An Analysis of Sustainable Leadership Challenges and Prospects in Scottish Higher Education

Laura Jean Gerard

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

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Abstract

Interest in sustainable leadership has intensified following the global financial downturn which resulted in organisations across all sectors facing new and complex pressures and demands. Within the Higher Education sector, growing trends of marketization and managerialsim have impacted how academics and professionals attempt to balance competing priorities and demands, with leadership a prime focus in such attempts. In such turbulent times, leadership that endures and sustains may contribute to the achievement of objectives at sectoral, institutional and individual level.

The aim of this study is to examine leaders' perceptions surrounding the challenges of and prospects for sustainable leadership within Scottish Higher Education (HE). Adopting a subjectivist epistemology and interpretivist ontology, collecting qualitative data and utilising interpretive phenomenological analysis to analyse the 35 in-depth interviews. Interviewees included leaders from all levels in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), along with key informants from policymaking organisations within Scottish HE.

The study identifies the key facets of sustainable leadership as embedding sustainable leadership throughout institutions, inclusivity, involvement of stakeholders, individual reflexivity and balancing objectives. These facets are represented in a conceptual framework that demonstrates the interconnected relationships required to achieve sustainable leadership in HEIs.

Through exploring these facets in Scottish HE, the contribution to knowledge of this research is the conceptual framework. Developed from the empirical research it illustrates the essential role of culture in fostering and developing a sustainable leadership approach. Interviewees discussed a range of challenges they experienced as leaders in HEI's and how these could be ameliorated by a culture which enabled sustainable leadership facets. Three key enabling elements are suggested by interviewees as being central to developing a sustainable leadership approach, namely leadership development, communication and peer networks. These findings can guide the application and future development of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE.

Abbreviations

CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CG	Corporate Governance
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
HE	Higher Education Sector
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resources
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
L	Leaders
LMX	Leader Member Exchange Theory
MOOC	Massive Online Open Courses
NPG	New Public Governance
NPM	New Public Management
NSS	National Student Survey
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy Qualification
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SIL	Senior Institutional Leaders
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SOL	Senior Operational Leaders
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
UK	United Kingdom
WAM	Workload Allocation Model

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout literature the importance and impact of leadership is unquestionable with extensive research undertaken each year (Zhu, Song, Zhu and Johnson, 2019). Much of this however exhibits at its core 'excessive positivity' and 'upbeat ideologies' that have not been thoroughly explained or applied to the realities of organisational life (Alvesson and Einola, 2019). Therefore there is a growing need to review challenges and prospects for achieving a sustainable approach to leadership in organisations, particularly as challenging demands placed on leaders can make it difficult to ensure that they can endure and sustain effective leadership competence (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011).

Ashford and Sitkin (2019) highlight that although there are vast amounts of leadership literature and authors who explore and attempt to define the topic, *"considering leadership in an organisational setting with its overlay of hierarchy, norms and culture only increases the fascination" (p.1).* Dive (2008) takes this sentiment further and states;

> *"Leadership does not exist in itself. It can only be really understood in relation to the role in which it is discharged. If leaders are needed throughout an organisation we need a theory that explains what leaders do at different levels. In order to be sustainable, leadership is not simply situational, but contextual, linked to a level of accountability and dependent on the competence of the occupant to handle the demands of a specific role. The importance of context is to provide meaning and satisfaction to individuals."*
> *(Dive, 2008, p.14)*

Consequently, applying sustainable leadership to a specific context will allow a thorough exploration of the impacts and implications the theory can have, this research has selected the Scottish higher education sector due to the increasing dynamics and pressures currently on the sector, which allude to somewhat unsustainable practices being the perceived reality of HEIs. Working within HE gives the researcher first-hand knowledge of the differing demand individuals, and particularly leaders, currently experience within institutions and the wider sector. Therefore, by undertaking qualitative research, such perceptions of leaders can be explored and an analysis of the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership can be undertaken. To date, there has been no research undertaken analysing sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education, which provides a novel organisational context whilst also allowing an

exploration of the potential such an approach may or may not have within the sector. By exploring leaders' experiences within the sector, the researcher will develop a framework which identifies the key facets that HEIs might consider to ensure sustainable leadership practice and enable the dynamics of the approach to be further understood and developed.

1.1 Sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education

1.1.1 Context of higher education

This research aims to explore sustainable leadership within the Scottish Higher Education sector where there are an increasing range of demands placed upon higher education institutions (HEIs). Challenges such as growing managerialism (Runya, Qigui and Wei, 2015); the need to do more with less (Osborne, Radnor, Kinder and Vidal, 2015); increasing competition and globalisation (Edwards and Roy, 2017) have placed immense pressure on individuals within HEIs.

Consequently exploring how leaders can adopt an approach to leadership that will aid the development of themselves, their teams and the institution for the future is imperative. Lee (2017) highlights this focus is one which differentiates sustainable leadership from traditional notions of leadership as it places much more emphasis and importance on long-term prospects and objectives than short-term targets. Therefore exploring prospects and challenges of this approach within the Scottish HEIs can allow an analysis of sustainable leadership within Scottish Higher Education.

To clarify the context and the institutions the researcher refers to by discussing HEIs, it is important to outline the Scottish Higher Education Institutions along with the 'groupings' of institutional types which were set out by the Scottish Government in 2014 with the *"governance arrangements at Scottish Higher Education Institutions"* (Macpherson, 2015). These are the groupings/indicative types applied to the institutions within this research, and are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Higher Education Governance in Scotland - Types of Institutions

Grouping of Institution	Description	Details

Ancient Universities	Those established prior to the 20th century	Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews
Chartered Universities	Established in the mid-20th century	Dundee, Heriot-Watt, Stirling, Strathclyde and Open University in Scotland
Post-1992 'new' universities and 'Small specialist institutions'	The 'new' universities designed under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992	Abertay, Glasgow Caledonian, Edinburgh Napier, Robert Gordon, Queen Margaret Edinburgh, Highlands and Islands, West of Scotland
	'Small specialist institutions'	Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Adapted from: Macpherson (2016)

Von Prondzynski (2012) in the 'Report of the Review of Higher Education Governance in Scotland' provided an overview of the legal categories of HEIs in Scotland based upon how they were established. This is a more complex picture with six (rather than three) institutional types across Scotland, as demonstrated in Figure 1. As this is more identifiable of those institutions in the smaller categories, the three broader groupings have been applied in this research.

Figure 1: Legal Categories of HEIs in Scotland

Chapter 1: Introduction

Specialist institutions
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), the Glasgow School of Art and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Open University

Papal bull
St Andrews, Aberdeen and Glasgow

Partnership of colleges
University of the Highlands and Islands

Royal charter
Edinburgh, Dundee, Stirling, Strathclyde and Heriot Watt

Privy Council
Queen Margaret University

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992
Robert Gordon University, Edinburgh Napier University, University of the West of Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University, and University of Abertay Dundee

Source: Macpherson (2015)

Being able to identify with a particular grouping can be important for organisations to foster their sense of mission and purpose within the Higher Education (HE) sector. However Von Prondzynski (2012) stresses;

> *"…Higher Education institutions are, and should be seen as, independent public bodies. They enjoy (and should enjoy) a high level of institutional autonomy, but they are not private bodies with a primary responsibility to maximise shareholder value; their responsibility stretches to students, staff and the wider community" (Von Prondzynski, 2012, p.5)*

This guarantee that Scottish HEIs are independent public bodies is welcomed, as Farooq (2018) underlines "*institutions need autonomy to influence and guide the lives of citizens for the better*" (p.237). Equally important in this definition provided by Von Prondzynski (2012) is the emphasis that HEIs should not be run as 'businesses' with a focus on financial goals, rather they must adopt a stakeholder view. However the growing trend of marketization and managerialism within the sector has numerous impacts (Kalfa and Taksa, 2017), one of which is an increasing adoption of such approach. Furthermore as Denzin and Lincoln (2018) stress New Public Management (NPM) marks a move *"toward*

a hierarchical business model" (p.901). Nevertheless, if we maintain that HEIs are there to serve the greater good of society, this aligns with the acknowledgement of Peterlin, Pearse and Dimovski (2015) that leaders must recognise and engage with the needs of all stakeholders.

In addition to the growing trend to be managed as businesses, competition within and between HEIs has increased due to metrics such as National Student Survey (NSS), Research Excellence Framework (REF) and positions on league tables (Edwards and Roy, 2017). These outputs foster a short-term perspective and look to quantify the work of Higher Education and HEIs. However as Findler, Schonerr, Lozano, Reider and Martinuzzi (2019) advocate the core outcome of Higher Education should be the development of individuals who will continue to develop over their careers and therefore results or 'outcomes' are not evident for decades. Further Metsamuuronen, Kuosa and Laukkanen (2013) stress leadership literature is increasingly placing an emphasis on the impact leaders can have in organisations achieving long-term goals over short-term gains; a core facet of sustainable leadership. Edwards and Roy (2017) however emphasise that 'hypercompetition' and attempting to respond to such demands are creating an *"increasingly perverse academic culture" (p.52).*

1.1.2 Developing need for sustainable leadership in HE

The theory of sustainable leadership has grown in interest and importance as within the last decade there has been a lot of discussion and promotion on the prospect of a new paradigm of leadership understanding and development in organisations (Hewison and Griffiths, 2004; Casserley and Megginson, 2008; Casserley and Critchley, 2011; du Toit, Veldsman, and Van Zyl, 2011; Edmonstone, 2011). This is required in order to respond to the need for sustainable development within organisations, promoted by the UN decade of education for sustainable development (2005-2014) (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006), which Findler *et al.,* (2019) advocate as being aimed to integrate the principles of sustainable development into all aspects of HEIs. Further, the authors highlight there has been a growing interest surrounding impacts of sustainable development in HEIs since 2014 (Findler *et al*., 2019). Therefore, a number of authors have specifically posed the question of whether traditional leadership models and approaches are appropriate

(Pearce, 2004) with many suggesting as organisational contexts adapt these are no longer enough, as leaders need increasingly diverse skills and competencies to respond to their changing situations (Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell, 2010). The connection and relationship leaders have with their stakeholders must be of central concern as arguably this can enable them to support their followers in achieving organisational goals (Peterlin, Dimovski and Penger, 2013; Pedler *et al.,* 2010).

Nichols and Erakovich (2013) assert ethical and authentic approaches in leadership are no longer just nice to have but are a necessity due to the impacts they have on stakeholders and building effective relationships. Additionally the role of leaders in achieving and embedding corporate sustainability is imperative (Stuart, 2013; Epstein and Buhovac, 2010; Young and Thyil, 2008). Ultimately, as a result of this and aspects such as increased expectations from a number of stakeholders on organisations has resulted in a strategic focus and transparency regarding their ultimate aims and achievements (Young and Thyil, 2008). Therefore advancements in leadership literature have been made to reflect these growing needs. Zhu *et al.* (2019) have alluded to such developments in leadership literature whilst the authors accentuate an advancing trend in literature towards transformational and value based leadership that adopts such views. Arguably this is due to the multi-level influences of leadership, the importance of social responsibility and the impact of leaders behaviours. Along with such trends in leadership literature Metcalf and Benn (2013) underscore that corporate sustainability has also become a growing trend, however achieving sustainability (either as an individual or an organisation) can be a complex problem. Baumgartner (2009) argues an organisations culture must foster sustainability approaches. Arguably this is where the role of leaders is emphasised as being the make or break factor in successful implementation of the sustainability agenda (Epstein and Buhovac, 2010; Stuart, 2013) and therefore leaders require extraordinary abilities and capabilities (Metcalf and Benn, 2013). Sustainable leadership involves sustaining organisational practices and culture (Davies, 2007) whilst also sustaining individual leaders (Hyatt *et al.,* 2010). A prominent societal change that has promoted increasing interest in sustainable leadership is arguably the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). The crisis has ignited debate and given rise to the growing realisation that the business as usual,

shareholder approach in organisations is no longer enough and a paradigm shift is required in the way we think about leadership (Casserley and Critchley, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Within HEIs there is increasing research and discussions around managerialism and competition (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016; Edwards and Roy, 2017) therefore exploring sustainable leadership within this context will enable a consideration of how HEIs can develop their leaders and employees in order to succeed for the long-term.

Kalshoven, Den Hartog and De Hoogh (2011) emphasise the growing importance of the research field of sustainable leadership. Dive (2008) agrees and suggests organisations can often ignore sustainable leadership elements by not engaging with or subsequently benefiting from the approach. Zhu *et al.*'s (2019) research demonstrates that a constant focus of leadership literature has been transformational leadership and Peterlin *et al.* (2015) directly align the similarities and differences between transformational leadership and sustainable leadership by stating;

> *"Transformational and sustainable leadership are similar in the following ways: (1) their dedication to understanding the whole, because creating a sense of meaning facilitates the commitment of stakeholders; (2) intellectual stimulation of stakeholders; (3) motivation by inspiring action and (4) individualised treatment of stakeholders (Avoilo, Bass and Jung, 1999; Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson, 2003). Whereas transformational leadership is focused more on personal charisma or idealised influence in influencing current followers (House, Spangler and Woycke, 1991), sustainable leadership is focused on nurturing future generations potential for a dignified existence"* *(Peterlin et al. 2015, p.279)*

Therefore leaders adopting a sustainable leadership approach must work with individuals to overcome demands. However as Stoker, Garretsen and Soudis (2019) argue how a leader responds to different demands and external pressures (such as the GFC) will be context specific, their study strongly emphasises that context is an antecedent for leadership behaviour. This aligns with Avery and Bergsteiner's (2011) proposition that a sustainable leadership approach is not a prescriptive one-size-fits-all approach, rather it must be determined by the context within which it develops or exists.

1.1.3 Defining sustainable leadership

Farooq (2018) stresses, the concept of sustainable leadership has been defined in a number of ways, by a number of authors since 2003 (Lambert, 2012). However it is important to establish the focus of the sustainable leadership theory which is at the heart of this research. One definition which represents the key principles underpinning of the concept is provided which was given to leaders during the interviews was by Avery and Bergsteiner (2011);

> *"Sustainable leadership requires taking a long term perspective in making decisions; fostering systematic innovation aimed at increasing customer value; developing a skilled, loyal and highly engaged workforce; and offering quality products, services and solutions"* (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011, p.5)

The topic of sustainable leadership is contested and this research refers to five seminal authors of the theory (as will be discussed in section 3.3).

