

## **Knaves, knights or networks: Which assumption of lecturer and manager motivation should underlie Further Education policy?**

### **Abstract**

Julian Le Grand, a well-known economist, identifies two types of public sector employee: Knights (with altruistic motives) and Knaves (with self-interested motives). He argues that the quasi-market, predicated on the assumption of knavish behaviour (or agent self-interest), is the most effective way of directing school managers and teachers towards improving education outputs at lower unit cost. In this article a review of the literature on the English post-incorporation FE quasi-market is undertaken [under the Conservative government (1993-1997), New Labour (1997-2010) and the Coalition government (2010-2014)] to assess if such a premise is correct. The conclusion from the review is that an over focus on policy, premised on agent self-interest, has limited improvements in the quality of education outputs and needs-based equity for disadvantaged students because such policy marginalises other motivational inputs such as intrinsic motivation, professional values and tacit knowledge from the production process. The solution, much of the FE literature suggests, is the replacement of top-down policy with democratic local governance and participative leadership as a means of encouraging intrinsically motivated tutors and managers (or knights) to meet economic and social goals through the productive potential of learning cultures (or networks).

**Key words: Quasi-Markets, Governance, Managerialism, Professionalism, Skills, Equity**

## **Introduction**

The growth in managerialism within English Further Education Colleges in the 1990s was part of a wider movement in the education sector connected to a 'New Right' critique predicated on a view of public services as ineffective because of powerful, 'self-interested' producers such as trade unions and professions. The resultant 'economising of education' (Kenway, 1994) in the shape of private sector management practices such as Human Resource Management (HRM), Total Quality Management (TQM) and the surveillance of professionals through performance management techniques (Gleeson and Shain, 1999), represented a rejection of the post-war assumption of altruistically motivated professionals (what Le grand calls Knights) in favour of a new assumption, in line with orthodox economics, of college staff as self-interested agents (what Le grand calls Knaves) (Le grand, 2003). Such a view of college staff as self-interested agents issued in, as we discuss in more detail below, a new policy of funding and inspection incentives to directed lecturer and manager effort (and their self-interest) towards the key objectives of government which, in the early post-incorporation period was one of increasing student enrolment at lower unit cost.

The assumption of self-interested college agents continued to be integral to New Labour's top-down policy reforms between 1997 and 2010 and is central to the current Coalition government policy of intensifying marketisation and competition in the sector to meet the human capital needs of businesses.

The assumption of agent self-interest underlying FE policy represents something of an experiment as there is little consensus between economists, psychologists, sociologists and other scholars regarding the nature of human motivation. Other possible motivators, given in the literature beyond self-interest, include altruism and intrinsic motivation (which may arise

because of the pleasure (or utility) derived from undertaking a task or through a commitment to professional or organisational norms and values) (Osterloh, Frey, and Frost, 2001). This article reviews the FE literature to assess the extent to which the assumption of agent self-interest underlying FE policy has been effective in improving the quality of education outputs in FE in line with the human capital requirements of business and needs-based equity for disadvantaged students. The key conclusion is that the governance of post-incorporation FE Colleges, under the Conservative administration, New Labour and the current Coalition government, has over emphasised agent self-interest as a key motivator, at the expense of motivational inputs of productive value such as lecturer intrinsic motivation and professional values. This, a significant body of research on FE suggests (e.g. Hodkinson, 1997; Avis *et al.*, 2001; Gleeson and James, 2007; James and Biesta, 2007) has been to the detriment of the skills agenda, but also needs-based equity for disadvantaged learners. Such a notion of fairness would require education policy to be egalitarian; in particular to direct lecturer and manager effort towards the most disadvantaged in society from lower socio-economic groups or with learning difficulties (Crump, 1994, p. 2, cited in Gerwitz *et al.*, 1995, p. 11).

A significant FE literature also suggests (e.g. Coffield *et al.*, 2008; Hodgson and Spours, 2009) that to more effectively utilise the productive potential of intrinsic motivation and professional values, in line with the skills agenda and needs-based equity, a more trusting form of governance is required; in particular a shift in the nature of governance from hierarchy (involving regulation of processes through government imposed standards) to open systems (devolution to those on the ground) and from rational goals (targets, PIs and the monitoring of outputs) to self-governance (improving agent commitment through capacity building, training and development) (Newman, 2001).

### **1. The policy context for the assumption of agent self-interest: 1992 - 2014**

The incorporation of Colleges in 1993 (through the 1992 Higher and Further Education Act) enabled the Conservative administration to replace monopolistic state provision with competitive semi-independent college providers. An FE quasi-market was created, with demand in the sector expressed through the state purchasing agency (the Further Education Funding Council - FEFC) which set about increasing participation at lower unit cost through convergence in the Average Level of Funding (ALF) (Lucas, 1999). This meant that colleges only received 90% of their previous years allocation year after year (i.e. 90% of 90% and so on) if they failed to grow in terms of student numbers (FEFC, 2001). Such funding incentives were designed to act on the self-interest of college agents, through pressure to significantly increase recruitment, retention and achievement each year between 1993 and 2001 to generate enough funds for college and course survival within the FE quasi-market created (Lucas, 2004).

Whilst demand was expressed through the FEFC funding methodology, supply in FE was determined through de-centralised management environments in which it was assumed private sector managerialist policies would provide the necessary improvements in terms of efficiency and accountability (Le Grand, 1993).

