienced micromanagement which is an aspect of managerialism, and the pragmatism aspect of that micromanagement was for staff to 'treat everyday as an Ofsted day'; thus, constantly being on the edge that they were going to be assessed. Micromanagement was employed by the HT of the second study academy to monitor the activities of the academy and to enforce the strategy of 'treating everyday as an Ofsted day' because of their 'Needs Improvement' Ofsted grade. Based on the study findings, teachers were also given a lot of unnecessary work which was spurious, like filling in a lot of unnecessary documents and ticking boxes on forms, on the pretext of fulfilling Ofsted requirements, which was quit pragmatic. These were some of the gaps in the literature about CAs leadership.

Also, another characteristic of 'new managerial pragmatism' in micromanagement was **the reduction of subject departments and HODs** for monitoring purposes and reducing the budget**.** It means that if you have fewer departments, you will have your eye on everybody rather than having lots of leaders in every department. This had a negative bearing on staff's income which was reduced because of the removal of their leadership roles. This move was also in accordance with the cuts in budget that was introduced by the then Coalition

government and also inherited by the Conservative government in 2015. As demonstrated in the findings, academies' funding was reduced and they were not allowed to have a deficit, so, these academies were operating according to the market's demands. They were also funded according to their enrolment of pupils, the more pupils they enrolled, the more funding they got. The 'new managerial pragmatism' was demonstrated by the two HTs who were prioritising the resources without consulting the staff; hence, justifying themselves as being pragmatic, as demonstrated in the findings.

The other characteristic of 'new managerial pragmatism' and a contribution to knowledge was '**avoidance' and 'cadre leadership strategy'.** The 'new managerial pragmatism' was seen when the HT of the second academy did not talk directly to the teachers, and the deputy head mediated both ways (discussed in detail in the DL section below). Also, the HT of the first academy only consulted the teachers who supported his agenda and avoided the ones who criticised him. This was very pragmatic and authoritative. This 'new managerial pragmatism' gives the HTs centralised power which results in increased surveillance and silencing of teachers (Ch *et al*, 2017), which led to teachers in the second academy not wanting to speak to their headteacher because she practiced 'new managerial pragmatism' leadership. The deputy headteacher had to mediate between the HT and the teachers.

This showed how interaction between the HT and her teachers was at a minimum or not effective at all. It also demonstrated the effects of the 'new managerial pragmatism' where the HTs created and imposed policies and tasks on teachers and they do not want to be confronted or opposed, instead, they just want the staff to comply and submit to the headteachers' orders. This compliance mentality is the one that instilled fear in these middle leaders who were afraid to approach the HT of the second academy, hence, sharing their concerns through the deputy head.

This study has demonstrated how this 'new managerial pragmatism' has a negative impact on teachers and how it removes the notion of teamwork and collaboration. Instead, it demotivates teachers. The study showed that under this leadership approach teachers are left in limbo and

in a confused state because they do not know which way to follow or who to consult, due to the HTs' lack of communication and 'new managerial pragmatism practice'. Instead of appreciating the hard work that the teachers do, the study HTs gave them negative comments as feedback, due to this 'new managerial pragmatism'. Furthermore, some autocratic HTs do not want to distribute leadership to other teachers who have the expertise, instead, they want to do all the leadership duties on their own. This type of leadership can stifle the teachers' professionalism because of the lack of trust by the HTs to give autonomy to their teachers. This means that the teachers will not enjoy working in this type of environment and the government needs to restore headteacher trust in teachers ability.

Nonetheless, this study provides a specific research example of arms-length management in education as exemplified by the deputy headteacher above, which is really useful. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 revealed that researchers have not written about how converted academies make this difference worse in perception between HTs and teachers, by encouraging headteachers to adopt a business model and 'new managerial pragmatism', using financial reasons as excuses to treat teachers badly, and not involve them in the decision-making processes within their schools.

Another gap in the literature and characteristic of 'new managerial pragmatism' was **compromising of the staff wellbeing.** The 'new managerial pragmatism' was displayed when the HT of the second academy was purported to have chosen not to support the teachers when they had heavy workloads; instead, she would tell the deputy headteacher that she was working hard, so the teachers could also do it. This was very pragmatic and autocratic, because the HT's attitude shows that she was only focusing on high standards and accomplishment of tasks, whilst ignoring the wellbeing of her staff. This notion is supported by Dahri (2015:4) who argues that with autocratic leadership, 'quality and efficiency' may increase but it also 'results in frustration and suffocation among senior and committed employees'. It is important to observe that autocratic headteachers do not focus on improving a vision for their school organisations or creating relationships, but they focus on achieving their tasks and to

do so effectively (Wynn, 2019). So, this research adds to the literature and wider field about leadership practice and contributes to policymaking about school leadership.