1.2 Purpose and value of study

As demonstrated, authors surrounding both 'leadership' and 'higher education' advocate for a renewed approach which will adopt a stakeholder view, develop for the future and aid in the management of competing demands. Consequently, due to the overarching context HEIs are operating within, such as increasing competition, increasing demands and the need to do more with less, this research and an exploration of the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership has value on a number of levels.

Firstly, as sustainable leadership is a contested area, this research conducts empirical research on the diverse theoretical landscape of sustainable leadership. This theoretical contribution of the research conceptualises the topic and presents common themes in a conceptual framework, in the context of the Scottish Higher Education sector. As Farooq (2018) contends;

> *"…the concept of sustainable leadership perhaps suffers from the lack of a single approach or model"* (Farooq, 2018, p.244)

Therefore this research will address the gap advised by Farooq to aid understanding and present a conceptual framework on the contested topic of sustainable leadership. This advances our knowledge of sustainable leadership both conceptually through the examination of theory and academic literature, and factually through a robust methodological examination of leaders experiences.

Secondly, as the purpose of Higher Education is ultimately for the greater good of society (Macpherson, 2015), consequently exploring prospects for and challenges of sustainable leadership which *"focuses on the future needs of many stakeholders"* (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015, p.279) and can help manage and respond to numerous demands will only be of benefit to HEIs and the sector. This research set out to explore prospects for and challenges of such an approach within HEIs, not to confirm or prove the existence of sustainable leadership but rather to garner leaders' perceptions on the realities they face within HEIs and explore the potential value for an approach in Scottish Higher Education.

Finally, applying the conceptual framework derived from literature to Scottish Higher Education has enabled the production of an applied conceptual framework to guide application and future development, which will positively impact institutions, the wider sector and their stakeholders.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

Aim: To examine perceptions surrounding the challenges and prospects for developing sustainable leadership within Scottish Higher Education to explore implications for leaders

Objectives

1   To critically review literature surrounding sustainable leadership in the Scottish Higher Education context

2   To develop a conceptual framework (based on existing literature) for the analysis of leaders views on sustainable leadership in the Scottish Higher Education sector

3   To undertake in-depth interviews exploring leaders' perceptions of sustainable leadership in order to explore prospects for future development and challenges leaders may face

4   To establish an empirically based conceptual framework to guide the application and future development of sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two: Higher Education Sector Context Literature – a context specific chapter which explores literature surrounding Higher Education. Initially developments within the sector are presented exploring implications of New Public Management and New Public Governance with an overview of policymaking organisations and higher education institutions which exist in the Scottish Higher Education sector. Changes that have impacted and influenced practices within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will then be considered; there are a number of core considerations to be made around public sector management centring around three areas, the 'Higher Education sector', 'institutions' and 'people'. Finally, the roles of leaders within the sector and within HEIs will be explored.

Chapter Three: Sustainable Leadership Literature Review – the subject specific literature review provides a theoretical underpinning for the research by exploring the contested concept of sustainable leadership. By evaluating the underpinning literature of sustainability and leadership, the review will move to exploring sustainable leadership literature, focusing on themes derived from seminal authors of the theory. Finally a conceptual framework will be presented, based on the literature, which is used as the base for the empirical research of this study.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology – this chapter outlines all decisions undertaken in the strategy of this research study. Provides detail on the subjectivist epistemological and interpretivist ontological underpinnings, along with considerations of the qualitative interpretative phenomenological methodological analysis research design which utilises in-depth interviews as the mono-method of data collection.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout providing detailed discussions and rationale, surrounding strategies and decisions employed throughout each stage of the research.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Findings – presents the analysis and findings of the primary data collected via the 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews undertaken in this research. Discusses leaders' experiences from across the Scottish Higher Education sector and explores leaders perceptions of the topics whilst considering challenges and prospects surrounding the concept.

Chapter Six: Discussions – following Chapter Five, the presentation of the analysis and findings of the research, chapter six presents detailed discussions which explore the findings in relation to literature in order to explore how the perceptions of the interviewees of this research compare to literature. Consequently, from the findings and discussions, the conceptual framework is amended to combine the theory of sustainable leadership alongside the Higher Education sector and explore leaders' perceptions of the challenges and prospects of sustainable leadership in this context.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations - Considers the achievement of the aim and objectives of the research, provides concluding remarks on the challenges and prospects for sustainable leadership in the Scottish Higher Education sector and provides implications for leaders within the sector and higher education institutions to foster a sustainable leadership approach.

Chapter 2: Higher Education Sector

2.1 Introduction

The selected context for this research study, Scottish Higher Education, is facing an ever-changing environment due to the increasing demands and pressures universities face. Bolden, Gosling and O'Brien (2012) have highlighted that;

> *"Recent years have seen substantial changes in higher education in the UK (as elsewhere) in response to factors such as increasing participation rates, internationalisation, funding, policy and market competition" (Bolden, Gosling and O'Brien, 2012, p.4).*

Edwards and Roy (2017) affirm this, suggesting increasing emphasis and focus on performance metrics has increased competition and resulted in universities being managed more aligned with a private sector business model. Drumaux and Joyce (2018) highlight since the GFC public sector leadership literature and research increasingly talks about *"…competition and contention"* (p.122). Consequently, as Jones, Lefoe, Harvey and Ryland (2012) state;

> *"New approaches to leadership in higher education are being explored as universities face the dual challenge of competing in a globally competitive world while at the same time designing opportunities to build and develop sustainable leadership" (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey and Ryland, 2012, p.67)*

Understanding the context in which leaders operate and build sustainable institution is vital (Lambert, 2011). However Siddique, Aslam, Kham and Fatima (2011) argue *"…leadership in higher education has been given less importance and is not explored widely"* (p.730).

In line with objective 1 which aims to critically explore sustainable leadership in the Scottish Higher Education sector, it is important to outline contextual influences and debates in the sector before exploring sustainable leadership literature in chapter 3. Therefore, this chapter will explore developments related to the Scottish Higher Education sector, which have shaped and influenced the sector and key considerations that must be made as a result. It will then provide an overview and analysis of key issues within higher education institutions (HEIs) to illustrate the current challenging context

leaders face. Finally, the chapter will finish by exploring the role of leaders in HEIs and how they can attempt to handle and overcome challenges within their institutions.

2.2 Context Development and Implications

Public sector services have undergone a number of fundamental changes over the years, particularly surrounding the management of the sector with many changes within HE (Osborne, 2010; Flynn, 2007).

> *"The last 25 years have seen a remarkable change in the social, economic and managerial structure of higher education with the development of mass and, in some countries, near universal higher education" (Shattock, 2010a, p.22).*

There are a number of benefits to such changes, particularly centred around the reduction of internal barriers and increases in communication and cross-discipline and boundary working within organisations the relationship between the centre and the periphery have encountered a number of issues (Diefenbach, 2009). Devolution of education and training from the UK Government to Scottish Government is a pivotal concern as it frames the context of this research. Since 1998, several Acts of Parliament from the UK Government have granted devolution powers to introduce new laws which affect the people of Scotland (Scottish Parliament, 2019), these powers have been amended and added to if required since inception. Working together with the UK Government the Scottish Parliament *"is one of the most powerful devolved parliaments in the world"* (Delivering for Scotland, 2019) who advocate they bring power closer to the people affected on a variety of issues. A sentiment echoed by Farrell (2010) who posits as a result of devolution policy reforms in Scotland (and Wales) have the *"citizen at the heart of policy reform"* (p.505). There is a range of reserved matters that the UK government will legislate over with sole responsibility, although they retain power to legislate on any matter, however legislation related to devolved powers must be done with consent from the Scottish Government (Scottish Parliament, 2019). In addition, there will always be unstable and changing issues such as Brexit which will significantly influence Scottish Government regardless of reserved or devolved maters. One of the devolved powers, which has been devolved since 1998 is education and training, which

allows the Scottish Government to institute laws and regulations around issues such as Tuition Fees, which differ from the rest of the UK.

Within this chapter, it is crucial to investigate general changes to public sector organisations with a focus on Scottish higher education institutions. These changes have influenced Scottish Universities in relation to both policy and development of the sector along with the management and leadership roles, which exist throughout the sector (Scott, 2013). Arguably, there are a number of considerations that should be made around local, regional, national and global identities (Scott, 2013) particularly as globalisation has increased in HE (see 2.3). Therefore, initially debates around public sector management, new public management and new public governance will be presented, located within literature, which stems across the UK. The Scottish Higher Education sector will then be located with an overview of the sector, the institutions that exist within it and the overarching aims it strives to achieve. This will pave the way for key considerations in the HE sector and influencers on leaders in HEIs to be undertaken.

2.2.1 Public sector management

Arguably, management within the UK public sector has undergone a number of changes throughout the years, predominately focusing around distinct design and delivery regimes. These have ranged from public administration in the Thatcher government of the late 1970s and early 1980s with a focus on efficiency (Osborne, 2017a; Lapsley, 2009; Shattock, 2008). To new public management (NPM) at the start of the twenty-first century, discussed at length by Hood (1995) who identified key elements such as adopting private sector management approaches, tighter controls on outputs and an increasing demand on resources, to name a few (Lapsley, 2009; Shattock, 2008). Arguments, which have attracted a lot of attention, question whether NPM is an entirely new approach (Greener, 2013). The development and foci of the overarching theory and underpinnings of public administration theory is outlined as;

> *"While efficiency was the main concern of traditional public administration, and efficiency and effectiveness are the main concerns of new public management, values beyond efficiency and effectiveness are pursued, debated, challenged and evaluated in the emerging approach" (Bryson,*

Crosby and Bloomberg, 2014, p.445).

This has led to the development of the emerging concept of new public governance (NPG) and the ideology of governance at the forefront (Osborne, 2017a and 2010). Liddle (2018) outlines the development of NPG emerged in response to the arguments that NPM;

> *"…did not address larger challenges such as declining government resources, the growing size of government agencies, and the complex, developing linkages between state, non-state and civic institutions to delivery public goods and services" (Liddle, 2018, p.968)*

Therefore, these approaches have developed from one another with strong origins which were formulated and matured as Western society moved from a traditional administrative to a management focus with NPM (Dienfenbach, 2009) to a more professional/leadership mentality (Lapsley, 2009) with the ultimate achievement of public value (Liddle, 2018).

These changes throughout the sector have affected the management of such traditional public sector practices, which have become more privatised in their nature (Bao, Wang, Larsen and Morgan, 2012; Flynn, 2007). Ongaro, van Thiel, Massey, Pierre and Wollmann (2018) agree and suggest that increasingly language and tools of the private sector have been applied within the public sector. NPM enabled a developing dialogue around the management of public services (Osborne, 2010) and management was seen as the most important element (Diefenbach, 2009) however there are a number of critics which highlight the flaws of the concept (Deem and Brehony, 2005). As a result, NPG Osborne (2010) argues is an emerging alternative where the focus of public sector management has developed on from the previous approaches but it is not a prescriptive approach. Further Liddle (2018) outlines *"achieving public good is a laudable aim of NPG" (p.971)* however highlights it does fail to recognise the capacities of the agents and institutions to bring about change. Nevertheless, Bao *et al*. (2012) argue new public management in whichever form

> *"…strives to make the services provided by government more responsive and accountable to citizens by applying business-like management techniques with a strong focus on competition, customer satisfaction, and measurement of performance" (Bao et al., 2012, p.445).*

With Greener (2013) suggesting that *"…just about any organisational form that doesn't represent the public administration archetype can be argued to be a part of it"* (p. 64). Ultimately, however both NPM and public administration before it fail to fully recognise the inherent complexities of management within public sector that has led to a number of contradictions (Deem and Brehony, 2005) which are depicted in Table 2. These contradictions have also paved the way for the emerging approach to become so prominent (Osborne, 2010).

Table 2: Contradictions in new public management

Contradictions	Description
Both managers and professionals believe that they should be in charge of public services	Public management implies that it is managers in charge of public services, when those managers often depend upon highly trained professionals who do not wish to be managed
Public services must be both democratically accountable to their citizenry, but also achieve good results for their individual users	Public services face the contradiction of having to manage resources for the benefit of their population as a whole, as well as for their individual service users who may want very different things
Public services must be run according to public values, but also according to market values	Public services are often associated with distinctively public values including collectivity and solidarity, but at the same time must work within individualistic market environments, requiring them to adopt market values
Public services must be efficient, yet also deliver strong customer service	Public services often achieve efficiency through organising around professional schedules, but have to demonstrate customer service by organising around user schedules
Public managers are appointed by contradictory means (election or selection)	Public managers may have very different duties if elected or if selected, creating very different lines of accountability

Source: Greener (2013, p.69)

Following these contradictions, it is important to note that the challenges faced by traditional public administration and new public management still exist within new public governance particularly as it is not wholly newly designed principles but rather based on existing approaches (Osborne, 2006). Johnson and Deem (2003) suggest the predominant aim of NPM within public services is to improve efficiency and

effectiveness even though there is no evidence this is the reality of the situation which is probably due to the complexities and definitional differences proposed by authors throughout literature (Ongaro *et al.,* 2018; Hughes, 2010). Lapsley (2009, p.5) agrees whilst going further to argue that NPM is a *"cruel disappointment"* which has given rise to emerging theories and resulted in governance emerging *"…from being an element within the PA and NPM regimes of public policy implementation and public services delivery, public governance has become a distinctive regime in its own right"* (Osborne, 2010, p. 7). This further demonstrates and compounds the argument that NPG is not something new but rather a refocus (Osborne, 2010) which has brought with it new conditions and challenges emerged to counteract the challenges faced. It places governance and how to govern at the crux (rather than management) whilst ensuring that citizenship and democracy play a significant role (Bryson *et al*., 2014). This shift is welcome as although there are a number of benefits that have arisen because of NPM the heavy reliance on management can *"turn into a nightmare for public sector organisations"* (Diefenbach, 2009, p.902).