Soon after New Labour came to power in 1997 the White Paper: *Learning to Succeed*: a new framework for post-16 learning (DfEE, 1999 cited in Coffield *et al*, 2008) argued that the post compulsory education system needed further reform through more effective co-ordination at the national, regional and local levels, with this requiring fundamental changes to funding, inspection and quality assurance within the sector. The outcome was an FE quasi-market which was more centralised in nature, but still predicated on the premise of agent self-interest. More specifically, the office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) replaced the FEFC in 2001 as the institution responsible for incentivising self-interested college agents (managers and

lecturer) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in line with New Labour's economic and social objectives. Failure to meet New Labour's goals, reflected in an inspection grade of 4 (unsatisfactory provision) or 5 (very weak provision), required courses to improve to a grade 3 (satisfactory provision) in a re-inspection or face the possibility of closure (OFSTED/ALI, 2000).

Further incentives, acting on the self-interest of college agents, were provided through the new state purchasing agency (the Learning and Skills Council - LSC). More specifically, Strategic Area Reviews (StAR) were planned which would transfer provision from inefficient providers evidenced in low growth, retention and achievement to larger providers (i.e. Centres of Vocational Excellence or COVE's) which met the critical strategic priorities of the LSC in terms of retention, achievement and success rates (broken down according to sex, ethnicity and disability), student progression, learner and employer satisfaction surveys and learners' attendance (Circular 02/19, LSC, 2002). Whilst StAR was not ultimately implemented, because LLSCs didn't have the 'power or political support to reorganize sensitive areas like 16-19 provision' (Coffield *et al*, 2008), it provided a powerful incentive for colleges to improve retention, achievement and success rates to survive within a new more centralised FE quasi market.

Although the coalition government (2010-2014) has emphasised a clear shift in national policy and governance away from New Labour's micro-management and command and control towards more flexible innovative business structures and procedures within colleges, policy remains predicated on the assumption of agent self-interest. More particularly, as we will see in more detail below, new funding and inspection incentives have been introduced to increase the level of competition between providers of education and training for 14-19 year old and

adult learners. The objective is that these funding and inspection incentives should shift the focus of the sector away from supply to meeting demand and, in doing so, provide the human capital requirements of businesses at lower average cost (Shah, 2013). A key concern, however, we will see below, relates to the impact of these measures on needs-based equity for disadvantaged learners from lower socio-economic groups or with learning difficulties.

## **2. Self-interested college agents and the price effect in FE**

In its narrowest sense self-interest refers to a genus of man called *homo economicus* or economic man. Such a man is essentially motivated by money (or material wealth) (Le Grand, 2003). Le Grand (2001) extols the virtues of quasi-markets in secondary education as a means of directing self-interested school agents (what Le Grand calls knaves) - school managers and teachers - towards realising improved efficiency and equity. His evaluation of the research suggests that school quasi-markets have led to a price effect (an economics term which refers to increased effort in self-interested agents to meet external incentives) (Frey, 1997) as a result of the implementation of robust incentive structures (i.e. rewards and penalties acting on agent self-interest) through funding formulae and league tables, limited professional autonomy, increased flexibility through decentralised management structures to meet demand pressures, and the emphasis of school managers on the financial success or failure of their institutions (Le Grand, 2001). Whilst the FE quasi-market has been far less researched than the school market it could be argued that there is also evidence supporting Le Grand's view of a price effect in Further Education Colleges in the early post-incorporation period under the Conservative administration. In particular, statistics for the sector show increased enrolments and a reduction in unit costs between 1993 and 1997:

- the number of funding units generated for each pound of public money up by 40 per cent;
- the number of students on approved courses up by 64 per cent from 1.9 million to nearly 3.2 million;

- part-time and part-year numbers up by 88 per cent from 1.3 million to 2.5 million;
- some 8 per cent of provision delivered outside colleges on premises more convenient for learners;
- open and distance learning up by over 50 per cent, albeit from a low base;
- the percentage of classes assessed by the inspectorate as being in the top two grades of its five-point scale up by 18 per cent, while the percentage of classes achieving grades 1-3 remained at 96 per cent. (McClure, 2000, p. 57)

The FEFC formula funding methodology, it is suggested, provided self-interested college agents (i.e. managers and lecturers) with the incentives to raise the participation of 16-19 year olds in the sector, and prepared the ground for the sector to meet further growth targets through more flexible and responsive colleges, lecturers and curricula (Lucas, 1999) and systems and procedure focused on induction, tracking and information systems, special needs and retention (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Leney, Lucas and Taubman, 1998). The focus on tracking and management systems to improve retention and achievement and to meet the funding and auditing demands of the FEFC, it was thought, also provided information not available before incorporation which was useful for improvements to both the quality of teaching and the development of the curriculum (Leney, Lucas and Taubman, 1998). With regard to needs-based equity it was further argued that increased participation (as the product of better enrolment, induction, tracking and tutorial provision) may also have benefited disadvantaged students in the FE Sector (Cantor, Roberts and Prately, 1995).