8.5.2 Identifying DL as a better option to use in the case study schools.

This doctoral study brought new insight about identifying DL as a better option to use in converter academies. The study's findings showed that the 'new managerial pragmatism' practice that was employed in both academies by the HTs was negative and was affecting the wellbeing of teachers. DL was identified as the better option because of its inclusiveness, collaboration and supportive characteristics, also, the recognition of expertise across the organisation. This notion supports Lumby's (2019) observation that DL weakens the power of the single leader and paves way for school staff to assume leadership roles. In this study, as discussed before, DL practice was demonstrated when the HT of the second academy did not talk directly to the teachers, and the deputy head mediated both ways.

This demonstrated how this deputy head's leadership practice was different from the HT's practice because the deputy head was approachable and understanding; that is why she took on board different ideas from the HT and teachers and translated them in both ways. This is the reason why DL would have been a better option for the HTs to use as compared to other leadership models which include the 'new managerial pragmatism'. DL has got an open-door policy as demonstrated by the deputy head in the second academy, and teachers ideas are taken on board. This is in total contrast with 'new managerial pragmatism' where HTs dictate their policies and instil fear in teachers as demonstrated in the findings.

The invitation of local MPs from different political parties to the second academy in order to raise the funding issues is a contribution to knowledge which also demonstrated DL practice. Although the academies were directly accountable to central government, they saw it fit to address their concerns through their MPs' so that they would probably debate them in Parliament. Inviting the MPs to this academy was a good DL practice, so that they could see the reality at this academy, as compared to their political rhetoric. These MPs witnessed the

real situation, and they had a clear idea of the effects of cuts in schools from the visit that they had at this academy. This DL idea should also be extended to DfE and Ofsted who should visit schools and discuss with the school community and understand their position, instead of imposing non-negotiable policies and instilling fear in schools from a position of authority. From the findings, it seems as if the government do know the reality, but choose to ignore it, as a pressured workforce is less likely to cause problems. If DfE and Ofsted visit schools like what these MPs did, with the intention of understanding the reality of academies and staff's experiences, the pressure and workloads from teachers might be reduced and academies might be different.

8.5.3 Enhancing understanding about academy conversion

Another contribution to knowledge and the existing literature is the development of a wider understanding about CAs' conversion. This study brought new insights about the teachers of both schools who were not necessarily engaging fully with the discussion about academies conversion, or if they were doing so, it was based on concerns about their job security and pay and conditions, rather than understanding the broader political background in which academy conversion was based, which was informed by Conservative government preference and at the time Liberal Democrat support of provision of educational resources being provided by the market. This shows that the teachers were not included in the debate of academy conversion by the government, which is the reason why they were concerned about their pay conditions and job security. Thus, the academy conversion was the government's agenda or educational policy which was just proposed and implemented without the public's approval. It seems as if the consultations in the study schools were just done to tick the boxes and yet the decision had been made by the HTs to convert the schools into academies.

8.5.4 Unique methodological contribution

This study had also made a unique methodological contribution as it employed the phenomenography approach to explore the conversion process and the leadership in

academies which has not been used before in CAs research. This approach helped to produce rich relevant data which brought new leadership style insights, hence, the new contribution to knowledge of ‘new managerial pragmatism’.

8.6 The study’s strengths and limitations

The study applied the phenomenography approach as its methodological framework. This approach was chosen as a suitable framework because it focused on people's experiences and their perceptions of the academy and its leadership. It allowed participants to tell their stories through semi-structured interviews and gave me access to gain knowledge about the teachers’ ways of experiencing their academy leadership. It also helped to answer the research questions. Being an insider researcher gave me an added advantage of choosing the relevant respondents for my research.

I was able to probe further and always went back to the respondents for further clarification of their experiences of the academy. I should acknowledge that I was very attentive during the interviews in order to capture everything that was explained and identified any new lines of thought that were being introduced by the respondents. I then followed up these new and unexpected lines of discussion. If I had had a structured interview, I could not have got this rich data, but it was through going back and forth that produced it. I made sure that I employed bracketing in order to avoid any preconceived ideas and assumptions. I achieved this through checking constantly after each interview, by playing back the recording and evaluating whether bracketing had been achieved. I also used my diary for reflection in order to minimise my bias. The transcription allowed me to be familiar with the data, I know this data more than anyone else, and the strength of the study is the data. In this study, during the analytical stage, the number of respondents who experienced the phenomenon in a certain way, whether many or only one was immaterial because of the collective voice. I was quite conscious not to consider some categories to be more significant than the others because of the number of respondents.