Bao *et al*. (2012) emphasise the development of NPG and discuss three characteristics that were either ignored and/or undervalued by NPM. These include a focus on service and quality rather than efficiency and effectiveness; importance of creating processes which facilitate agreement between stakeholders; and finally the creation of the public good as a coproduction process (Bao *et al*., 2012). Within this emerging theory the customer-orientation which has dominated NPM is replaced by a partnership and facilitation approach (Bao *et al*., 2012) along with citizen participation and involvement in design of the product/service offered (Farrell, 2010). However the consistent underlining individuality of practice and creating the best 'reality' for the organisation which came from NPM (Fenwick and McMillan, 2005).

To bring the discussions of NPM together Diefenbach (2009) highlights a number of core elements and basic assumptions of NPM but advocates *"…the primary objective of NPM is to give public sector organisations a new orientation and, in so doing, change the way they operate" (p.894).* This argument is very interesting when we consider the influence within higher education institutions and in order to understand this Diefenbach (2009,

p. 894) reinforces three strategic outside-orientations which are discussed within literature and are;

1. *Market-orientation – with a focus on creating value for money*

2. *Stakeholder-orientation – meeting expectations of external stakeholders*

3. *Customer-orientation – with a focus on service delivery*

These orientations will allow us to consider the current issues within the Higher Education sector from a NPM perspective and following this will align with the crux of the sustainable leadership literature which will be explored within the Higher Education sector. However it is important to acknowledge the development of the NPG approach which Osborne (2006, p.382) highlights *"acknowledges the increasingly fragmented and uncertain nature of public management theory in the twenty-first century"* and is based upon organisational sociology and network theory. This network theory can be seen to be crucial in considering the different orientations underlined by Diefenbach (2009) but the importance of networks is not an entirely new consideration. Connolly, Farrell and James (2019) discuss stakeholder and emphasise the role and influence they will have which leaders must take on responsibly. Linking to Diefenbach's orientations we can see that stakeholders will be different in each orientation however as Pollitt (2003) suggest relationships between these groups is important and can be managed in a number of ways. Gomes, Liddle and Gomes (2010) extend these considerations and underline the importance of stakeholder considerations and emphasise each cluster of stakeholders will have different relationships with the central 'decision maker'. Further, the authors emphasise the important role of leaders in responding to the influence of each stakeholder group.

2.2.2 Scottish Higher Education Sector (Universities)

Within the Scottish Higher Education sector there are three policy-making organisations, which influence and oversee the sector and Scottish institutions, they are;

1. Scottish Government – Advanced Learning and Science Directorate, responsible for the *"delivery of further and higher education in Scotland"* (Scottish Government, 2019). 2019 Cabinet Secretary – John Swinney MSP and Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science – Richard Lochhead.

2. Scottish Funding Council, *"helping make Scotland the best place in the world to educate, to research and to innovate."* (Scottish Funding Council, 2019), funding body for Scotland, responsible for investing in Scottish Universities.

3. Universities Scotland, *"the voice of Scotland's universities"* (Universities Scotland, 2019), representative body of Scotland's institutions with membership from each institution.

There are a total of nineteen Higher Education institutions throughout Scotland (as detailed in Table 3). The majority of Scottish institutions were formed between the 14th to 19th century with seven of the institutions receiving full university status as a result of or after the Further and Higher Education Scotland Act 1992, these are commonly known as 'post 92 universities'. There are a number of distinctions made between different institutional types can be classified as, for example 'pre, post 92' (Bolden, Gosling, O'Brien, Peters, Ryan and Haslam, 2012a) or 'old and new' universities following the binary divide of 1992 (Chandler, Barry and Clarke, 2002).

As this research is based on the Scottish Higher Education Sector, in 2014 the Scottish Government set out the governance arrangements for Scottish HEIs which consequently set out three groupings of institutions in Scotland (see 1.1.1 – Table 1). However based on when the institutions were formed and gained university status, von Prondzynski (2012) emphasised this legally impacts the institutions governance set up.

Table 3: Scottish Higher Education Institutions

University	Formed	Gained University Status	Identification by Scottish Government
University of Aberdeen	1495	1495	Ancient
Abertay University	1888	1994	New
University of Dundee	1881	1967	Chartered

University of Edinburgh	1582	1582	Ancient
Edinburgh Napier University	1694	1992	New
University of Glasgow	1451	1451	Ancient
Glasgow Caledonian University	1875	1993	New
Glasgow School of Art	1845	1845	Small specialist institutions
Heriot-Watt University	1821	1966	Chartered
University of the Highlands and Islands	2001	2011	New
Open University of Scotland	1969	1971	Chartered
Queen Margaret University	1875	2007	New
Robert Gordon University	1750	1992	New
Royal Conservatorie of Scotland	1993	1993	Small specialist institutions
Scotland's Rural Univeristy College	2012	2012	Small specialist institutions
University of Saint Andrews	1413	1413	Ancient
University of Stirling	1967	1967	Chartered
University of Strathclyde	1796	1964	Chartered
University of the West of Scotland	1836	2007	New

Adapted from: Universities Scotland (2017) and Macpherson (2015)

2.2.3 Aims of Higher Education within the UK

The Robbins Report (1963, p.6), a UK government funded report which reviewed Higher Education UK wide outlined the four aims of Higher Education as;

1. *Instruction in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour;*

2. *Promotion of the 'powers of the mind'. The aim should be to produce not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women;*

3. *Advancement of learning; and*

4. *Transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship*

These aims are still true today regardless of the numerous changes that have occurred throughout the sector. However as Von Prodndzynski (2012) highlights these aims were built on a number of assumptions particularly around the role of governing bodies being in control of financial and strategic issues. Each university within Scotland exists to make a difference to the wider world and the distinctive nature of Scotland's Higher Education

performs well on a number of levels (Von Prodndzynski, 2012). The range of institutions in Scotland provide a number of opportunities for students to study in Scotland (Macpherson, 2015).

The Dearing Report (1997) frames the context of the Higher Education sector following the Higher and Further Education Act 1992. The report was conducted throughout the UK however outlines that in order to compete within an international marketplace and claim to be world class there are a number of aspects which are essential; these are listed as;

- *encourage and enable all students - whether they demonstrate the highest intellectual potential or whether they have struggled to reach the threshold of higher education - to achieve beyond their expectations;*

- *safeguard the rigour of its awards, ensuring that UK qualifications meet the needs of UK students and have standing throughout the world;*

- *be at the leading edge of world practice in effective learning and teaching;*

- *undertake research that matches the best in the world, and make its benefits available to the nation;*

- *ensure that its support for regional and local communities is at least comparable to that provided by higher education in competitor nations;*

- *sustain a culture which demands disciplined thinking, encourages curiosity, challenges existing ideas and generates new ones;*

- *be part of the conscience of a democratic society, founded on respect for the rights of the individual and the responsibilities of the individual to society as a whole;*

- *be explicit and clear in how it goes about its business, be accountable to students and to society, and seek continuously to improve its own performance.*

The Dearing Report (1997) goes on to highlight that in order to achieve these aims the staff within higher education must be skilled professionals who are highly rewarded for their work within their well-managed institutions that create productive, engaging environments for them to excel. Arguably, it is the role of leaders to create and sustain such an internal culture and therefore they must ensure they are doing so with the employees at the centre of everything they are doing. This links directly with the theory of sustainable leadership set out by the seminal authors (see 3.3 - such as Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, in particular). Therefore it can be argued that within HE, as Kwiek (2005)

highlights universities are affected by growing demands (such as globalisation) which will also be experienced by society as a whole but that the role of leaders and individuals within institutions are more important and prominent than before as institutions attempt to balance such demands and ensure they are sustainable. This has resulted in a more 'managed university' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016) with the importance and impact of leaders within HEIs accentuated.

The New Higher Education Act of 2004 *"allows the entrance of new private sector suppliers of higher education, possibly creating significantly different institutions"* (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004, p.14). These institutions have been set up for completely different reasons and therefore expounding the issues contained within the market set up of NPM, however this 'market perspective' has dominated higher education on a global scale (Kwiek, 2005).

> *"The current higher education environment may be seen as one where there is a constant tension between knowledge processing and business processing, where there is a need to facilitate and support scholarly thought and enquiry alongside institutional performance and productivity"* (Bolden et al., 2012, p.9).

Shattock (2013) highlights this paradox that has arisen where the HE sector and market has come to replicate the private sector more than ever although the private sector company governance model is arguably the least appropriate for managing the public sector. These challenges are compounded within the Higher Education sector where the balance between traditional public and private sector management is hugely influencing organisations. As such key considerations for the HE sector must be undertaken to explore the impacts and implications on institutions and how they achieve their overarching aims.

2.3 Key considerations in the HE Sector

Multiple changes in the public sector and the rapid expansion of HE have amended expectations and have caused tensions in higher education institutions between balancing the need to manage as a business whilst holding true to the fundamentals of Higher Education (Bolden *et al*., 2012; Peters and Ryan, 2015). Arguably, the concepts

of NPM began to surface in the public sector following the Jarratt Report (1985) which began to question university structures, ensure efficiencies were achieved and accountabilities were clear. Chandler *et al.* (2002) then discussed the existence of NPM in higher education *"…with staff experiencing intensification of labour and increasing emphasis on accountability and surveillance"* (p.1060) and argue that no matter how it is implemented the principles will still affect workload, surveillance and 'wear and tear' of those involved. Nevertheless the authors also highlight that there are examples where there are *"…contrasting notions of managerialism, professionalism and collegiality finding expression, sometimes in forms which challenge the NPM model"* (Chandler *et al.*, 2002, p.1064). Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) hints at the changing expectations of leaders and the fact that leaders in today's institutions have different pressures in comparison to previous decades. Yet they are still compounded by the problems of yesteryear, and in particular NPM (Chandler *et al.*, 2002) whilst also dealing with new challenges, in particular those of student expectations (Johnson and Deem, 2003). The language surrounding NPM is arguably challenging reality within organisations, and particularly higher education, which has seen a greatly enhanced importance of league tables, targets, and performance management of employees to which the answer seems to be management, in accordance with new managerialist language (Deem and Brehony, 2005). Diefenbach (2009) highlights that essentially NPM with its strategic orientations *"can barely deliver what it promises…it does not serve 'the public' but artificially creates markets and parallel universes of vision statements and performance reports"* (p.897)*.*

The context of public services in the UK and NPM has given rise to multiple challenges for institutions that Peters and Ryan (2015) including the Higher Education context, institutions and people within the sector. These themes, as depicted in Figure 2, will guide this research.

Figure 2: Considerations in HEIs

Higher education context	• Brexit • Globalisation • Mass higher education
Institution level	• Quality control • League table culture • Funding
People	• Student as consumer • Role of leader
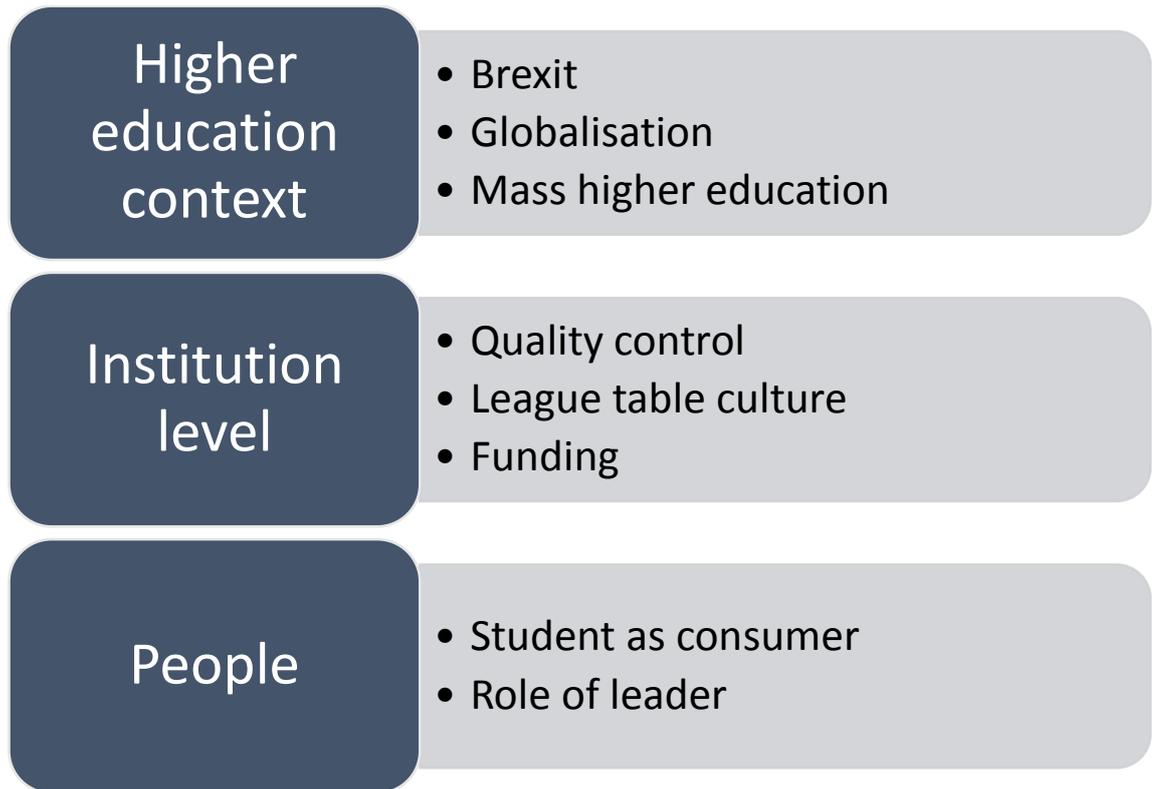
The changing focus of higher education institutions to focus on efficiency, economy and performance that strongly aligns with the managerialist approach (Farnham, 2010). Deem and Brehony (2005) expand on this by highlighting that the 'new managerial' permeation of Scottish Higher Education can be seen as a direct result of changes externally within public policy and funding regimes rather than a desire from academics to implement the NPM principles. Arguably, the external environment of Higher Education in the UK, and the increasing globalisation (Dieck-Assad, 2013) which affect the sector has caused a range of changes within universities particularly due to the effects of "…*universalisation of higher education and the increasing commodification of research"* (Kwiek, 2005, p.325). These wider external contextual changes, particularly of mass education within an international marketplace, are overshadowed by the need to do more with less whilst continuing to ensure high quality LTA strategies are in place (Johnson and Deem, 2003) and as Peters and Ryan (2015) highlight leaders are *"…relying on the efforts of an overloaded and demoralised workforce"* (p.18). Perhaps the driving force behind this increasing need to be more effective could be traced to the introduction of the league table culture where competition has intensified throughout

institutions in the UK Higher Education sector (Shattock, 2017). Bolden *et al*. (2012) have indicated that;

> *"Greater competition between providers, reduced public funding and stronger demand for access to higher education has driven universities to respond in a more market-orientated way and have made collegial leadership and shared decision-making increasingly difficult to sustain" (Bolden et al., 2012, p.7).*

These changes began to cause effect a decade ago and key aspects essential to consider include globalisation and the audit culture that has been the result of the resource constraint and students viewed as consumers (Deem, 1998). This movement towards 'new managerialism' has resulted in a *"…drive to create a centralised strategic direction in universities, administrative structures to implement the strategy and control mechanisms that allow the strategy to be transformed into action"* (Von Prondzynski, 2012, p.9). Each of these aspects and the themes of (1) Higher Education sector; (2) institutions; and (3) people will be considered in more detail to explore the current context leaders within the higher education sector must tackle on a daily basis.