Under New Labour there was also little doubt that incentives built into the LSC funding methodology, as with the FEFC methodology, impacted positively on volume and quantity (i.e. student enrolment and achievement) in FE. There were significant increases in the participation of disadvantaged students (as defined by post codes judged to be relatively disadvantaged), with 29% of students in 2003/04 generating a widening participation funding uplift for their colleges. Success rates, which reflect increased retention and achievement in the sector (in particular achievement of those initially enrolled at the first census date), also increased

markedly from 53% in 1998/99 to 72% in 2003/04 (Foster, 2005) and 77% in 2005-06 (Coffield *et al*, 2008). The reduction in the proportion of colleges deemed inadequate, from 11% in 2001-2 to 4% in 2005-06, and the increased number of colleges deemed outstanding at inspection, from 25 to 151, would also seem to indicate improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in the sector (Coffield *et al*, 2008). This all suggests a price effect, which research undertaken by Alton *et al* (2007) indicates was the product of target setting, the monitoring of performance with national benchmarks and measures to address poor performance. Lumby (2001) similarly argues that management intervention had challenged self-interested lecturers by opening them up to self-questioning in light of external sources of information.

A price effect is further suggested in New Labour's third term and in the current Coalition government's term in Office by the continued upwards trend in success rates. More specifically, success rates for General FE and tertiary colleges for 16-18 year olds have been 77.3%, 78.3%, 79.1%, 81.6% and 84.1% in 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 respectively. For students aged 19 and over they have been 79.9%, 80%, 79.4%, 81% and 84.3% (SfA, 2014).

### **3. Questioning the price effect – Gaming behaviours**

It would seem from the quantitative measures outlined above that the FE quasi-market, under both the Conservative administration and New Labour led to a price effect (i.e. increased effort in line with government objectives as a result of incentives acting on the self-interest of college agents) in terms of increased retention and success rates, of benefit to the skills agenda and needs-based equity. A key caveat, for policy predicated on the assumption of college staff as knaves, however, relates to the extent to which these quantitative improvements were achieved through the price effect suggested or through gaming behaviours.



Whilst there is limited literature on the FE quasi-market on gaming behaviours in the FE literature, there is significant evidence in the literature on the school FE quasi-market in terms of cream skimming (selecting the best students to achieve improved outcomes) and parking (providing little assistance to difficult students) to facilitate improved newspaper league table position for schools at the expense of the needs of less able students, and thus needs-based equity (Gerwitz et al, 1995; Whitty et al, 1998). Other gaming behaviours include resource reallocation to marginal students to the detriment of other pupils (West and Pennell, 2000), reclassifying weak students as having learning disabilities, as a means of excusing them from mandatory tests (West and Pennell, 2000) and ‘constructive’ exclusion through pressure on children to leave voluntarily (Gerwitz et al, 1995). A key current concern relates to the planned introduction of performance related pay in schools, which some commentators feel may intensify the pressure on teachers to ‘amend GCSE grades’ to improve league table positions and, in turn, career prospects (Walker, 2013).

Whilst the extent of gaming behaviours is an under developed area within FE research, there is some evidence. Ainley (1999), for instance, suggests that funding incentives under the FEFC led to a ‘rampant qualification inflation as millions run up and down an escalator in which their diplomas devalue even as they acquire them’, a situation which suggests a certified, rather than a learning society. Students, he argued, had become increasingly utilitarian in their approach to learning, and lecturers more focused on the ‘key personal and transferable skills’, at the expense of deeper student learning, to ensure good pass rates for maximum funding. This also compromised needs-based equity, such research suggests, in that qualification success, as a result of qualification inflation, was not a reflection of meeting the diverse needs of disadvantaged students, but of lowering standards to maximise funding units.

Incentives within the FEFC funding formula also seemingly led to a distribution of funds more sensitive to those ‘playing the system’ than any genuine growth or improvement in quality; an example was TEC output-related funding which had distorted objective judgements of quality through lecturers passing incompetent NVQ students (FEDA, 1998; Lucas, 1999, p. 59). Ainley (1997) described the use of output indicators in FE as representing an ‘All Pigs Flying’ scenario in which it is difficult to distinguish between PIs manipulated to meet the needs of the FEFC funding method and legitimate indicators of quality

Again whilst there is limited research in this area there is some evidence that the introduction of success rates by the New Labour government also led to gaming behaviours (Smith and Bailey, 2005). Success rates (i.e. student achievement as a percentage of those enrolled on the first census date) provided the incentives for colleges to ensure students were enrolled onto the right courses, that students attended and achieved, but there was also the incentive to enrol students onto unsuitable courses, if courses were undersubscribed, and to subsequently lower standards to ensure satisfactory retention, achievement and success rates, compared to national benchmarks (Boocock, 2014). There was the further incentive to not enrol risky students, if there was some doubt about their ability to contribute to success rates, at the expense of needs-based equity (i.e. second chance education) (Boocock, 2013). More recent concerns relate to management driven procedures to maximise success rates through the removal of unsuccessful students from the record under the pretext of ‘data cleansing’ (Lee, 2011),

Success rates, therefore, have the potential to distort practice, and to cause a conflict between the goals of needs-based equity and the achievement of a good inspection grade. This was intensified, under New Labour, by the higher value placed on success rates over softer measures of success such as student satisfaction, progression into employment and the value

of a student to the community or economy (Smith et al, 2005, Smith, 2005). It was further exacerbated by Ofsted's emphasis on success rates rather than value added measures (which calculate the contribution of a college to student achievement by controlling for student input characteristics) which meant FE Colleges were less likely to achieve the high inspection grades received by school sixth forms and sixth form colleges which achieved higher success rates with their more advantaged student cohorts (Smith and Bailey, 2005). For this reason, Perry and Simpson (2005) argue that performance measures in FE should be re-tuned to take into account these student input characteristics. In particular benchmarking should consider differing environments and student intakes.