However, this study had some limitations. It focused on two school academies using an in-depth study approach with a small sample. Although the findings were not generalisable, they facilitated a foundation for future studies. This research only used phenomenography as its most suitable research approach which might have some limitations of excluding understanding that could have been provided by the employment of other approaches like participant observation or grounded theory. Another limitation was that I interviewed the deputy head of the second academy on her last day of work at this school. No one knew about her resignation until the last day. As an insider researcher, I managed to interview her whilst she was in the middle of packing.

Although I got as much data as I could because I was not able to go back to her again, I could have even gathered more data if she was not leaving. She was a key respondent because she was there when the school converted, and she was the acting HT when the HT who converted the school left. My positionality as an employee as well as a researcher was a limitation because it might have brought some bias to the study. However, I tried to address this through going back and forth to the participants to ensure I have collected rigorous data. Another limitation was about time; I was asking the respondents to remember things that had happened prior to, during and after the conversion process in 2014. Memories can fade and people can remember things that did not happen or happened differently to how they retold them. In retelling, respondents might have embellished or omitted things, this is the other reason why I was going back and forth to the participants to ensure I have collected rigorous data, which I was able to go through using the phenomenographical approach in my doctoral studies.

8.7 Concluding remarks

The study concludes that a lack of understanding of the type of leadership practices employed in academy conversion can lead to weaknesses in academy leadership not being recognised and the role that DL can play being ignored. The academies' business model that they have

adopted is encouraging headteachers to keep their staff at arms-length by using financial reasons as excuses to treat them badly and not involve them in the decision-making processes within the school through new managerial pragmatism. I would recommend that academies should try to employ some inclusive leadership approaches like DL, alongside the Ofsted (2019) framework which focuses on reducing the workload of staff and on teaching and learning, instead of the production of school data.

However, for DL to be effective according to Harris (2014), it needs proper planning and to be purposely orchestrated because it does not just happen on its own. Also, the criticisms of DL which include Gunter (2013) and Lumby's (2019) argument that DL does not seriously take into consideration the effects of a change in practice to include staff with different characteristics like age, experience, background, gender, race and other identity features, should be considered and included in the distribution of leadership in these academies. I think other researchers will be interested in carrying out more research in academies leadership, since there is not much research in this area at the present time.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant information sheet

Exploring the role of distributed leadership among senior leaders in two converted academies

My name is Lucia Jera and I am a PhD research student studying at the University of Bedfordshire, with the Institute for Research in Education (IRED).

What is this study about?

I am carrying out a research to find out the leadership styles and strategies that are used in new academies. The main questions being explored by this study are:

1) What leadership strategies do academy leaders use to deal with the demands of their school, and their roles? Has this changed as a result of a transition to Academy Status?

2) What role do ideas of distributed and dispersed leadership play in leadership strategies in new academies and can they be reconciled with other drivers and expectations of success and transformation?

What I am asking of you

As a professional who is working at an Academy School, you are being kindly requested to participate in this research study. The head teacher is aware of the details of study and has given permission for me to approach you, but this does not compel you to participate in this research. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please do not hesitate to ask me if there is anything that you do not understand or would require further information**.**

How the research will be conducted

You will be requested to take part in a face to face interview which will last for between 40-60 minutes. Before the start of the interview I will seek your permission to record data which will later be analysed for the research thesis. Our discussion will be captured by the use of a

Dictaphone to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. The Dictaphone will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, I can record the conversation by taking written notes. If we do use the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. If there are any questions that may need clarification or follow up, you may request a meeting with me at your convenience. You are free to decline to answer any questions.

Voluntary participation

Please note that participation is voluntary. You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point or before the end of 2016 be withdrawn and be destroyed. Please note that I anticipate completing the writing up of the thesis by the end of 2016 and no data can be withdrawn after this date.

How your data will be kept and confidentiality

It is intended that all study records shall remain confidential. I will use Pseudonyms (not real names) throughout the study. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. However, details about the functions and type of organization may be published. All information will be kept in folders on my laptop/computer which can be accessed through a password only known to me. All data will only be viewed by me and my supervisor overseeing the study prior to publication of the final thesis.

Benefits of the study

Please note that there will be no financial benefits in taking part in this study nor shall you be asked to pay for your participation. However, you will be helping me understand the leadership styles that are being practiced in the new academy schools.

Dissemination of the study at the end of the study

Research findings will be written up within a final PhD thesis. Other outputs might include academic journals, published books, conferences, workshops and seminars in the UK. It is also anticipated that a short summary of the findings will be available for websites.