2.3.1 Higher Education sector

One of the biggest challenges currently facing Scottish HEIs and the HE sector is the uncertainty and risk associated with the Brexit vote. Constitutional Relations Secretary, Michael Russell in a letter to the home secretary (Russell, 2019) states;

> *"Scotland has a world-class higher education sector and a long-standing reputation for being amongst the best in the world. But Brexit is already the biggest risk to the sector, threatening our ability to attract and retain EU staff and students. This damaging policy has many consequences for Scottish institutions, putting them at a competitive disadvantage with regards to undergraduate recruitment. […] The uncertainty of Brexit – and the end of freedom of movement – continue to be the biggest threat to our university sector." (Russell, 2019)*

To the unstable, changing context of HE issues such as Brexit, neither the UK or Scottish Governments have answers related to what the future holds nor the direct impacts on Scottish HEIs, therefore they are working with assumptions and presuppositions but no clear plan of action (Macpherson, 2016). Consequently leaders within HEIs are working with the same and although may be attempting to manage consequences until negotiation on a deal are final these remain uncertain (Macpherson, 2016). Brexit is an

issue which is managed by the UK government and therefore decisions taken, such as the three-year time limit for EU students to complete degrees significantly influence Scottish HEIs, which prompted Michael Russell's (Constitutional Relations Secretary) letter to the home secretary to espouse concerns from Scottish policy making organisations.

This uncertainty and how to manage for the future of HEIs must be done so with the cognizance of the global environment in which institutions exist. As Osborne, Radnor, Kinder and Vidal (2015) emphasise organisations within the public sector;

> *"…can no longer act as if their efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability are in their own hands alone. In reality [they] are now part of complex public service delivery systems where their mission-critical objectives require the successful negotiation of relationships within these systems – with policy makers, other [institutions], service users, citizens, and indeed a range of service system elements and stakeholders" (Osborne, Radnor, Kinder and Vida, 2015, p.2)*

Therefore the role of leaders in navigating this is accentuated in managing stakeholder demands and responding to these challenges. NPG has developed from NPM and ensured that at the local level, the implementation of government policies can be flexible and therefore views of stakeholders can be taken on board (Osborne, 2010). This has

> *"…resulted in the creation of a wide variety of new policy instruments, negotiated agreements, and performance measures that would have been difficult, if not unthinkable under NPM" (Bao et al., 2012, p. 447).*

The emerging debates of NPG have emphasised the use of networks and of flexibility within working practices which have been discussed previously. What is also important to mention is the ideology of the private sector marketization and globalisation which has been embedded throughout the sector is growing and gaining momentum even after more than a decade since it was introduced (Shattock, 2008, 2013). As Scott (2013, p.223) highlights *"much of the literature about the contemporary university tends to focus on the local and the global [identities], apparently missing out the national".* This occurs despite the funding provided by national governments (Scott, 2013). Although funding streams become more diversified as a result of changes in the sector and aspects such as globalisation. Consequently, Kwiek (2005) highlights universities can compete

on the global stage. Flynn (2007) discusses the increase in demand on higher education institutions with

> *"The main result for managers of the expansion in further and higher education is that they have to achieve two things: attract enough students to generate revenue and to increase productivity (measured in cost per student) of the staff in order to cope with the reduction in unit funding" (Flynn, 2007, p.98).*

Therefore, in order to compete globally HEIs face these increasing demands and attempt to achieve a balance between them, particularly around the increasing occurrence of mass higher education. This has brought UK institutions into line with other modern societies, with the consequences and implications being severe (Chandler *et al.*, 2002). For example, the focus on always producing high quality work in every task has led to increased stress and

> *"…a climate of fear…worries about the insecurity of work and fear of unemployment [and] flexibilities of capitalist production…[have led to an acceptance]…in workload. They took on more work…like workers on an assembly line just to keep up, agonising over a perceived loss of quality and scholarship, losing sight of their students in a growing sea of faces, but worried too about their own livelihoods" (Chandler et al., 2002, p.1059).*

Gibbs (2008) supports this and contends that the expansion and mass education is a result of a marketing issue and global competition debate rather than for the 'best' educational reasons surrounding expanding the numbers graduating with awards, rather than a focused concern of knowledge and creativity. It is however important to note that research has found that academics do not dislike the principles of mass education; particularly in expanding to disadvantaged or underrepresented groups; however there are a number of issues and discontent with the way in which it is managed and implemented within institutions (Chandler *et al.*, 2002).

2.3.2 Institutions

Bolden *et al.* (2012, p.10) highlight that *"…increased emphasis on excellence in all spheres of activity (teaching, research, service, etc.)"* has led to an increased interest in leadership. This is arguably a result of the need to balance demands and ensure the HEI can perform well and achieve their outcomes whilst building towards a sustainable future.

After the introduction of the research excellence framework (REF) the power and control of higher education universities no longer lies solely with higher education funding councils, rather funding streams have diversified with a greater percentage of income now from the student loans company (Shattock, 2013) or commercial work. The income diversification has increased from 2008/09 to 2014/15 although the sector did report an increase of 8.1% in income the funding challenges is one faced by numerous institutions, as a report from Grant Thornton (2016) emphasise. These funding changes and ability of the national governments to provide sufficient investment (via funding) have been dramatically affected in recent years, and will probably continue to decline into the future. This has occurred regardless of the fact there has been an increase in the importance of 'knowledge' within our economies and in gaining a competitive advantage over other nations (Kwiek, 2005). This exacerbates the growing trend of funding decreases within the Higher Education sector (Shattock, 2013) and *"the impact of selective research funding [which has] a profound, and often unanticipated, effect on higher education systems"* (Shattock, 2010, p.24). In an attempt to manage this and negotiate areas of foci with HEIs, the SFC have 'outcome agreements' with all institutions which set out objectives on both short-term (usually 1-3 years) and longer-term (anywhere between 3-10 years) which embed Scottish Government objectives into the strategies and operational plans of the HEIs. These outcome agreements are negotiated individually with each institution and aim to align institutional and societal objectives with institutional leaders (the vice-principal or chancellor) holding ultimate responsibility for the outcomes agreed.

Nevertheless, Peters and Ryan (2015) argue the only real answer to deal with pressures is to do more with less and sell more courses with a decreasing resource (Peters and Ryan, 2015). Osborne *et al.*'s (2015) warning is important as the authors emphasise in attempting to manage on a short-term mentality a number of public sector organisations have made cuts to or limit resources, however this can be *"counter-productive to their survival"* (p.3). Therefore, institutions must make strategic decisions founded in long-term considerations over short-term savings which may negatively impact service/quality provided. Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) however highlight consumer based quality initiatives which attempted to improve quality of particularly

teaching and learning, are *"doing a serious disservice to those institutions of HE it was meant to improve"* (p.16). Therefore, leaders must be aware that they should not be looking to quantify and manage institutions as businesses as this can have detrimental impacts on the performance of employees who in reaction to growing demands avoid risks and innovation (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004).

2.3.3 People - students

Arguably, therefore the impact(s) on students are vital to consider. Fuelled by the changes that have occurred throughout the sector and also arguably as the result of the imposition of fees positions debates around students as customer/consumers who therefore need choice, which feeds the competitive marketplace exponentially are rife (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004; Johnson and Deem, 2003). This competitive marketplace impacts on price, quality and products offered by universities and as a result the most important decision is not (only) the skills and knowledge that will be developed by the student. Deem and Brehony (2005) agree and discuss research by Trowler (1998) who quotes a university head of department articulating the impact of this within universities;

> *"We talk about this as an educational business and we don't talk about courses in a sense, we talk about products which we have to sell to students and to industry. Now, that's a cultural shift…the days when you were just delivering to students and they liked it or not have done. You're delivering to clients now. And you've got to deliver on time, to quality or walk away. And if they walk away there's no income and if there's no income there's no business. If there's no business, there's no job"* (Deem and Brehony, 2005, p.228).

This view of delivering a product, which is hugely evaluated, is further compounded by the use of quality audit and satisfaction surveys (such as the national student survey (NSS) and the research excellence framework (REF)). Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) argue these could be viewed as essential to protect 'consumer' interests and act as a review by previous 'consumers' regarding the 'product'. However, this increased expectation to cater to the needs of students, as the central or in some cases only concern, particularly in an effort to climb league tables can be seen to negatively affect the culture of universities (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004). Nevertheless, students as consumers often fail to take responsibility for their own learning and therefore effectively undermines

the ideology surrounding learning within higher education as a partnership and integrated relationship (Osborne, 2017b) and replacing it is the commonly accepted idea of the student and academic with potentially oppositional interests (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004). Hence, this has fuelled the resistance surrounding the view of the student as consumer (Johnson and Deem, 2003). There needs to be an acknowledgement of the responsibility to care for the pastoral needs of students/customers and involve them in decision making rather than members of the academic community and therefore they should not be viewed in a purely consumer light (Johnson and Deem, 2003). Arguably, therefore when adopting a short-term view such as viewing students via a consumer lens, Osborne *et al.* (2015) underline individuals may not be able to give the same quality if resources are continually impacted to make short-term savings. Osborne *et al.* (2015) discuss the movement toward a partnership and co-production in service delivery which can be seen to follow the development of NPM to NPG and effectively a move towards alternative theories of public administration (Bao *et al.*, 2012). Although Deem and Brehony (2005) and Johnson and Deem (2003) suggest they have been greatly resisted by the manager-academic of higher education institutions. However, Osborne (2017b) reaffirms the movement toward the idea of value co-creation, which underlines the importance of individuals placing value on the public service offered and suggests this can be vital within institutions who are providing a service. Perhaps the historical resistance stems from the 'customer' connotations which Deem and Brehony (2005) suggest lie within labelling students as customers. Arguably, if students are viewed as customers, with education viewed as a service, following Osborne's (2017b) logic that value stems from the perceptions and experiences of the individual receiving the service this underlines the importance of viewing students as stakeholders. Consequently, how institutional leaders manage their expectations must be a core consideration of the HEIs.

2.4 Leadership within HEIs

A key consideration of the HE sector and the underpinning aspect of this research is leadership within HEIs which will now be explored.

"Alongside the changes described above, and the associated drive for

transformation of universities and higher education more widely, there has been a rapid expansion of interest in the role of leadership and leaders, in effecting such changes" (Bolden et al., 2012, p.8).

It is important to highlight the context of leadership within higher education as being one which is rarely strived for, as Rowley and Sherman (2003) state *"many faculty members end up in both managerial and leadership roles without ever having aspired to them"* (p.1058).

Rowley and Sherman (2003, p.1059) also highlight the differences between departmental leadership and that at the [department], school and university levels and importantly the way in which leadership is viewed and exercised which is a crucial consideration within leadership in higher education institutions. The authors (Rowley and Sherman, 2003) identify these as;

1. *Department level (head of) – which may well be temporary and rotating – attention to leadership is limited and seen as something you have to do*

2. *School (Dean) – who may willing give up all teaching and research responsibilities to become a full-time administrator – attention to leadership is more managerial/professional in nature*

3. *University (Principal or Vice Chancellor) – typically moved up the hierarchy of administrative positions and dedicated to this side of academia – attention to leadership synonymous to senior leaders of a private organisation*

Following on from an exploration of public services and management within this sector Osborne (2010, p. 414) proposes an exploratory model (see Table 4) which aims to highlight the managerial action required in each policy and service regime, namely PA, NPM and NPG.

Table 4: An exploratory model of the interaction of public policy implementation and public services delivery regimes and managerial practice

Policy and service regmine	Focus of managerial action		
	Policy	**Organisation**	**Environment**
Public Administration	Street-level bureaucracy	Professional practice	Political management
New public management	"costs of democracy"	Organisational performance	Competitive market behaviour

New public governance	Stakeholder management	Boundary spanning and boundary maintenance	Sustainable public policy and services

Source: Osborne (2010, p.414)

Within this table, Osborne (2010) highlights that within the NPG framework sustainable public policy and services is the aim and therefore the role leaders play within this is vital and needs to be a key consideration for all within the sector.