Further research will be required to determine how new incentives within the Coalition government reforms of funding and performance management limit or discourage gaming behaviours in FE. There appears to be some understanding of the potential distorting effect of success rates. Indeed the Department for Education (DfE) no longer uses them within its funding formula because of a view that they incentivise colleges to enrol students onto unchallenging courses to improve achievement. The funding emphasis under the Coalition is now on retention, with student withdrawal at any point in the year leading to the realisation of 50% funding only (DfE, 2012). A potential perverse incentive, however, given the need to maximise funding, is one of enrolling less able students who are unlikely to achieve as a means of realising 50% funding based on student retention. To achieve 100% funding from such students, colleges might also be incentivised to 'criteria chase' (Spours *et al.*, 2006) through marking assignments continuously to ensure student retention on courses.

The incentives currently acting on the self-interest of college managers and lecturers, however, go beyond the DfE funding methodology. Ofsted (2012) now recognises that New Labour's

crude use of benchmarks did not sufficiently consider how course teams might achieve success rate benchmarks easily with higher ability students and, conversely, less easily with disadvantaged students. Whilst Ofsted still judges colleges through success rates (including a comparison with similar groups of learners in terms of the nature of provision, age and level of course) they now also consider the importance of the impact of socio-economic factors, prior attainment, local factors such as employment rates and provider-specific risk factors such as enrolling NEETs, on student attainment (Ofsted, 2012). If student starting points are recognised by Ofsted, as is seemingly the intent, colleges may be judged more fairly; in particular the incentive for gaming behaviours on course teams teaching disadvantaged learners may be lessened whilst course teams achieving benchmarks easily with more able learners, through coasting, may be challenged to improve success rates.

#### **4. The quality of education outputs**

A second caveat, which puts into question the extent to which improved success rates indicate the success of policies acting on the self-interest of college knaves (managers and lecturers) (in line with the government's agenda of improved skills for employability and needs-based equity) relates to the impact of incentives on the quality of education outcomes. In the early post-incorporation period, for instance, a reduction in unit costs in the sector, through convergence and 90% core funding, was achieved through reducing contact hours for students on their courses (FEFC, 1996), lecturer redundancies, the casualisation of lecturers (Guile and Lucas, 1996) and endless restructuring (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). This, it is argued, caused lecturers to focus on individual survival instead of colleges' education goals (Hewitt and Crawford, 1997), distracted colleges from curriculum concerns and reduced class contact for disadvantaged students requiring extra support (an equity concern - Lucas, 1999).

The utilitarian form of funding in FE, coupled with the business backgrounds of college governors, was also accused of negatively acting on the self-interest of college managers, in directing them towards the short term and the instrumental (i.e. satisfying the financial requirements of the FEFC) at the expense of longer term education processes such as teamwork, staff development, professionalism and the pedagogic process for improving the quality of education outputs (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Mackney, 1998; Spours, 1997).

A further problem related to the bureaucratic nature of the FEFC funding methodology which limited the development of a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of those students with learning difficulties and others who were socially excluded (again an equity issue) (Lucas, 1999); a product of the formula's inability to accommodate partial achievement or modularisation/unitisation.

Under New Labour, there continued to be concerns about the impact of incentives contained within the more centralised FE quasi-market introduced on the quality of education outputs. Lucas's (2005) critique of the literature on the LSC funding methodology (for the Foster review of FE in 2005), for instance, outlined how the controlling nature of LSC funding was at the expense of local flexibility. Targets and PIs in FE, as the end product of a top-down chain of command, he argued, led to inertia in colleges at the expense of the local flexibility, innovation and professional development needed to genuinely meet New Labour's economic and social agenda and other important educational goals (Lucas, 2005).

Currently, under the Coalition government, funding incentives are directing colleges towards an emphasis on the education and training of young people and courses providing employability skills rather than adult education. Concerns relating to quality are thus less about

the inertia caused by top-down targets under New Labour and more about needs-based equity for disadvantaged adults (Shah, 2013). Needs-based equity for adult learners has been particularly affected by the replacement of free study for adults on level 2 courses up to the age of 26, and level 3 up to age of 23, with loans. This has threatened the viability of some adult courses such as adult apprenticeships (Evans, 2013) due to the resultant reduction in applications from adults unable or unwilling to finance their own education.

UCU (2013) have also expressed concern about needs-based equity for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Additional learning support for students up to the age of 18 is no longer to be funded by the EfA but by LEAs (and extended up to the age of 25). A key worry relates to the extent to which LEAs, given their own significant cut backs, can afford provision for students with learning disabilities?

A further concern regarding quality relates to the provision of 16-19 education in light of the DfE's withdrawal of funding for extracurricular activities. Such provision is no longer to be provided, as before, through extra 'entitlement funding' but through the funding allocated for the 540 to 600 guided learning hours of a full-time student. This, it is thought, may impact on quality if college management replace teaching with the use of learning resource centres and student-centred learning strategies to release teaching hours for the provision of additional activities (UCU, 2013). Education quality and needs-based equity may also be compromised by the planned 17.5% cut in funding for 18 year olds relative to 16/17 year olds from 2014/15. This, it is estimated, will affect 150,000 students (Isles, 2013), many from disadvantaged ethnic minority groups (Evans, 2013).