For further information

If you have further questions regarding this research, you may contact me on my email address (lucia.jera@study.beds.ac.uk). Also, should you have further queries or questions about how this research is being conducted, please contact my supervisor, Professor Patrick Carmichael on telephone number 01234 400400 or Doctor Giannandrea Poesio, Acting Head of the Research Graduate School on, Telephone 01582 743473 or email giannandrea.poesio@beds.ac.uk. Thank you for taking time to read the contents of this letter. If you agree to participate, please sign the attached **Informed consent agreement form** to show your consent and hand it back to me. You are free to remain with a copy of this of this information sheet.

Appendix 2: Consent letters and forms for gatekeepers

Institute for Research in Education

The University of Bedfordshire

Bedford campus

Polhill Avenue

Bedford

MK41 9EA

Addressee's name and address

Date

Dear Name of head teacher

I am a PhD student with the Institute for Research in Education at the University of Bedfordshire, undertaking a research study on 'Exploring the role of distributed leadership among senior leaders in two converted academies'. I am writing to ask if it would be possible to interview you, your teachers, governors, Heads of Departments and Senior Management team as participants in this study, as your organisation is one of the new academies. You have a right to withdraw your permission at any time without obligation. I have attached a copy of the information sheet of the study which contains detailed information of my proposed research for potential participants. It is my hope that I will begin data collection by the end of May 2014. A summary of the research findings and any publications that result from this work will be sent to you at your request.

Each interview is anticipated to take no more than 60 minutes. Participants are free to choose a quiet place on your premises, convenient to them, for the study to be conducted. Should

interviews take place within working hours, I will endeavour to keep the disruption of your working day to an absolute minimum.

I hope to have the pleasure of working together with you on this research and hope that the attached information gives you an outline of what is proposed. If it would be helpful for me to come and discuss any aspect of this, please do let me know. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisor, Professor Patrick Carmichael on telephone number 01234 400400 or the Head of the Research Graduate School at the University of Bedfordshire.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this information and I hope to hear from you soon. If you are willing to be involved, would you please sign the form below to acknowledge that you have read the explanatory statement, you understand the nature of the study being conducted and the risks and likely benefits of participation in this study, and you give permission for the research to be conducted at your school. Please reply using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

Yours sincerely

Lucia Jera

lucia.jera@study.beds.ac.uk

Gatekeeper's consent form

I (Name)..... as (Role).....

Title:..... (of Organisation Name)..... having been fully informed as to the nature of the research to be conducted about 'Exploring the role of

distributed leadership among senior leaders in two converted academies' give my permission for the study to be conducted. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at anytime.

Signature:..... Date: .....

Appendix 3: informed consent agreement form (pilot study: case study one)

Lucia Jera

University of Bedfordshire

Institute for Research in Education

Bedford campus

Polhill Avenue

Bedford

MK41 9EA

UK

This consent form seeks to find out whether you have read and understood the information provided to you regarding this research. By signing this form, you are acknowledging that you are satisfied with the information and you are showing your willingness to participate in this research.

I have read the information sheet provided by the researcher explaining the purpose of the research. YES/NO

I understand that participation to the pilot interview is voluntary. YES/NO

I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question. YES/NO

I understand that I can stop the interview at any time. YES/NO

I understand that my information will be confidential. YES/NO

I understand that any information about me will be anonymised. YES/NO

I understand that I have the right to withdraw. YES/NO

I do agree to be audio recorded during my interview YES/NO

I understand that I can contact Professor Patrick Carmichael (Supervisor) on telephone number 01234 400400 or Acting Head of the Research Graduate School Dr Giannandrea Poesio giannandrea.poesio@beds.ac.uk if I have any further questions.

I do agree to take part in this research. YES/NO

Do you have any further comments regarding this research? If yes, please write your comments here:

A summary of the pilot research findings will be available once the work of this study is complete. Would you want to receive a copy? If yes please provide an email address below

Your Details:

Your name (Not obligatory)……**Date / /**

Your signature (not obligatory)……..**Date / /**

Informed consent agreement form for the main study

Lucia Jera

University of Bedfordshire

Institute for Research in Education

Bedford campus

Polhill Avenue

Bedford

MK41 9EA

UK

This consent form seeks to find out whether you have read and understood the information provided to you regarding this research. By signing this form, you are acknowledging that you are satisfied with the information and you are showing your willingness to participate in this research.