Public governance applies to both the sector and policy making organisations along with institutions governing bodies (typically the court or senate) and also arguably to the senior institutional leader, the Vice Chancellor of the HEI. Drumaux and Joyce (2018) posit;

> *"The role of public sector leaders in relation to public governance appears to us to be a really important topic for both now and the immediate future. The challenges of leadership in Europe's public governance institutions are numerous and include the importance of long-term thinking, the importance of selectivity when setting goals and priorities, and the importance of interaction between government and civil society (including citizens)"*
> *(Drumaux and Joyce, 2018, p.136)*

This illustrates the importance of ensuring such bodies and leaders are facing challenges which align with sustainability challenges in that the institution or organisation must extend beyond a singular focus and rather balance between short and long-term objectives, consider impacts on stakeholders and ensure they are preparing for the future whilst not depleting resources. Farrell, Morris and Ranson (2017) emphasise *"the concept of accountability is central to public service organisations"* (p.215) with a range of types of accountability to different stakeholders (within HEIs this could include funders, students, businesses etc.) which may at times have conflicting demands.

The ability to be accountable and to respond to demands however is determined by the ability to work within current policies or strategies. Arguably there this can only be reactive, as they are accountable to these policies and can only be proactive in being reactive by writing new policies to deal with demands as if that policy has not been written then they cannot respond (von Prondzynski, 2012).

Osborne *et al*. (2015) agree with this and further the work of Osborne (2010) by exploring sustainability for public sector organisations, and argue considerations must be undertaken on a number of levels, from the individual to societal and environmental sustainability of the communities they work within. As the seminal authors of sustainable leadership approaches argue this sentiment is at the core of sustainable leadership which begin with the organisation then also impacts the sector (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Therefore as Diefenbach (2009) argues

> *"…the idea of leadership and a new corporate culture puts the final touch on the new type of public sector organisation as portrayed by the NPM concept" (Diefenbach, 2009, p.903)*

However, Pollitt (1990) argues this cannot just be lip service and rather must be brought to life by institutions. Van der Voet, Kuipes and Groeneveld (2015) emphasise implementing and managing change within public organisations requires the essential role of leaders, beginning with senior institutional leaders but extending to leaders throughout the institution who will act as role models and share communication to encourage commitment to change. There are a number of underlying challenges which face leaders of higher education institutions, particularly around creating efficiencies (and dealing with time management and pressures) and ensuring effectiveness (and achieving an effective balance between quality control and associated balancing of expectations) which are crucial in all public sector organisations (Osborne, 2009).

The introduction of quality control and quality reviews of the 1980s has caused significant tensions throughout public sector (Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004). This is echoed within the debates of viewing the student as a consumer but it also has wider implications for leaders of higher education institutions to reach benchmarks, fit within league tables and ultimately ensure they are not identified as 'poor' performers (Chandler *et al*., 2002). The ramifications of the quality controls which have now been in place for a number of decades are listed by Chandler *et al*. (2002, p.1055) as;

I. *A compelling explanation for increasing levels of stress within universities*

II. *Rise of a new managerialism which focuses on becoming the overseer or regulator as professional autonomy comes under scrutiny and competitive pressure*

Osborne (2010) poses 'a sustainability question' highlighting how in order to embrace sustainability, public sector leadership needs to take a more sophisticated approach to management. Jones *et al*. (2012) therefore argue;

> *"…for universities to build sustainable leadership a new, more participative and collaborative approach to leadership is needed that acknowledges the individual autonomy that underpins creative and innovative thinking". (Jones et al., 2012, p.68)*

Dumaux and Joyce (2018) highlight public sector leadership has undergone a number of developments surrounding the leader and follower however these developments have been diverse and have not followed a precise or linear development track. Further the authors highlight complex challenges leaders face which require different approaches than were historically required. Osborne *et al*. (2015) when implementing sustainability considerations also underlined the need for leaders to adopt multiple stakeholder views extended beyond the singular bottom line performance. Dieck-Assad (2013) corresponds with this and suggests leaders who contribute globally are increasingly required. Therefore, this need for leaders to respond to challenges and balance demands whilst maintaining and enhancing the leaders relationships with stakeholders builds towards this research's exploration of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE.

2.5 Summary of Higher Education Sector Chapter

Increasing demands and challenges have been placed on leaders throughout public sector organisations, including Scottish Higher Education. Historical changes related to public administration, new public management and new public governance have instigated a range of developments throughout the sector. Private sector management practices are increasingly being implemented in public sector organisations which can cause significant tensions, particularly within HEIs. Within NPM there are a range of contradictions (Greener, 2013) that are vital to acknowledge and which have caused a development towards NPG. A partnership approach aimed at creating value by adopting stakeholder considerations along multiple 'orientations' (Diefenbach, 2009) leaders can adopt is important.

Consequently, expectations of leaders have changed and developed with a number of considerations crucial for leaders in HE which centre around the HE context, HEIs and people, within which are a number of demands. The wider context of Brexit and globalisation is an uncertain and challenging time for society and HEIs. However expansion in HE via globalisation and mass participation have resulted in a number of challenges for individuals in HEIs, particularly around balancing demands. Bolden *et al*. (2012) consequently argued increased interest in leadership has resulted with Osborne *et al*. (2015) underlining the importance of making decisions based on long-term strategic objectives of the HEI; rather than short-term savings. Nevertheless short-term decisions have been made and private sector influences have fuelled the 'student as customer' receiving a product debate. A range of authors highlighted how 'business like' management practices have been adopted throughout HIEs. However in a similar shift advocated by NPG, a partnership approach within the sector is advocated as a key means to overcome negative connotations of a transactional approach between institutions and students.

Therefore how leaders guide and manage within HEIs is growing in importance to ensure institutions can overcome challenges posed by the changing sector whilst also ensuring academics and professional services staff within institutions can equally manage and balance demands placed on them to ensure they are sustainable.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Sustainable leadership as a concept is still in infancy with literature only dating back a decade (Lambert, 2012; Peterlin *et al.*, 2015). Sustainable leadership has developed from the acknowledgement that the longstanding 'business as usual' mind-sets are unsustainable in creating effective and sustainable economic conditions (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Tideman, Arts and Zandee, 2013). Simmons (2004) suggests a hard focus on financial measures and enhancing shareholder success has diminished within organisations as 'new rules' surrounding social responsibility and corporate governance increase in importance. There has been promotion and debates of a desperate need for a new focus of leadership within organisations (Hewison and Griffiths, 2004; Middlebrooks, Miltenberger, Tweedy, Newman and Follman, 2009; Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Crews, 2010; du Toit *et al.,* 2011; Edmonstone, 2011). As Young and Thyil (2008) state

> *"Empirically, there is a dearth of research that encapsulates the full spectrum of reasons and actions contributing to the crisis that corporations are finding themselves in" (Young and Thyil, 2008, p.95).*

As a result, arguments suggest organisations need to stop considering leadership as a control function (Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Crews, 2010) and instead focus on dialogue and the idea of mutual-interdependency between leaders and their followers (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011a; Barr and Dowding, 2012). Within leadership literature, stakeholder approaches (Groves and LaRocca, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011a); discourses underlining the importance of relationship between leaders and followers (Barr and Dowding, 2012); and discussions about the need to develop reflexive and participative leadership models (Kopp and Martinuzzi, 2013) have become prominent which has given rise to sustainable leadership. The current challenge for organisational leaders is to guide their organisations through these tough economic times towards a sustainable future (McCann and Holt, 2010; Pernecky, 2015) while doing so with a high consideration of the stakeholders of the business. In recent years, ethical dimensions of leadership have increased as scandals in business have become more widespread, whilst

confidence in leaders has decreased (Brown, Trevino and Harrison, 2005; De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008; Kalshoven, Den Hartog and De Hoogh 2011; Yulk, 2013). As a result leadership literature has started to recognise the importance of ethical behaviours (Brown and Trevino, 2006) along with a balance of achieving endurance for the best outcome of organisations.

> "By adopting sustainability principles, businesses can become more profitable and sustain their activities over the long term" (Szekely and Knirsch, 2005, p.629).

The concept of sustainable leadership builds on the importance and impacts of sustainability practices and advocates that organisations should shift emphasis from a traditional singular focus on finances, to a view that organisations are contributors to wider environmental and social influences that exist (Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Crews, 2010; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011a).

This aim of this chapter is to explore literature surrounding the concept of sustainable leadership. Initially the origins of sustainability will be explored, which will identify the underpinning principles of sustainable leadership and analyse sustainability as a hybrid concept of underpinning practices which will impact organisations, then going onto explore academic viewpoints surrounding leadership within organisations. This results in a deliberation of what sustainable leadership is and an assessment of the overarching themes to be derived from the sustainable leadership frameworks. By exploring these themes individually in depth will allow an evaluation of the concept along with its impacts and importance within organisations before applying this to HE.

3.2 Underpinning concepts

3.2.1 Sustainability, a hybrid and contested concept of differing practices

Sustainability as a concept has emerged as a fusion of different elements such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate governance (CG) which have given rise to the focus on sustainable practices and the principles of sustainability embedded throughout organisations. This has become *"the strategic imperative of the new millennium"* (Galpin, Whittington and Bell, 2015, p.1). Sustainability can mean a range

of things, currently there are over 400 definitions (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011), although to date there is no singular definition of the concept, the most accepted and referenced definition comes from 'The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development' (1987);

> *"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (The Brundtland Report, 1987, p.41)*

This definition allows a sense of flexibility and ultimately a number of authors have argued there are a range of meanings associated with sustainability (Middlebrooks *et al.*, 2009) with many viewing it as a *"desirable ideal and elusive phenomena"* (Ilisko and Badyanova, 2014, p.46). Further as Galpin *et al.* (2015) state;

> *"There is an ever expanding volume of literature underscoring the importance of sustainability to organisations and its positive impact on performance" (Galpin et al., 2015, p.1).*

Nevertheless it does have its critics, Crews (2010) argues many view it as simply the latest buzzword with a fashionable aspect to labelling principles. However arguably *"Sustainability is here to stay"* (Galpin and Whittington, 2012, p.40) and is building momentum, becoming increasingly important for communities surrounding organisations along with enhanced business success (Galpin *et al.,* 2015; Middlebrooks et al., 2009). This is due to the lasting impact of embracing and encouraging this mind-set and principles can have throughout organisations. Lubin and Esty (2010) take this further and stress the strategic importance and role of senior leaders in embedding sustainability strategies to ensure organisations are not "*flailing around, launching a hodgepodge of initiatives without any overarching vision or plan"* (p.44). Additionally Garavan, Heraty, Rock and Dalton (2010) argue that successful sustainability initiatives and programmes depend on enlightened employee management and leadership.

3.2.2 The triple bottom line

Kopp and Martinuzzi (2003) also discuss the Bruntland Reports views and emphasise the ability to endure means that individuals and organisations must *"protect resources for the needs of future generations"* (p.193). To do so prominence on a focus in balancing economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects/outcomes in crucial for

organisations to endure (Florea, Cheung and Herndon, 2013; Theyel and Hofmann, 2012). Elkington (1994) coined the concept of the triple bottom line (TBL) which encompasses the three elements and aligns with the Brundtland Report's proposition that development which does not harm is of utmost importance. Kopp and Martinuzzi (2003), Hind, Wilson and Lenssen (2009), and Szekely and Knirsch (2005) adopt Elkington's theory when discussing sustainability as they all mention organisations integrating their economic, social and environmental objectives into business strategies. As Florea, Cheung and Herndon (2013) state;

> *"…a comprehensive approach to organisational sustainability should take into consideration all three sustainability dimensions – economic prosperity, environmental integrity and social sustainability" (Florea, Cheung and Herndon, 2013, p.394).*

This underlines the crucial importance that these interrelated aspects play in securing a sustainable organisation and the durability of the organisation. Siebenhuner and Arnold (2007) emphasise sustainability is an integrated approach to achieve a range of initiatives. Freeman and Hasnaoui (2011) suggest challenging the assumption that all a business aims to do is make money, which CSR begins to do but ultimately stress expanding considerations, to things such as the TBL, must be a central foci of leaders. Further, Middlebrooks *et al*. (2009) underline the importance of enhanced measures of organisational value and success must extend beyond the shareholder foci.

Business cases for sustainable practices therefore underline the role of leaders whilst also advocating the strong successful correlation the practices have with the TBL due to the foci on the social, environmental and economic benefits (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). Henriques and Richardson (2004) argue that it is essential to recognise the interrelationships between the different concepts in the TBL. Bratton and Gold (2012) agree on the interrelationships and also discuss the idea of cultural goals having an influence within organisations, underlining the multi-faceted approach within organisations. Simmons (2004) also mentions TBL considerations and discusses a shift to the post-managerialist era whilst emphasising;

> *"…effective governance can be reconciled with corporate social responsibility, and that incorporating stakeholder views in decision-making processes enhances organisation performance and reputation" (Simmons, 2004, p.601)*

3.2.3 Corporate social responsibility

A hard focus on financial measures and enhancing stakeholder success has diminished within organisations as 'new rules' surrounding CSR and CG increase in significance (Simmons, 2004). Martin, Farndale, Paauwe and Stiles (2016) highlight that CG helps to ensure the TBL domains can be achieved effectively within organisations and discuss the role that boards play in ensuring CG is embedded successfully. Matei and Drumasu (2015) suggest that the importance of CG lies in how it underpins the overarching approach of leaders within organisations which is demonstrated via its definition which they suggest is;

> *"The way in which an organisation is led and controlled, with the purpose of getting performance/accomplishing its responsibilities successfully and bringing added value, as well as using financial, human, material and informational resources efficiently while respecting the rights and obligations of all involved parties" (Matei and Drumasu, 2015, p.497)*

This shift in leaders' focus to ensure resources are being used effectively and all stakeholders are considered emphasises the rising importance concepts related to sustainability have throughout organisations (Matei and Drumasu, 2015; Galpin and Whittington, 2012; Middlebrooks et al., 2009). Therefore sustainability's underpinning philosophy is becoming more appealing and essential to organisations in enhancing financial return, customer satisfaction and product retention whilst also contributing to doing the 'right' things for the community of stakeholders associated with the organisation (Gapin et al., 2015; Matei and Drumasu, 2015). Lin-Hi and Muller (2013) discuss the idea of 'doing the right thing' at length when considering the importance of sustainability and suggest the voluntary nature of CSR centres around organisations recognising the need to 'do good'. Equally they suggest that when avoiding corporate social irresponsibility it is vital for leaders to 'avoid bad' but labelling this as 'doing good' seems to be more attractive in demonstrating social responsibility. However many argue that aspects such as CSR practices are simply organisations undertaking marketing ploys and paying lip service to the fundamentals (Bratton and Gold, 2012). Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) suggest tensions may lie between existing organisational culture centred around stability and control versus flexibility and curiosity, as these would be central to achieving sustainability objectives. Du, Swaen, Lindgreen and Sen (2013) agree that

organisational circumstances can have a major influence, therefore have highlighted the need for further research on the external and internal institutional factors that shape CSR activities. The authors discuss the role of leaders in ensuring CSR is embedded within the organisation and the need for leaders to exhibit responsible leadership traits. Ultimately they found that arguably the *"dampening effect of transformational leadership on the organisational outcomes of CSR indicates that…by itself, it seems to detract from CSR's ability to create value for the firm"* (Du, Swaen, Lindgreen and Sen, 2013, p. 165). Lin-Hi and Muller (2013) agree that the CSR strategy must be tailored to the specifics of the organisation in order to have the most meaningful impact, ensure organisations are 'doing good' and that ultimately they are sustainable.