##### **5. Professional values and intrinsic motivation under the Conservative administration**

A further issue of concern, regarding the assumption of agent self-interest, relates to the negative impact of funding and inspection incentives on the utilisation of intrinsic motivation and professional values within FE Colleges. Whilst extrinsic motivation (drawn upon by both economists and policy makers in FE) relates to externally set policies and incentives such as pay, policy, promotion and career advancement, intrinsic motivation, drawn upon by motivation-based organisation theorists and psychologists relates to interest in work for its own sake. This includes enjoyment-based intrinsic motivation which requires agents to be provided with a satisfactory flow of activity, which fulfils their needs, a situation which does not require an external reward (Deci, 1975), and obligation-based intrinsic motivation, which requires an increased emphasis on the obligations of personal, social, or professional norms for their own sake (March, 1999) or to the firms' 'organisational citizenship behaviour' (Osterloh, Frey, and Frost, 2001, p. 5).

In the early post-incorporation period a polemic regarding professional values and intrinsic motivation emerged, between those who viewed professions as 'uniquely ethical occupations' and those who perceived professionals as powerful groups who have masked their pursuit of self-interest behind essentially spurious ethical codes (Randle and Brady, 1997b). A particular argument from the 'managerialist' (anti-managerialism) critique was that the discourse of professionalism emerging under the Conservative administration had become concerned with the business of FE in terms of efficiency and reliability (i.e. a focus on costs, outputs and throughput); with policy and procedure imposed by senior managers, and internally translated by middle managers usurping professional knowledge and judgement. This deprofessionalisation (or proletarianisation or de-skilling) thesis was applied to FE by Randle and Brady (1997b), and highlighted a degradation of work in FE and the systematic de-skilling of the lecturer through a resultant powerlessness to define the final product of one's work, its

disposition in the market and its uses in the larger society (Randle and Brady, 1997b, p. 236). Such lecturer de-skilling, it is argued, reduced teachers and lecturers to the level of (self-interested) artisans to be controlled by senior and middle managers, rather than professionals to be empowered (Hodkinson & Harvard, 1994).

A key question relates to the impact of such de-professionalisation (based on the assumption of agent self-interest) on education outputs. Advocates of professionalism in the public sector conceive it as restricting the capacity of professionals to act as agents for the client (students) through the differential information advantage of the professional (Wrigley and Mckevitt, 1994). They further argue that, in reducing lecturer control over the labour process de-professionalisation has caused a shift from a lecturer/student relationship involving common enterprise, cooperation and mutual responsibilities to a supplier/customer relationship with the consumer/student used as a surrogate surveillance device (Randle and Brady, 1997a). This, it is argued, is a destructive instrument in that it has led to some students perceiving surveillance devices (such as complaints procedures) to be undermining of lecturer authority, leading such students to question lecturer competence in terms of the 'correct classroom activity' and the teaching methods used, based on a subjective view of the aims of education (as opposed to the objective and professional view of the lecturer).

There was also evidence in the early post incorporation period suggesting that consumer (i.e. student) instrumentalism in FE, combined with a need for colleges to meet funding targets for survival, may have led to the supplier (lecturer) narrowing the focus of teaching to the 'key transferable skills' to ensure the realisation of funding targets, at the expense of the wider social purposes of education (Ainley, 1999). This indicates that surveillance of lecturers, if



empowering of students at the expense of lecturers, may not be the best policy for achieving the optimum level of outputs for either the needs of industry or society.

An alternative perspective however has been provided by researchers who question what they conceive as the simple division of values postulated in the 'managerialist' thesis between lecturers and managers; in particular the assumption that only lecturers (and not managers) have the means of meeting organisational goals. In particular, the 'managerialist' thesis has been challenged by Lumby and Tomlinson (2000) who are critical of the polarisation of lecturer and manager values within the 'managerialist critique' which may have obscured the complexity of motives and actions. Further criticism is levied at the assumption of the 'managerialist' (anti-management) paradigm that teachers and lecturers, in being motivated by professional values, should retain control of the ends and means of teaching (Lumby and Tomlinson, 2000, p. 147). Indeed Lumby's research (2001) uncovered a particular view amongst quality managers interviewed that lecturers were resistant to new learning; that they were unable to accurately self-assess due to an inability to admit weaknesses, deal with criticism and critically evaluate their own performance. In response quality managers were required to challenge lecturers to move from single-loop learning or static efficiency (fine tuning to make the best use of existing technology) to double-loop or dynamic efficiency (to change technology in profitable directions through experimentation and innovation) (Potts, 2006, p. 5). In this way, it is argued lecturers' resistance to learning was overcome by opening them up to self-questioning in light of external sources of information (Lumby, 2001, p. 80). Similarly, the research of both Alexiadou (2001) and Simkins (2000) (cited in Humphreys and Hoque, 2007) suggests that managerialism has created a more enterprising people-centred culture in several colleges through increased staff involvement in quality strategies.