I have read the information sheet provided by the researcher explaining the purpose of the research. YES/NO

I understand that participation to the interview is voluntary. YES/NO

I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question. YES/NO

I understand that I can stop the interview at any time. YES/NO

I understand that my information will be confidential. YES/NO

I understand that any information about me will be anonymised. YES/NO

I understand that I have the right to withdraw. YES/NO

I do agree to be audio recorded during my interview YES/NO

I understand that I can contact Professor Patrick Carmichael (Supervisor) on telephone number 01234 400400 or Acting Head of the Research Graduate School Dr Giannandrea Poesio giannandrea.poesio@beds.ac.uk if I have any further questions.

I do agree to take part in this research YES/NO

Do you have any further comments regarding this research? If yes, please write your comments here:

A summary of the research findings will be available once the work of this study is complete. Would you want to receive a copy? If yes please provide an email address below

Your Details:

Your name (Not obligatory)……..……**Date / /**

Your signature (not obligatory)…….**Date / /**

General questions about the respondents' background (given before the interview)

What is your name? .....

Circle: Male or Female.....

Circle: Age group 20-30 yrs, 31-40yrs, 41-50yrs, 51-60yrs, 61 and above

Teaching experience.....

Teaching experience at this academy.....

What is your role?.....

Did you do leading from the middle.....

If you are in a leadership role, how long have you been in this role at this school?.....How long before joining this school?.....

Where you here before this school was converted into an academy?.....

Did you do other roles at this school? Specify.....

.....

Appendix 4: Interview questions

Head teacher's interview questions

1. Can you please briefly explain to me the nature of your job as an assistant Head? What type of leadership styles and strategies do you use at your school? Do you delegate some of your roles to other staff members? How do you introduce a new concept or policy at your school? (Do you consult first or you just give them the new policies)
2. Is your school a specialist school? If so, do you get extra funding?
3. May I know why your school was converted into an Academy school? Did you have all the full information? Were you pressurised or it was your own choice? (Please explain as much as you can).

   How did you sell the idea of converting into an academy to your staff? Did they fully understand what this conversion was all about? Did you consult them? If the majority had disagreed with the conversion, were you still going to go ahead?
4. Do you think your academy is run like a business?
5. Please may you explain your experiences since your school changed into an academy? Did the leadership structure changed? What was the reason for expansion or reduction? Did it expand or it was reduced in terms of leaders in each level. How about your financial status and the services that you were receiving from the LA? Who controls your finances and curriculum? What about the roles and power of governors, did they change?
6. How different is your leadership structure from the former LA school? Which one do you prefer and why?
7. How is leadership delegated to staff? Do you feel that it's fair?
8. Do you consider the wellbeing of all the staff? How do you support your staff when they are under pressure? Can you please give examples. How do you reconcile the demands of Ofsted and the wellbeing of staff?

9. Does your staff go for courses or staff development? Do they choose the courses that they want or you choose for them? At least about how many times are they allowed to go for courses per year?
10. Do you consider and implement the views of your staff? Do you consider the expertise of other staff members and how do you acknowledge or elevate them?
11. Who is involved in (May you please explain how you include other staff in) policy making, formation of mission statement, vision and ethos of your academy school?
12. Do you have a high staff retention or turnover? How have you managed to have the high staff retention?
13. Can you please describe the leadership styles that are used by the SLT and middle leaders?
14. Distributed leadership believes that leadership should be 'stretched' across the school organisation, like grouping together different teachers with different expertise in order to solve a problem and disband afterwards (Gronn, 2003b, p.35). DL can be perceived as division of labour (*ibid*). Gronn (2000, p.226) sees DL as an "emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals. The concept of DL overlaps with shared leadership, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.7 and Harris, 2008, p 33).
15. Do you think that there is DL at this school? Can you explain how it is practised?
16. What changes in leadership would you like to see happening at this school?
17. What is the work of the governors? Who has more powers between the governors and the head teacher?
18. Who chooses the governors and what criteria do they use to recruit them? Are they specialists in their roles and do they go for training?
19. Do you have a finance manager? What is her role? Who oversees her duties?
20. Who is in charge of distributing the finances? Do you have any financial control?