3.2.4 Leadership responsibilities in embedding sustainability

The way in which organisations manage their strategies and embed practices is crucial, as are the ethical responsibilities and behaviour adopted by people throughout the organisation (from front-line to senior managers) but also that they are considering all stakeholders. Young and Thyil (2008) discuss Francis and Armstrong's (2003) research which emphasises the impact this can have by stating;

> *"such an approach contributes to stakeholders' quality of life and leads to increasing profits, reducing fraud, avoiding litigation and ensuring a healthy and safe working environment" (Francis and Armstrong, 2003, cited in Young and Thyil, 2008, p.100).*

Therefore following on from the stakeholder focus of CG (Matei and Drumasu, 2015) this is evident in other sustainability initiatives. Carroll's (1999) four-part model (the most established model for CSR) argues organisations must adopt responsibilities on a number of levels and consider the impact each level could have (Freeman and Hasnaoui, 2011) as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Carroll's Four Part Model of CSR
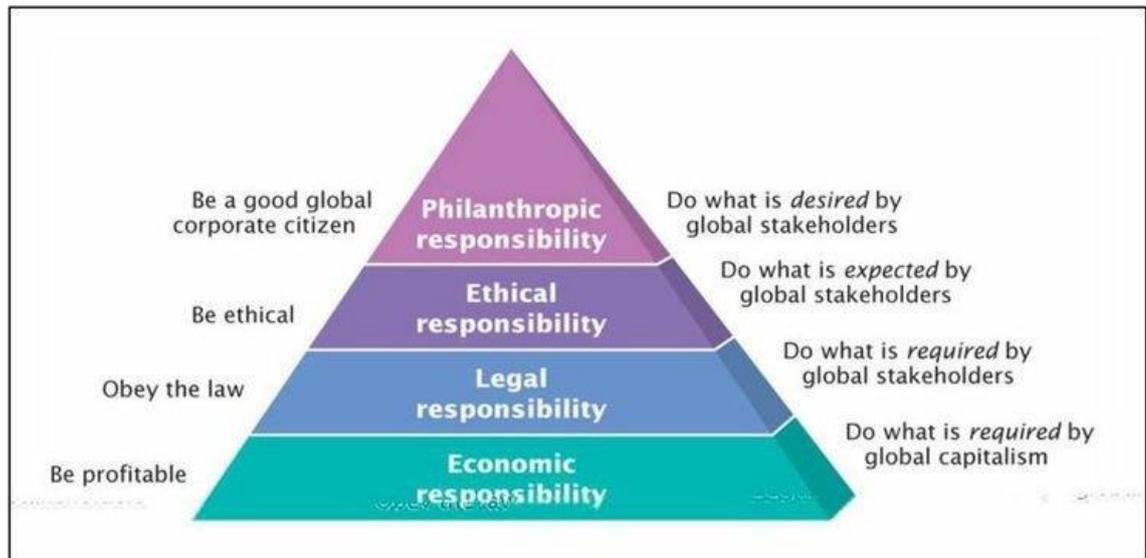
<div align="right">Adapted from: Carroll (1999)</div>

Carroll's model posits a range of responsibilities, rationales and stakeholder considerations with the upper levels representing the voluntary nature of CSR. Therefore although there are different responsibilities and frameworks, on multilevel and multidisciplinary levels (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012) presented throughout literature, Szekely and Knirsch (2005) argue that;

> *"sustainability for businesses, involves sustaining and expanding economic growth, shareholder value, prestige, corporate reputation, customer relationships, and … also adopting and pursuing ethical business practices, creating sustainable jobs, building value for all the company's stakeholders and attending to the needs of the underserved" (Szekely and Knirsch, 2005, p.628)*

Additionally, Vox Global (2012) highlight sustainability can be interpreted in many different ways and often it is implemented for a variety of reasons and not all with ethical underpinnings; some do so to improve their branding and image strategies; others as a vital ingredient in cost cutting; or to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Only a limited number of organisations are implementing these practices into their value statements and undertaking them for specific ethical reasons such as to make a difference within their communities (Galpin and Whittington, 2012). If management teams implement these practices for the wrong reasons or fail to connect sustainability to business strategy they will often fail in their sustainability initiatives

(Porter and Kramer, 2006). However it is imperative to acknowledge the challenges that surround the implementation of a successful sustainability strategy (Galpin *et al.,* 2015). Arguably the impact of such practices accentuates the need to ensure they are embedded thoroughly throughout organisations. Young and Thyil (2008) underline the most important element of such activities is their need to be directed towards meeting the needs of stakeholders. Simmons (2004) agrees and extends this ideology to discuss the multi-level responsibilities which are a crucial element in achieving and maintaining the practices within the organisation.

The ideology of the relationship between leader-follower and organisation-stakeholder are viewed as crucial components for effective CG and ethical responsibilities of the organisation due to the important role the follower plays in implementation. Stuart (2013) and Lubin and Esty (2010) emphasise leaders are responsible for developing shared sustainability goals and ultimately senior leaders are responsible for aligning sustainability strategies and practices with the organisational strategy. Verheul and Schaap (2010) highlight that there is an interdependency and reciprocal relationship between the leader and follower that is crucial. When considering this relationship the role of the leader is crucial to achieve sustainable outcomes and achievements. Further Metcalf and Benn (2013) suggest the complex nature of building towards effective sustainability requires *"…leaders of extraordinary abilities"* (p.370) as they play pivotal roles in achieving such objectives. Aligned with this, the principles of corporate governance emphasise the ethical responsibilities leaders possess are critical in ultimately adding to organisational sustainability. CG is therefore becoming essential for organisation success, nevertheless this culture and attitude shift in the organisation plus leader's competence must be aligned with the practices of sustainability and sustainable leadership (Young and Thyil, 2008; Ilisko and Badyanova, 2014). Stuart (2013) considers Nidumolu, Prahalad and Rangaswami's (2009) argument that *"leadership is critical in helping organisations become sustainable" (p.794).*

3.2.5 Implementing sustainability within organisations

As demonstrated, within the origins of sustainability there are a number of crucial underpinnings to consider with leaders playing a prominent role in their effectiveness.

However, there are a number of contested arguments surrounding the implementation of practices. Arguably the contextual nature of organisations and the difficulties in embedding changes can lead to issues between rhetoric versus reality, as is seen in NPM especially (Verschuere, 2009) where policy directs or suggests one approach but is practically implemented differently. Consequently little change may be enacted as leaders implement the minimums of sustainability although a new rhetoric and lip service around the greater good is implemented to attract stakeholders. Makipere and Yip (2008) discuss that often the lack of full implementation is due to the pressure on organisations, the four principal factors contributing to this pressure include;

> *"(1) the nature of an industry's product, (2) the level of an industry's energy and resource consumption, (3) the criticality of human capital for an industry's success and (4) the size of the company within an industry"*
> *(Makipere and Yip, 2008, p.67)*

Therefore although the organisation may work toward sustainability, Lueneburger and Goleman (2010) emphasise it must be weaved into and integrated into all organisational practices and principles, plus incorporate both short- and long-term goals whilst being a long-term undertaking (Szekely and Knirsch, 2005). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) outline five action points for achieving sustainability in practice; Activism, Vigilance, Patience, Transparency and Design. These action points ensure that sustainability is integrated successfully throughout organisations, they also emphasise that long-term success is vital as is the planning and communication of the strategy. It can be argued they aid in the achievement of the underpinning elements of sustainability by ensuring all practices are up-to-date and are integrated effectively throughout the organisation, hence allowing it to endure (Galpin *et al.*, 2015).

> *"To enhance their corporate sustainability, however, leaders need to learn to understand and manage the sustainability drivers and barriers that impact both their sectors and their companies." (Makipere and Yip, 2008, p.67)*

Ensuring sustainability elements are integrated throughout the organisation can arguably motivate employees and encourage them to display discretionary behaviour as their performance objectives and personal values align (Galpin, Whittington and Bell, 2015; Morsing and Oswald, 2009) whilst also enhancing reputation and revenue of the organisation (Galpin and Whittington, 2012). However Porter and Kramer (2006) posit

that in many cases organisations attempt to implement sustainability practices and the reality becomes a mess of practices that do not link to the organisations mission or values and often they are simply paying lip service to this cause (Szekely and Knirsch, 2005). Galpin *et al.,* (2015) highlight that to ensure an organisation is able to embed a successful sustainability strategy they must alter their organisational culture to ensure that it extends throughout the organisation. As a result, true leadership can be seen as a critical success element of sustainability and sustainable practices within an organisation (Szekely and Knirsh, 2005). Epstein and Buhovac (2010) discuss 'The Epstein Corporate Sustainability Model', emphasising leadership as the core of the model. The model (demonstrated in Figure 4) illustrates that inputs related to the context of the organisation and processes of leadership and sustainability strategies, structure and processes and key for success.

Figure 4: The Epstein Corporate Sustainability Model
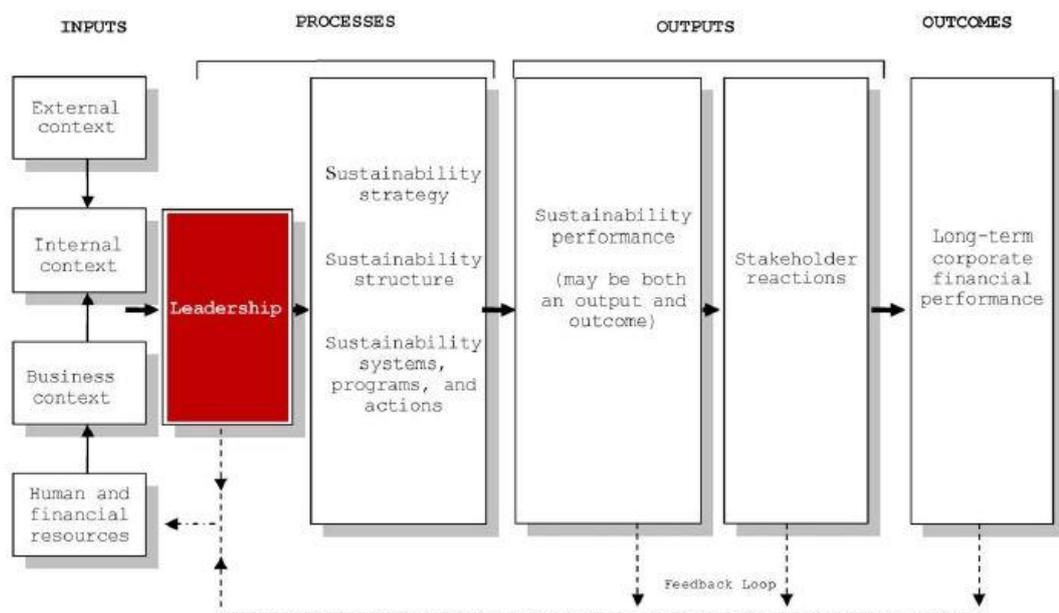
Source: Epstein and Buhovac (2010, p.307)

The crucial role of the leader is emphasised the model which act as a key link and determinant between the inputs and processes (Stuart, 2013). As Epstein and Buhavoc (2010) argue, *"the role of committed leadership can never be overstated"* (p.307). Young and Thyil (2008) agree and suggest that senior leadership, in particular the board, plays a crucial role in embedding an effective sustainability culture within the organisation.

Culture is a determinant of good governance and Cutting and Kouzmin (2000) argue that it is the boards' role to ensure the culture is effective. They go onto discuss *"the processes of the board (and the corporation) should be encouraging the development of a greater understanding of their reality and stimulating the creation of new knowledge" (Young and Thyil, 2008, p.98).* Kemp (2006) also highlights that numerous stakeholders (including employees and regulatory agencies) have a heightened level of expectation surrounding the role of the board in implementing new policies. Holloway and van Rhyn (2005) further this discussion and argue that a healthy boardroom culture *"is the most critical of the additional elements needed to ensure that good governance practice is translated into 'better' organisational performance" (p.313).* Embedding effective governance, trust and candour within the organisation is crucial and sustainability processes and practices can enable and ensure these are achieved, whilst the board acts as the role model for these practices (Holloway and van Rhyn, 2005).