A further complexity relates to the position of middle (curriculum) managers within the professionalism/managerialism dichotomy outlined above. Whilst some research suggests middle managers operate as an ideological buffer (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) between the professional and managerial paradigms, (Briggs, 2003) other research, conversely, finds little evidence of middle managers influencing senior management decision-making (Hannagan et.al, 2007) due to the hierarchical and authoritarian leadership styles required for survival in the FE quasi-market (Boocock, 2011; Gleeson and Knight, 2008)

The managerialist/professionalism dichotomy is also undermined by research (Shain, 1998) which questions the 'managerialist' view of a shared set of lecturer (anti-management) values. Analysis of data from the ERSC funded project on teaching and managerial cultures in FE uncovered a range of lecturer responses (and thus motivations) to 'new managerialism' in the sector, from newer lecturers critical of the old contract staff - indicative of an internalisation of the New Right discourse of pre-incorporation teachers being lazy and complacent (i.e. self-interested), to strategic compliers co-operating with the dominant discourse of managerialism in order to survive within a context of bullying by the Principal who required staff to be flexible and to comply with new initiatives. Some argue that 'managerialism', as a result, created a context in which lecturers were forced to reflect on the framework in which they operate leading, not to de-professionalisation, but to the emergence of a re-professionalised FE lecturer status resultant from accountability initiatives in the sector (Avis, 1996).

Whilst Shain's (1998) research highlighted the complexity of responses to 'new managerialism' it does not, however, completely undermine the 'managerialist' (anti-managerialism) critique articulated by Randle and Brady (1997a). Re-professionalisation might have led to a price effect but it also included the usurping of tacit knowledge and professional

values (of benefit to student learning) by managerialist policies. Strategic compliance, in the main, represented a forced pragmatic response from lecturers who, whilst resistant to the new demands placed on them to be ‘designer teachers’ (Gerwitz, 1997), were also reluctant to outwardly display this view (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). The result of such a forced pragmatic response from lecturers, within a culture of compliance, Bathmaker *et al.* (2003) argue, was one of the depoliticisation of the teaching profession and to uncritical, unthinking lecturers. Such compliance, it is further argued, was imposed on lecturers through ‘contrived collegiality’, a process whereby lecturers within course teams are forced to accept ‘new managerialism’ uncritically; with individual thought, within this context, suppressed by a dominant group ethos fully accepting of new managerialism (Avis, 2002).

The existence of depoliticisation would seem to indicate that the debate between those espousing a conflict in values and others espousing the re-professionalisation of lecturers is askew from the more significant question: To what extent did oppressive managerialist policies (predicated on an assumption of agent self-interest) disable lecturers from contributing productively (through intrinsic motivation, altruistic motivation or communities of practice) to improve skills for employability and needs-based equity? We address this question below, in relation to New Labour policy, before considering the possible implications of current government reforms for the utilisation of intrinsic motivation and professional values.

The modernising agenda of the New Labour administration created a new form of governance of FE between 1997 and 2005 which impacted on the utilisation of intrinsic motivation and professional values in the sector. Newman (2001) outlines, in reviewing New Labour’s impact on the public sector more widely, how New Labour policy created a potential conflict in governance between the hierarchy form of governance (involving regulation of processes through government imposed standards) and open systems (devolution to those on the ground)

and between the rational goals form of governance (targets, PIs and the monitoring of outputs) and self-governance (improving agent commitment through capacity building, training and development) (Newman, 2001).

#### **6. The impact of the balance of hierarchy and open systems on the utilisation of intrinsic motivation under New Labour**

With regard to the balance between the hierarchy and open systems forms of governance, there is a significant body of literature on FE (e.g. Coffield *et al.*, 2008; Hodgson and Spours, 2009) which suggests that the Common Inspection Framework and the LSC created a governance in which the hierarchical model was emphasised to the detriment of the open systems model of governance (Newman, 2001); in other words top-down government policy diktats, acting on the self-interest of senior managers, took precedence over decision-making based on local knowledge, intrinsic motivation and professional values. The outcome of this was seemingly one of compliance rather than innovation and flexibility at the level of the college (Lucas, 2005).

Such a usurping of the open systems model by that of the hierarchy model is further evident in the research of Rennie (2003), Smith and Bailey (2005) and Kelly *et al* (2005) who found college activity surrounding inspection of colleges to be more akin to a theatrical production (or ‘performing performance’) than a process of college improvement; in other words Colleges were more focussed on the ‘rituals of verification’ than with genuinely reflecting on existing work practices to improve efficiency and needs-based equity. The performance carried on with the production of quantitative performance measures, with the ‘rituals of verification’ more important than the accuracy and validity of such measures (Smith and Bailey, 2005).

The question arises as to what policy would create a better balance between the hierarchy and open systems models of governance to facilitate decision-making based on local knowledge, intrinsic motivation and professional values. Lucas (2005) argues for more trust in the sector, and the use of more informal quality systems such as peer review to encourage colleges to experiment and challenge practice in line with the needs of students and local communities.

It could be argued that the current Coalition government has made some progress in shifting the nature of governance from New Labour's emphasis on hierarchy towards open systems. In particular, the Education Act (2011) encourages more flexible constitutional and organisational FE structures as a means of facilitating more innovation in terms of social enterprise models, joint ventures or strategic alliances. The aim is to encourage competition for students leading to innovations that meet the needs of local businesses (Daly, 2013). A significant caveat, however, relates to the extent to which innovation through open systems may be facilitated, given the continued hierarchy form of governance in the shape of the Framework for Excellence (FfE) which requires Ofsted to scrutinise key performance indicators such as institution success rates, employer and student views and student destinations in determining inspection grades. This continued emphasis on audit and inspection, together with the need to comply with funding directives from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Education Funding Agency (EfA), may, as under New Labour, focus senior managers on external issues (relating to funding and inspection) rather than on internal systems and procedures or lecturer professionalism to meet local needs. This is the view of O'leary (2014) who, through his research on OTL (Observation of Teaching and Learning), describes the current Ofsted inspection framework as a 'regime of truth' and an 'apparatus of control' (Foucault, 1980, cited in O'Leary, 2014, p. 24) which fails to capture the complexity of being a teacher in Further Education.