Deputy head and assistant head / HODs

1. Can you please briefly explain to me the nature of your job as an HOD/Head of year? What type of leadership styles and strategies do you use at your school? Do you delegate some of your roles to other staff members? How do you introduce a new concept or policy at your department?
2. May I know why your school was converted into an Academy school? Did you have all the full information? Were you pressurised or it was your own choice? (Please explain as much as you can).
3. Please may you explain your experiences since your school changed into an academy? Did the leadership structure change? Did it expand or it was reduced in terms of leaders in each level. What was the reason for expansion or reduction? Who controls your finances and curriculum?
4. How different is your leadership structure from the former LA school? Which one do you prefer and why?
5. Do you think your school is run like a business? In what way? Do you like it? Why?
6. How is leadership delegated to staff? Do you feel that it's fair?
7. Can you describe the leadership styles that are used by the head teacher? (Please explain in detail).
8. Does the head consider the wellbeing of all the staff? If no, what do you think causes that?
9. Do you think your views and the views of staff are implemented?
10. Can you describe the leadership styles that are used by the SLT?
11. Can you describe the leadership styles that are used by the HODs?
12. How do you support your staff members in your team when they are under pressure?
13. Explain how your head teacher supports you when you are under pressure?
14. Explain how you participate in policy making, formation of mission statement, vision and ethos of your academy school?
15. Can you explain how your views are implemented?

16. Do you have high staff retention or turn over and why?
17. Do you believe in DL? Can you please explain what you understand about DL? Distributed leadership believes that leadership should be 'stretched' across the school organisation, like grouping together different teachers with different expertise in order to solve a problem and disband afterwards (Gronn, 2003b, p.35). DL can be perceived as division of labour (*ibid*). The concept of DL overlaps with shared leadership, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.7 and Harris, 2008, p 33).
18. Do you think that there is DL at this school? Can you explain how it is practised?
19. What changes in leadership would you like to see at this school?
20. What is the work of the governors? Who has more powers between the governors and the head teacher?
21. Do you interact with them or are they visible at this school?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

Teachers' interview questions

1. Can you please briefly explain to me the nature of your job as a teacher?

2. May I know why your school was converted into an Academy school? Did you have all the full information? Were you pressurised or it was your own choice? (Please explain as much as you can).

3. Please may you explain your experiences since your school changed into an academy? Did the leadership structure change? Did it expand or it was reduced in terms of leaders in each level. What was the reason for expansion or reduction? Who controls your finances and curriculum?

4. How different is your leadership structure from the former LA school? Which one do you prefer and why?

5. Do you think your school is run like a business? In what way? Do you like it? Why?

6. How is leadership delegated to staff? Do you feel that it's fair?

7. Can you describe the leadership styles that are used by the head teacher? (Please explain in detail).

8. Does the head consider the wellbeing of all the staff? If no, what do you think causes that?

9. Do you think your views and the views of all staff are implemented?

10. Can you describe the leadership styles that are used by the SLT?

11. Can you describe the leadership styles that are used by the HODs?

12. Explain how your head teacher, HOD, head of year and SLT support you when you are under pressure?

13. Explain how you participate in policy making, formation of mission statement, vision and ethos of your academy school?

14. Can you explain how your views are implemented?

15. Do you have high staff retention or turn over and why?

16. Do you believe in DL? Can you please explain what you understand about DL? (If they can't explain read the explanation below) Distributed leadership believes that leadership should be 'stretched' across the school organisation, like grouping together different teachers with different expertise in order to solve a problem and disband afterwards (Gronn, 2003b, p.35). DL can be perceived as division of labour (*ibid*) The

concept of DL overlaps with shared leadership, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.7 and Harris, 2008, p 33).

17. Do you think that there is DL at this school? Can you explain how it is practised?

18. What changes in leadership would you like to see at this school?

19. What is the work of the governors? Who has more powers between the governors and the head teacher?

20. Do you interact with the governors or are they visible at this school?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