The sustainability initiatives and practices undertaken by an organisation can follow a number of principles, Fenwick (2007, p.634) proposes that from environmental and corporate social responsibility literature there are four prominent themes present throughout the principles of organisational sustainability which are;

1. *An attitude which involves a sense of personal **ethical responsibility** for restoring healthier communities and eco-systems*

2. *The action of implementing practices of **renewal** or involving minimal resources and waste in production and life activity*

3. *The action of **interconnectivity** or acting with awareness of one's relatedness to others in local, global and biological webs and the impact of one's actions on them*

4. *The action of promoting **local well-being***

These themes of organisational sustainability have received a lot of attention throughout organisations (Pernecky and Luck, 2013) however as Pernecky (2015) highlights *"inquiries into social and cultural sustainability, for example, are still lagging behind." (p.110).*

Regardless of the fact that these aspects of sustainability are lagging behind organisational sustainability, it can be argued that any type of sustainability can only take place when there is a leader who champions the approach, as without effective leadership, sustainability approaches will ultimately fail (Szekely and Knirsch, 2005). Sustainability is predominantly successful when the principles championed by leaders and adopted throughout the organisation (Galpin *et al.*, 2015; Galpin and Whittington, 2012). Stuart (2013) argues that to develop sustainability on a corporate level, *"leaders have to abandon a purely economically driven paradigm and achieve a more balanced set of socially and environmentally responsible values" (p.797).* Arguably, values exhibited by leaders can have a huge impact on the successful implementation and communication of the strategy therefore, *"leaders of an organisation play a key role in deciding how sustainability will be implemented within an organisation"* (Stuart, 2013, p.796). Fenwick (2007) corresponds with the importance of the role of leaders but highlights;

> *"Leaders alone will not convert attitudes to this commitment but a focus on learning can help foster understanding and active participation in sustainable practices within and among work organisations"(Fenwick, 2007, p.643)*

Szekely and Knirsch (2005, p.631) reinforce these aspects, however they propose critical success factors to achieve sustainability, which include but also extends beyond leadership; as demonstrated and considered in Table 5.

Table 5: Critical success factors to achieve sustainability

Success Factor	Description	Implications
Leadership and vision (which they term as the most critical)	*"Key top managerial staff must be committed to this objective, and companies must ensure that sustainability values and vision are not only integrated into business strategy, policies and culture but also communicated to all employees"*	1. Transparency 2. Leader is a role model for adoption 3. Consistency and commitment from leaders with full adoption of management practices
Flexibility to change	*"Adopting a sustainability approach involves continuous effort, investment and adaption…Companies that*	1. Continuous effort, investment and adaption

	implement successful sustainable development programmes view it as a strategic issue"	2. Aligned and adopted in overall business strategy 3. Seen as a strategic issue by senior leaders
Openness: Stakeholder engagement	*"Stakeholder engagement means more than just entering into dialogue. It has to produce real learning effects that lead to product and process improvement or innovation"*	1. Shared understanding 2. Engagement with internal and external stakeholders on a long-term basis

Adapted from: Szekely and Knirsch (2005)

Considering how these success factors are implemented is critical. Galpin and Whittington (2012) argue an engaged workforce is essential in ensuring sustainability practices are successful within organisations as when they are engaged they champion it and take ownership of the initiatives. Van Marrewijk and Were (2003) emphasise that corporate sustainability must be related to the values, vision and context of the organisation, therefore a once-size-fits-all approach does not work. Rather leaders must encourage and foster this engagement in the best way for their organisation, consequently Szekely and Knirsch (2005) propose internal managerial factors that that can help enable this are;

- Assessment of all internal organisational structures and management procedures

- Development and implementation of incentive mechanisms to promote sustainability initiatives and to increase the sustainable performance of companies

- Early identification of potential business opportunities

- Recognition of emerging risks, potential threats and management failures

- Better risk management, lower risk levels

- Improvement in workers' safety and the quality of labour recruitment and retention

Lambert (2011) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006; 2011) postulate that sustainable leadership should honour the past and present in order to develop the future; hence adopt the principles of sustainability. Subsequently, organisations should embrace lessons from the past in order to shape future development which arguably creates this sustainable environment within the organisation (Florea, Cheung and Herndon, 2012). Stoker *et al.* (2019) suggest exploring leadership behaviours that result due to circumstances such as the global financial crisis is imperative.

3.2.6 Leadership: theoretical developments and linkages to sustainability

Leadership is one of the most researched topics of current literature, with a tremendous amount of research surrounding the concept (Zhu, Song, Zhu and Johnson, 2019; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). As there is still no agreed singular definition the concept remains elusive and enigmatic (Dugan, 2017; Armstrong, 2012) with a proliferation of terms surrounding it, there are similar characteristics shared by authors (Zhu *et* al., 2019; Northouse, 2013; Yulk, 2013). Such characteristics include influencing individuals, encouraging achievement of objectives (Yulk, 2013), the ability to persuade, communicate and motivate towards the leaders vision (Armstrong, 2012). At the heart of the leadership concept, no matter the definition of leadership, is arguably the leader and follower relationship. This is due to the fact that;

> *"Leadership is grounded in a relationship. In its simplest form is a tripod – a leader or leaders, followers, and a common goal they want to achieve."*
> *(Bennis and Nanus, 2007, p.3)*

This statement by Bennis and Nanus (2007) emphasises the inter-related aspects that play a dynamic role in the leaders' position and how they interact and lead within organisations. However this ideology although emphasising the inter-links between these entities arguably portrays the leader and follower as cogs in a machine rather than complex entities which many authors stress as reality (Crews, 2010; Groves and LaRocca, 2011). Nevertheless, it stresses fostering, developing and managing stakeholder relationships in order to extract benefits and achieve effective leadership outcomes (Ewen *et al.*, 2013; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Burke, Sims, Lazzara and Salas (2007) take this further and suggest the most effective leader-follower relationships rely on trust which has tremendous benefits;

"Trust has been shown to have influences on processes such as communication, cooperation, and information sharing, satisfaction with and perceived effectiveness of the leader, increased discretionary behaviours, increased upward communication, decreased turnover and improved team and organisational performance/stability" (Burke et al., 2007, p.607)

The leader member exchange (LMX) theory also emphasises trust within the relationship and accentuates the dyadic relationship with all stakeholders, not just some, and the way in which this affects organisational effectiveness and goal achievement (Yulk, 2013). It is the first leadership theory which places the leader-follower relationship as the central concern, and advocates communication as a vital element in leadership (Northouse, 2013). Further, Ferdig (2007) takes a responsibility point of view and argues sustainable leaders act beyond their self-interests based on the relationships they develop. Kalshoven *et al.* (2011) additionally highlights previous research has demonstrated impacts of ethical leadership imply a positive relationship between the leader and employees. They go onto suggest although the research field of sustainable leadership is emerging when discussing Hargreaves and Fink's (2004 and 2006) sustainable leadership ideology suggest ultimately a leaders aim is to develop others, the environment and endurance over time.

Consequently, sustainable leadership further builds on the stakeholder and relationship aspects of the LMX and ethical leadership theory signifying these principles as essential. However one of the biggest concerns and criticisms of LMX is the fact that it is based on a transactional level where the leader is most often a 'manager' and not a 'leader'. This is where the individualism that surrounds the leadership concept (Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2010) can be problematic with a systemic hierarchy often placed upon the title of 'leader'. Where in realty as a number of authors comment leaders can be formally appointed leaders or informal leaders; who are usually employees who exhibit strong leadership techniques and skills but aren't in a leadership position, as Dive (2008) reminds us a CEO or senior leader although important is not the only leader. This gives rise to focusing on leaders through the organisation, which demonstrates the shared approach to leadership, recognises the importance of all leaders (Dive, 2008), and underlines the criticality of relationships (Pearce, 2004). Equally, Metcalf and Benn (2013) underscore this shared approach to leadership, which embraces leaders

throughout the hierarchy of an organisation, can be extremely beneficial in dealing with complex scenarios. Arguably, sharing of responsibility and encouraging others to take on leadership opportunities is re-shaping expectations of leadership practices whilst also proposing a movement towards a situational, discursive style of leadership (Crevani *et al.*, 2010). Further recognising leadership transcends one individual and is a 'collective activity', considering the social interactions and relationships is key (Crevani *et al*., 2010).

These aspects demonstrate changes in leadership theory and approaches, which a number of authors discuss to illustrate the evolution of leadership literature, Zhu, Song, Zhu and Johnson (2019) especially explore such evolution. They undertake a bibliometric analysis of leadership articles between 1990 and 2017 (within certain areas) and found that the shift towards value based leadership theories has been strong with the focus on transformational leadership, as expected. A time zone visualisation is depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Zhu, *et al.*'s (2019) Time zone visualisation of leadership-related keywords in leadership research during 1990-2017
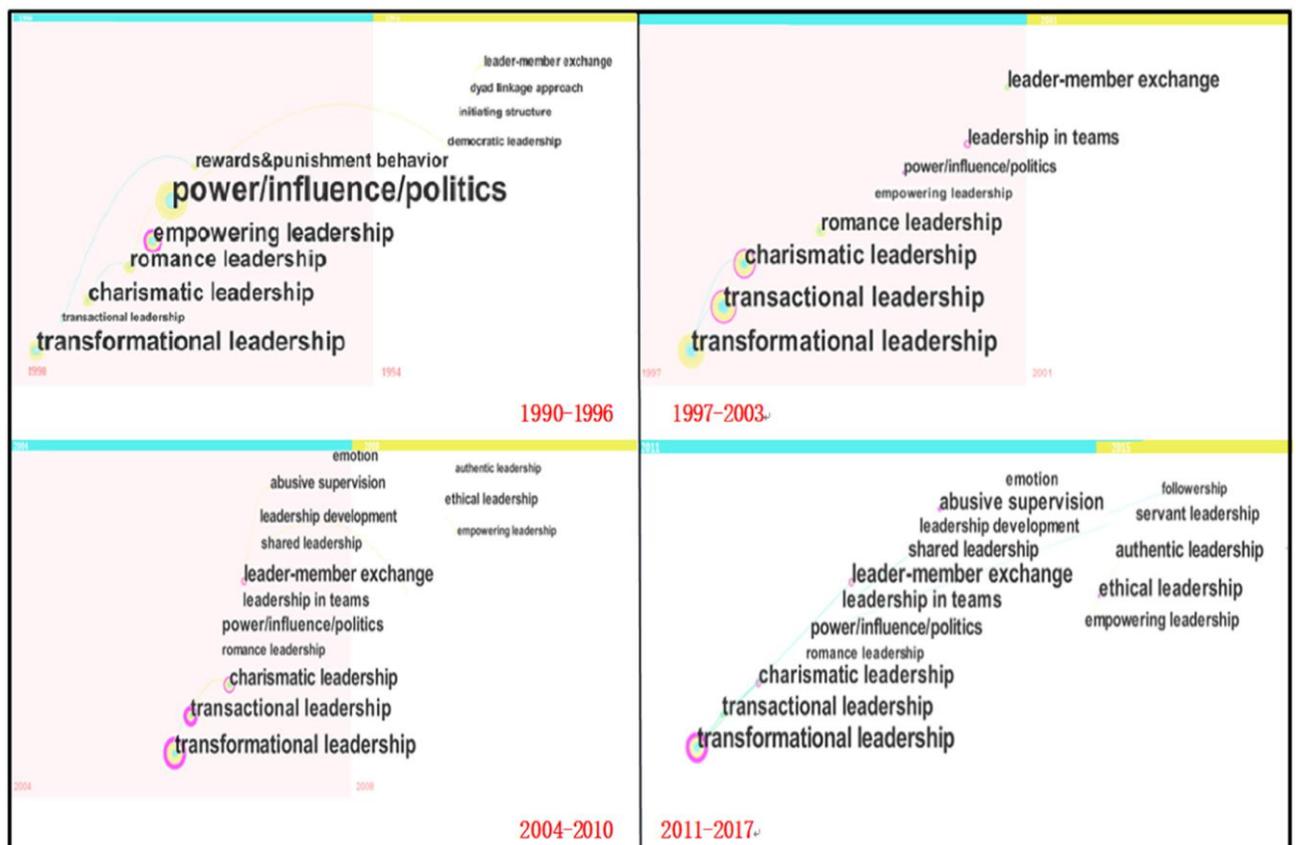
Source: Zhu *et al.* (2019, p.225)

This visual representation of leadership articles is interesting in that it shows the development of the surrounding literature, the increase in variety of areas of leadership, the trends which show a growth in more value based leadership (such as ethical, authentic leadership etc.) among other things. With that said, current literature portrays a move towards this idea of a focus on situational and context specific leadership approaches, versus a generic ideal of leadership (Yulk, 2013). Implicit leadership has become more prevalent in current organisations as a result of this move towards very contextual, situational approaches to leadership. Nichols and Erakovich (2013) confirm that every individual has their own thoughts and beliefs surrounding leadership and how leaders should behave; therefore highlight that someone's implicit leadership theory signifies their ideal of leadership. Subrananiam, Othman and Sambasivan (2010) also discuss differences between an individual's implicit leadership theory and actual leader behaviour. Therefore the effectiveness of leadership within an organisation can be highly impacted by individuals' implicit leadership expectations, resulting in this becoming an exceedingly important consideration of leadership in today's organisations.

> *"In essence, in comparison to other leadership theories that stem from the transformational leadership approach, sustainable leadership is distinguished by pursuing the value of sustainability at the individual, organisational, social and ecological level for both current and future generations" (Peterlin et al., 2015, p.279-280).*

Consequently, leadership literature has naturally evolved and adopted different foci over the years, the most recent developments have seen greater emphasis placed on the leader-follower relationship with trust at the centre (Crevani *et al*., 2010; Burke *et al.*, 2007). As Lee (2017) emphasises sustainable leadership adopts a more 'humanistic' approach to management with a focus on developing employees and leaders within organisations. Sustainable leadership builds on the leader-follower relationship but also draws upon the environmental, social and financial performance of organisations (Johnson, 2011) as originally defined as crucial in the sustainability literature. As a result, leaders will adopt a longer-term view which enables and fosters resilience throughout organisations (Johnson, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Due to the challenging

nature of the HE context exploring sustainable leadership allows a multi-pronged approach to how leaders are able to develop effectively and sustainably within such an environment. Ultimately, sustainable leadership is founded on the belief that organisations can and should develop for the future without harming the present and arguably, *"sustainable improvement depends on successful leadership"* (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p.1). But the reality of ensuring leadership is and can be sustainable depends on a number of inter-dependent concepts rooted in a need to ensure that the underpinnings of sustainability echo throughout with a moral substance at heart.