Pressure exerted on senior managers to undertake rigorous product management and aggressive marketing (Wilford, 2012) for college survival within the new FE quasi-market may further intensify this focus on external policy at the expense of the local.

A further limitation regarding the open systems form of governance, and adaption of provision in line with local needs, relates to the Coalition's funding priorities: young people and the narrow needs of business. As discussed above such centralisation of funding has marginalised local knowledge within decision-making relating to both need-based equity for disadvantaged adults and the wider benefits of education beyond the instrumental and economic (Shah, 2013).

#### **7. The impact of the balance of rational goals and self-governance on the utilisation of intrinsic motivation under New Labour**

The other tension in governance under New Labour, as discussed above, was between rational goals and self-governance. Self-governance was certainly on the agenda in New Labour's second term. An increased emphasis was put on teaching and learning and professionalism through the introduction of mandatory teaching qualifications, staff development, observation of teaching and learning, appraisal and information learning technologies (Avis, 2002). Some commentators claimed that this represented a shift from managerialism towards learners and learning in the sector (e.g. Grix, 2001, cited in Avis, 2002).

A more extensive literature, however, suggests that such a shift towards self-governance and capacity building was severely limited by a rigid audit culture (Power, 1999), predicated on the assumption of agent self-interest, which undermined learning cultures within FE Colleges (e.g. Hodkinson, 2005a, 2005b, Hodkinson *et al.*, 2007). The audit culture created by Ofsted and LSC, focused on quantitative measures of success, and sustained by managerialist approaches,

was accused of undermining the morale of lecturers because of the constant need to defend the existing 'learning culture' against change (in the shape of reorganisations, mergers and funding) driven by the need to improve performance indicators for survival within the FE quasi-market.

The marketised priorities of New Labour's more centralised FE quasi market, it is argued, also marginalised the professional judgement of lecturers derived from lecturer agency and pedagogic principles (Nixon *et al.*, 2008). In other words the audit culture disregarded learning which was not measured - what Stronach *et al.* (2002) call 'the economy of performance.' Similarly Boocock (2013; 2014) found, in a five year ethnographic study of a single FE College, a crowding out (Frey, 1997) of intrinsic motivation and professional values in course teams teaching level 3 vocational and academic courses due to the low self-determination caused by the controlling nature of targets and benchmarks.

A key question relates to the extent to which the current Coalition government has shifted the balance away from rational goals towards self-governance to facilitate a more effective utilisation of intrinsic motivation and professional values. Whilst further research is required, the impact of Coalition policy on the FE sector is seemingly in line with the perspective of Coffield *et al.* (2008) on demand-led policy reforms in that the funding incentives integral to such reforms (which continue to be top-down and predicated on an assumption of agent self-interest) have limited the traditional professional focus on needs-based equity for disadvantaged learners. In particular, the Coalition's narrow focus on developing (and funding) employability skills would appear to be at odds with the public sector ethos which historically also had a concern for disadvantaged learners (who may not be employable in the short run) and education provision beyond the 'human capital' requirements of employers (Coffield *et*

*al.*, 2008). Coffield (2014) argues that lecturers and managers are instead compliant ‘data gatherers’ and ‘target followers’ (p.3), with the resultant undermining of self governance creating the context, he further argues, for ‘bulimic education’ in which students regurgitate large amounts of data to pass exams and coursework at the expense of deep learning.

The removal of mandatory teaching qualifications to allow industry experts to teach in the FE sector without a teaching qualification (NIACE, 2012) has also undermined self-governance in terms of teaching and learning within the FE sector. It is a policy which may be criticised for not developing the dual professionalism (i.e. the combination of subject specialism and pedagogy within teaching practice) required of new teachers to meet the needs of vulnerable students such as those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties (Fazaeli, 2012, in NIACE, 2012, p. 13). It may be further criticised for not considering how professionalism, in the absence of qualifications, may be constructed within contested ‘market’ conditions or how institutional failure and poor leadership may marginalise the voice of practitioners, leading to restrictive rather than expansive professional learning communities (Gleeson, 2012, in NIACE, 2012, p. 17).

Overall, the new quasi-market would appear to have contributed to a further undermining of the relationship between tutor and student, and the essential processes of learning (i.e. tutors’ subject knowledge, and commitment to students and pedagogy), because marketisation requires a focus on products rather than processes, on customers rather than learners and on funding and administration rather than pedagogy (Coffield *et al.*, 2008).

## **8. Networks in the FE sector**

What then does the FE literature indicate should be the policy to facilitate a more effective utilisation of intrinsic motivation and professional values? A significant volume of research on



FE (Coffield, 2008; James and Biesta, 2007) rejects the assumption of agent self-interest underlying both New Labour's micromanagement of the FE sector and the Coalition's demanded reforms, in favour of a policy of working with diverse 'learning cultures' in FE.