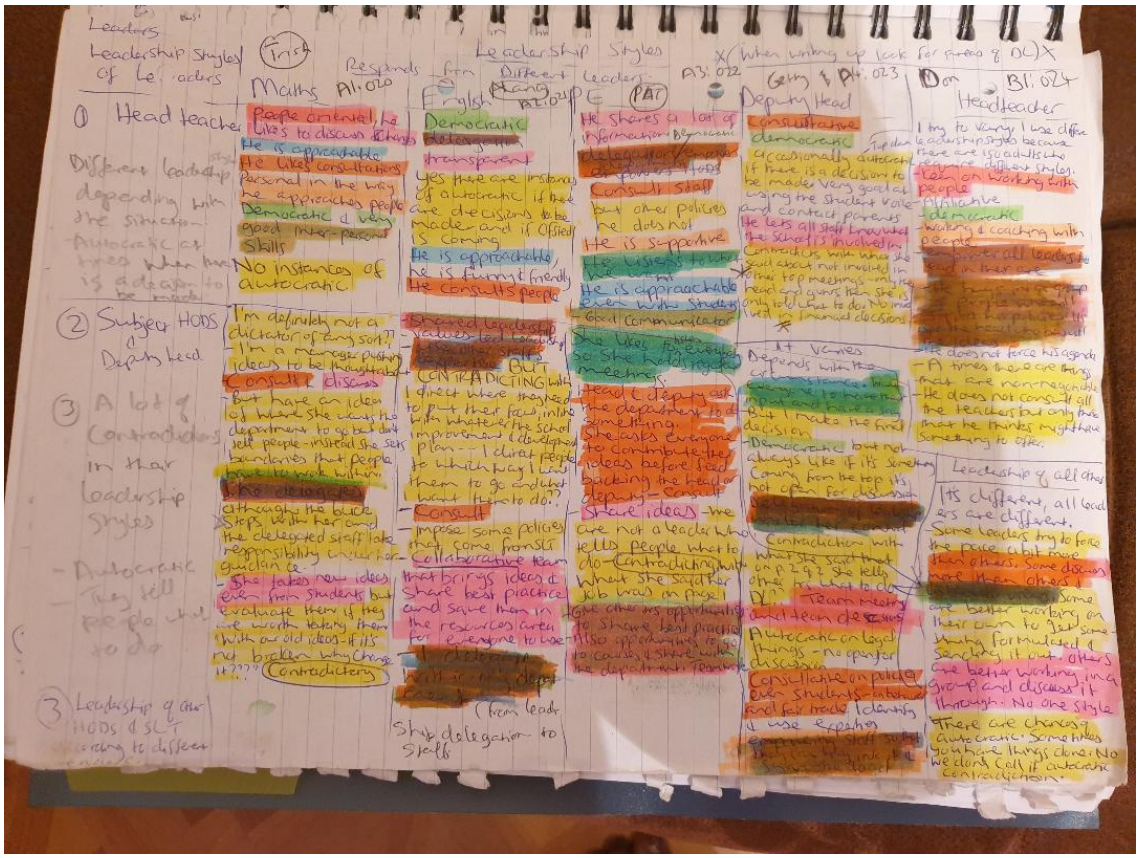
Governors' interview questions

- If you were a governor at this school before it was converted into an academy school, can you please explain briefly why you converted into an academy?
- Can you please explain your role at this academy school and how many hours do you spend per week? How does your role affect the school improvement and the staff?
- How did you assume this role? Who recruit the governors and what criterion is used to recruit them?
- Do you go for courses?
- How is the balance of power divided between the head teacher and governors?
- Did the leadership structure change since it was converted into an academy? Who suggested the change and why? Is it working? In which way?
- How do you relate to the head, the staff and the pupils?
- What type of support do you offer to the staff when they are under pressure?
- What type of leadership styles and strategies are used at this academy school by the head teacher and do you support them? What about the HODs, SLT and Heads of department.