More specifically, research into learning cultures (e.g. Hodkinson, 2005b, Hodkinson *et al.*, 2007) suggests that current Coalition policy (as with New Labour's before it) is unlikely to succeed at improving student learning because learning is a social process rather than something which can be mandated from above. To improve teaching and learning, it is argued, will require lecturer autonomy and opportunities for professional development rather than top-down policy premised on the assumption of agent self-interest. This may be facilitated through a transformative learning culture which maximises the capacities of all staff (Scaife, 2004, p. 7), so that 'learning professionals' within 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1994) or 'networks' (Le grand, 2003) may more effectively engage with the diverse needs of students. The norms and values integral to such networks may also be used to challenge the self-interest of those college professionals who continue to prioritise their vocational specialism at the expense of pedagogy and more expansive forms of professionalism (Lucas, 2004).

To accommodate such learning cultures, or **networks**, in FE would clearly require a change in college leadership. Research from the Centre for Excellence in leadership (CEL) focussed on 'leadership analysis' within post compulsory education (e.g. Kelly *et al.*, 2005; Fox *et al.*, 2005; Iszatt White *et al.*, 2004; Collinson and Collinson, 2007) suggests that a shift towards situated leadership is required. This would involve leaders paying more attention to coordinating and understanding the lived environment of staff, with the aim one of creating a 'community of professional practice' and reflective dialogue (Binney, Wilke and Williams (2005, cited in Jameson, 2008, p. 14). Similarly Elliott (2013) argues for a shift away from uncritical

management derived from the marketised education environment towards a style of leadership which he describes as ‘critical practice leadership’: an ethical, reflexive and research-driven form of leadership in which leaders put:

learning and the common good at the heart of institutional strategy such that their organisations are not self-serving but further the aspirations and attainments of their students and colleagues (Elliott, 2013, p. 11)

The question remains, however, as to what policy would encourage such professional communities of practice/networks in FE. Coffield *et al.* (2008) argue for more democratic local governance, stable funding in the sector, locally determined CPD, and policies determined through local collaboration. This in turn, Coffield *et al.* (2008) suggest, should be overseen by regional planning bodies to ensure democratic and accountable decision-making at local levels (and arbitration between social partners such as employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector). Within this policy context, Coffield and Williamson (2011) contend, the professional identity of lecturers would shift away from ‘managerial professionalism’ focussed on control, accountability and effectiveness towards ‘democratic professionalism’, in which lecturers cooperate with other educational partners – students, parents, businesses and the local community – as a means of improving FE institutions and the education system in line with the needs of local communities.

Achieving such an open systems form of governance would require the current Coalition government to shift its policy away from a narrow focus on the human capital requirements of business to a wider concern for all stakeholders within local communities; the aim should be to create a more democratic form of local governance which encourages situated leadership in FE to emerge. Within this more democratic environment college lecturers and managers, in partnership with local bodies, would be trusted to meet the needs of local employers,

disadvantaged learners (16-18 and adults) and the community more widely, through their tacit knowledge, professional values and learning communities.

### **Conclusions and implications for the Coalition government**

The existence of both self-interest and professional values (involving altruistic and intrinsic motivation) make it difficult to determine a policy in FE which would act in the most effective way on professionals. Le Grand's (2003) evaluation of the school quasi-market leads him, however, to view the market as the best means for drawing on both self-interested and altruistic motivation. To assume knightly motivation in schools, he argues, would be disastrous because if agents are actually knaves they might act in their self-interest rather than for the service user. Conversely if knavish motivation is assumed it would not have a detrimental effect on the motivation of agents (if they are knights) because such agents would continue to work in the interest of their pupils.

Whilst the research on FE does suggest a price effect, with incentives integral to the FE quasi-market directing college agents towards improved systems and procedures in line with government objectives, Le Grand may be criticised for not incorporating a sufficient regard for the negative aspects of quasi markets in education. In FE these include a crowding out of the intrinsic by the extrinsic, a reduction in standards and gaming behaviours to achieve student certification rather than student learning, and the de-professionalisation and de-politicisation of FE staff such that the productive potential of lecturer intrinsic motivation and professional values is underutilised.

The solution, much of the FE literature suggests, is a shift away from hierarchy and rational goals towards open systems and self-governance within policy to facilitate more understanding of diverse 'learning cultures' in FE. This, it is further argued, requires the removal of top-down

policy so that intrinsically motivated tutors and managers may use their initiative and inventiveness through the increased autonomy made available, with the introduction of democratic local governance and participative leadership used to facilitate this.

There are, however, doubts about the viability of the assumption of trust by economists who (assuming exogenous motivation) argue that such a policy would fail if lecturers and managers are actually knaves (or self-interested) because they would not have an incentive to meet the goals set by government, or if professional values are neither act-relevant or goal-oriented (Le Grand, 2003). This is, of course, true if one assumes exogenous motivation only, so that motivation cannot be created, just redirected to organisational goals. The significant literature on FE (outlined above) suggests conversely, that the top-down control of FE colleges, in emphasising exogenous motivation and agent self-interest, is inadequate for meeting the economic and social agenda of the FE sector, and that utilising norms and values within college 'networks' (and thus endogenous motivation) would be a more effective policy for realising this agenda. Such a policy is in line with the communitarian perspective which argues that collectivism and self-interest may be aligned through the deployment of both economic and intrinsic incentives such that agents are not induced or incentivised but morally committed through internalisation of policy to the collective good (Etzioni, 1996).

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