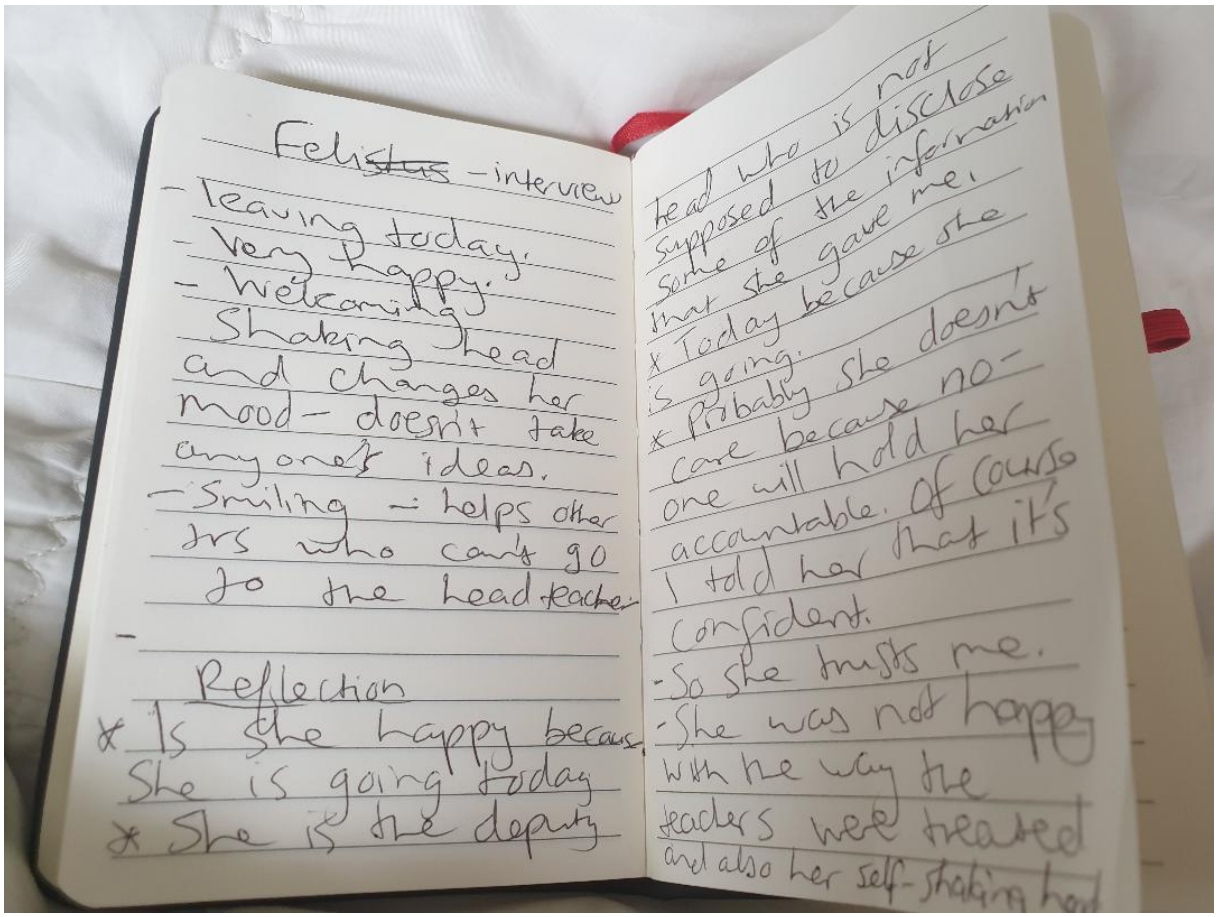
- Can you please explain the differences that you have made since you converted into an academy school?
- Who runs the school?
- Do you have the powers to control the head teacher?
- Do you think this academy is run like a business? In what way? Is it the best way?
- What changes would you like to see happening in terms of the school leadership?

Thank you for participating in the interview.

Appendix 5: Analysis: Colour coding for the first case study



Appendix 6: An example of notes in a reflexivity diary



Appendix 7

Background of respondents in the first academy

Names	Don HT	Getty Deputy Head	Nancy English HOD	Trish Maths HOD	Pat PE HOD
Age group	41-50	41-50	31-40	51-64	31-40
Job responsibility	HT	Deputy head-pastoral	English HOD	Maths HOD	Girls PE HOD
Experience as a teacher	9 years	21 years	8 years	28 years	13years
Experience as a leader	14 years	6 years	5 years	15 years	1 year
Leadership training	NPQH and NCLS	Leading from the middle, Learning communities 2, in house leadership courses	In house and LC2	In house and LC2	In house and LC2
No. of teachers led	80	14	11	10	2

Joined before/after conversion	Just before conversion and led conversion	Before conversion	Before conversion	Before conversion	Before conversion

Appendix 8: Background of respondents in the second academy

Names	**Age group**	**Job responsibility**	**Experience as a teacher**	**Experience at current school as a leader**	**Leadership training**	**No. of teachers led**	**Joined before and after conversion**
Tash HT	41-50	HT	27 years	3 years	NPQH and NCSL	40	After
Felie Deputy Head	51-65	head	21 years	6 years	LC2 and in-house training	40	Before
Naome English HOD	51-65	English HOD	14 years	2 years	Leading from the middle and in-house	7	After
Bertha Maths HOD	51-65	Maths and ICT HOD	18 years	10 years	In house	8	Before
Tony PE HOD	20-30	PE and PSR HOD	6 years	2 years	LC2 and in house	8	Before

Lora Arts HOD	31-40	Music and Arts HOD	5 years	3 years	In house and LC2	3	Before
Archie Head of year 8	51-65	Head of year 8	31years	12 years	Leading from the middle and in house	6	Before
Pretty Head of year 7	51-65	Head of year 7	17 years	14 years	Leading from the middle and in house	6	Before
Derrick, Head of year 5	51-65	Head of year 5	21 years	4 years	NPQA and in-house training	5	Before
Tom Head of Year 6	31-40	Head of year 6	10 years	1 year	In house training	6	
Humanities Matty	31-40	Humanities HOD	8 years	5 years	In house and LC'	10	Before
Billy HOD Design and Tech	51-65	DT HOD	31 years	9 years	Leading from the middle	5	Before

					and in house		
Teacher Tecla (No leadership position)	51-65	English and Maths Teacher	36 years as a teacher at this school			None	Before
Ben Deputy Governor	31-40	Deputy head of Governors		8 years	In house	8	Before