3.3 Conceptualising Sustainable Leadership

3.3.1 Defining sustainable leadership

There are a number of definitions and frameworks within sustainable leadership literature and McCann and Holt (2010) argue the concept is blurred due to the many definitions. There are a number of authors who discuss practices and elements of sustainable leadership and are referenced throughout avenues of the theory; they are Hargreaves and Fink (2006 and 2011); Davies (2007); Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) and Lambert (2011). In addition, Casserley and Critchley (2010) highlight the importance of having sustainable leaders within organisations. Sustainable leadership has grown in interest, as it is a *"contemporary values-orientated approach to leadership that emphasises leadership as 'being'"* (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015, p.278). Therefore unlike traditional leadership research which focuses on specific skills and attributes, sustainable leadership is dependent on the context and how the leader responds to demands placed upon them (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015). Further Ghosh and Chatterjee (2014) underline a sustainable leadership approach should actively engage with the surrounding environment and develop communities of practice to facilitate good ideas.

As highlighted, the idea of sustainability is established and the literature is expansive with the prominent underpinnings applied to the theory of sustainable leadership. However, as Crews (2010) underlines there are few empirical research studies of sustainable leadership, Sharma (2019) agrees and suggests *"there is a dearth of scholarly work on sustainable leadership as the subject is still evolving" (p.1)*. Nevertheless it is

evident the theory has developed in interest and importance as a result of the fallout of the economic crisis as organisations consider how they can develop for the future, plus as leadership theory has advanced, an ignited interest in alternative views of leadership with context and situations are vital components in today's organisations (Farooq, 2018). For example, the core facet of the relationship between leader and stakeholders along with how a leader responds to situations, deals with demands and interacts with others are seen as pivotal and major differentiating factors of sustainable leadership (Peterlin *et al*., 2015). With this in mind, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) speculate that approaches such as distributed leadership and consequently sustainable leadership both sustain and depend on the leadership of others to achieve enhanced effectiveness within organisations. Crews (2010) corresponds with this idea and as Dive (2008) notes distributed leadership could arguably be one of the foundations of sustainable leadership in practice.

Although the business case for sustainable leadership proposes numerous advantages, Avery and Bergsteiner (2011a) caution some commentators propose it is an idealistic and humanistic approach, historically ignored and by-passed. However current assumptions encompassing leadership must expand beyond its singular pursuit of profit maximisation (see Avery, 2005; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Casserley and Critchley, 2010; and Tuan, 2012). Therefore sustainable leadership foci on achieving sustainability on the individual, organisational, social and ecological level whilst considering all stakeholders (Peterlin *et al*., 2015; Casserley and Critchley, 2011) underlines how it responds to the needs of today's organisations. Martin, *et al.* (2016) discuss the differing core CG logistics signal opposing rhetoric's between shareholder and stakeholder approaches which is often an either or approach. However, the creation of propositions such as sustainability and focusing on the TBL has signalled a shift in business philosophy as either or approaches (Florea, Cheung and Herndon, 2012). Therefore, although a shift is instigated it is difficult to ensure that the concept can be considered on a holistic level as there are *"different pockets of knowledge"* which have not been linked (Pernecky, 2015, p.111). The concept of sustainable leadership is interesting and due to the underpinning notions of sustainability and leadership the role of the concept within organisations is crucial.

This chapter will now evaluate differing frameworks presented on sustainable leadership which will allow a presentation of key themes on these aspects and attempt to understand the holistic picture and nature of the concept of sustainable leadership and its implications for organisations which at the moment literature hasn't undertaken. As Pernecky (2015) contends;

> *"There is a need for more conceptual works, and a broader discourse on sustainable leadership" (Pernecky, 2015, p.110)*

3.3.2 Models and frameworks surrounding sustainable leadership

Sustainable leadership is a contested topic which has been applied in a number of different contexts, arguably

> *"…there is no one 'right' way within the overall sustainable leadership paradigm" (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011b:5)*

Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Davies (2007) and Lambert (2011) all explore the concept of sustainable leadership adopting an organisational level of analysis in the school and further education sector (in the US and UK). Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) adopt an organisational perspective in a number of contexts. Finally, Casserley and Critchley (2010) focus on the development of sustainable leaders from an individual perspective. These authors are cited and referenced by published authors others in the sustainable leadership literature and have therefore been identified as seminal authors of the concept. A range of literature uses the term 'sustainable leadership' however they often do not harmonise with the full meaning of the theory, one example is Kociatkiewicz and Kostera (2012) who discuss 'morally sustainable leadership' and focus on the moral dimension of leadership which explores 'light and dark sides of leadership'. Dalati, Raudeliuniene and Davidaviciene (2017) reflect on the limited levels of empirical research surrounding sustainable leadership, as argued by Crews (2010) and by using the work of the seminal authors discussed in this research explore sustainable leadership, organisational trust and job satisfaction in Higher Education in Syria. However as the scope was wider than this research and as it was based on the seminal authors work the research of Dalati *et al.,* (2017) was not included as a seminal piece of work.

Therefore in order to harmonise and facilitate research on sustainable leadership which recognises different frameworks within literature it is important to present the identified seminal authors definitions, frameworks and perceived similarities in order to develop a conceptual framework which encompasses this literature. Consequently, the theories presented by these five seminal authors are depicted in Table 6 in order to demonstrate the key approaches surrounding sustainable leadership. Gerard, McMillan and D'Annunzio-Green (2017) published the table alongside more focus on each of the seminal authors' frameworks individually to explore each framework in more depth.

Table 6: Sustainable Leadership Frameworks

Author(s) discussing Sustainable Leadership	Casserley and Critchley (2010)	Avery and Bergsteiner (2011)	Hargreaves and Fink (2006)	Davies (2007)	Lambert (2011)
Definitions	"Performance derives from an integration of three core processes: reflecton on action; psychological intelligence; and physiological well-being...it is the integration of these three core processes, followed by their engagement with the culture of the organisation, which constitutes effective leadership development, generates sustainable leaders, and is more likely to create sustainable organisations" (p.290)	"Sustainable leadership requires taking a long term perspective in making decisions; fostering systemic innovation aimed at increasing customer value; developing a skilled, loyal and highly engaged workforce; and offering quality products, services and solutions" (p.5)	"The image of the future places different and more challenging demands on leadership. It now becomes leadership for learning, leadership by learning, and leadership as learning" (2011:19)	"Sustainable leadership can be considered to be made up of the key factors that underpin the longer-term development of the school. It builds a leadership culture based on moral purpose which provides success that is accessible to all" (p.11)	"If sustainable leadership is to have any measureable impact on the organisation, it needs commitment from all elvels of the organistion to create a cultre in which leadership skills can be developed" (p.145)
Framework presented surrounding Sustainable Leadership	1. Reflecton on Action 2. Psychological Intelligence 3. Physiological Well-being 4. Engagement of core processes with the culture of the organisation	**Foundation Practices** 1. Developing people; 2. Labour relations; 3. Retaining staff; 4. Succession planning; 5. Valuing staff; 6. CEO and top team; 7. Ethical Behaviour; 8. Long or short term perspective; 9. Organisational Change; 10. Financial markets orientation; 11. Responsibility for environment; 12. Social Responsiblity (CSR); 13. Stakeholder consideration; 14. Vision's role in the business **Higher Level Practices** 15. Decision making 16. Self-Management 17. Team Orientation 18. Culture 19. Knowledge-sharing and retention 20. Trust **Key Performance Drivers** 21. Innovation 22. Staff Engagement 23. Quality	1. Depth - Sustainable Leadership matters. 2. Length - Sustainable leadership lasts 3. Breadth - Sustainable leadership spreads 4. Justice - sustainable leadership does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment 5. Diversity - Sustainable leadership promotes cohesive diversity 6. Resourcefulness - sustainable leadership develops and does not deplete material and human resources 7. Conservation - sustainable leadership honors and learns from the best of the past to create an even better future	1. Outcomes not just outputs. 2. Balancing short and long term objectives 3. Processes not plans 4. Passion 5. Personal humility and professional will 6. Strategic timing and strategic abandonment 7. Building capacity and creating involvement 8. Development of strategic measures of success	1. Builds capacity of staff 2. Strategic distribution 3. Consolidates 4. Builds long term objectives from short term goals 5. Diversity 6. Conserves
Perspective	Individual perspective - Focus is developing sustainable leaders	Organisational perspective - Adopt a holistic view and believe it is the way in which an organisation is lead that leads to sustainability	Organisational perspective - Emphasise sustainability should be viewed as a meal not a menu	Organisational perspective - Believes that sustainable leadership should be embedded throughout the organisations	Organisational Perspective - Predominantly considers the development of Sustainable Leadership
Research Context	Private Sector - No real empirical research has been completed on sustainable leadership - really developed from the idea of burnout and the development of individuals	Private sector research - exploring the different 'honeybee' and 'locust' organisations - comparing them and producing the pyramid	Education sector (school and further education) - looking at research from both the UK and the US and stems from the idea of principle leadership	Education Sector (further education) - looking at both UK and US	Education Sector (further education) - looking at both UK and US

Source: Gerard, McMillan and D'Annunzio-Green (2017, p.119)

Adapted from: Casserley and Critchley (2010), Avery and Bergsteiner (2011), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Davies (2007) and Lambert (2011).

In order to explore commonalities of the dispersed literature surrounding sustainable leadership, the researcher wanted to display the different theories from identified seminal authors in comparison with one another in order to show the definition they propose, the framework, perspective and research context of the literature. This comparison enables emerging, common themes from the frameworks to facilitate development of a conceptual framework of sustainable leadership which derives from the work of all seminal authors, rather than relying on just one framework as others have done (for example Lambert's 2011 work is derived from Hargreaves and Fink and Davies work).

3.4 Emerging themes and areas for research surrounding sustainable leadership

By understanding and exploring these frameworks of sustainable leadership there are a number of overarching themes to be explored. The underpinning context of leadership has arguably changed significantly with many organisations adopting a longer-term perspective in their development of their people and processes (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015). Leadership should sustain high levels of work performance and positively impact the organisational environment and sustainability (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011a; Casserley and Critchley, 2010). Avery and Bergsteiner (2011b) propose that sustainable leadership is extremely versatile and can be implemented in any organisation, no matter the ownership, size etc. in any country.

There are five key themes originating from commonalities across the frameworks, are discussed in Table 7.

Table 7: Emerging Sustainable Leadership Literature Themes

Theme Identified	Brief Description of theme from literature	Aspect of seminal author's framework
Embedding sustainable leadership throughout	• Integrated in the organisational culture	• Culture (Avery and Bergsteiner – higher level practice)

the organisation	• Adopted as an organisational approach and intertwined with all practices/policies • Embraced and championed by all leaders	• Length – ensuring it extends beyond the individual leader (Hargreaves and Fink) • Process not plans – around dialogue (Davies) and reflection on action (Casserley and Critchley) • Conserving – learning from past and built into culture (Lambert and Hargreaves and Fink)
Inclusivity	• Adopting an inclusive and collegiate approach to working throughout the organisation • People are given the opportunity to learn and develop (via formal and informal development) • Leader acts as a role model and supports staff	• Building capacity of staff (Lambert) • Developing People (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Succession Planning (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Building Capacity and Creating Involvement (Davies) • Importance of continual development (Casserley and Critchley)
Short and long term objectives	• Mutually reinforcing objectives • Attempting to balance demands between short term needs and long term goals • Working towards creating a sustainable long-term view	• Balancing short and long term objectives (Davies) • Long or short term perspective (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Builds long term objectives from short term goals (Lambert) • Avoidance of focusing on the short term (Casserley and Critchley)
Stakeholder considerations	• Involves all stakeholders • Should create a supportive, developmental environment and culture in organisations that benefits all stakeholders • Moves away from singular profit based approach	• Ethical behaviour (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Justice - Improving internal environment and being socially just not selfish (Hargreaves and Fink) • Trust (Avery and Bergsteiner – higher level practice) • Diversity – social inclusion and cohesion (Hargreaves and Fink and Lambert)

		• Conversations - Developing individuals and succession planning
Individual reflexivity	• Encourages individual sustainability • Avoiding burnout of individuals via reflection on action • Developing resilience	• Resourcefulness (Hargreaves and Fink) • Links to burnout foundations (Casserley and Critchley) • Developing People (Avery and Bergsteiner)

Researcher's identification of key themes and links to seminal authors work – Adapted from: Avery and Bergsteiner (2011), Lambert (2011), Casserley and Crtichley (2010), Davies (2007) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006)

Each theme draws upon the research of the seminal authors as demonstrated in the table however they will be explored in more detail in the remainder of this chapter.

3.4.1 Embedding sustainable leadership throughout the organisation

Each framework of sustainable leadership proposed discusses the importance of embedding sustainable leadership throughout the organisation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007; Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Lambert, 2011). Therefore integrating it into the culture of the organisation can help to achieve this and ensure that it becomes the 'norm' in organisations (Ilisko and Badyanova, 2014). Morsing and Oswald (2009) suggest;

> "…that the organisational culture could prove a vital point of investigation to understand how leaders nurture a culture of sustainability" (Morsing and Oswald, 2009, p.96).

However organisational culture must be developed towards principles of sustainable working, although there is debate as to how that can occur because it can be difficult to pinpoint and directly influence organisational culture (Baumgartner, 2009). Schein with Schein (2017) reflect on a dynamic definition of culture and state;

> "The culture of a group can defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaption and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioural norms that come to be

taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness" (Schein and Schein, 2017, chapter 1, para. 16).

Therefore to embed sustainable leadership practices within the organisation, the principles and practices need to be embraced by leaders and integrated throughout the organisation to ensure engagement; as Lueneburger and Goleman (2010) and Szekely and Knirsch (2005) argue is also necessarily for its sustainability underpinnings. Arguably the leader plays a crucial part in this with all stakeholders. Verheul and Schaap (2010) emphasise the relationship and dialogue between leaders and followers is crucial and highlight *"…organisational and political theories hypothesise that leaders play a vital part in forming the identity of their followers" (p.442).* Consequently this must be championed and managed by leaders but must be a *"shared product of shared learning"* (Shein with Shein, 2017). Therefore, although ultimate responsibility lies with individual leaders' who should champion the sustainable leadership strategy (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007), it is imperative that the principles and practices extend beyond just an individual leader (Lambert, 2011). This underlines the important fact that sustainable leadership is characterised by a number of facets that should be present within organisations (Hargreaves and Fink, 2011). Moreover, it should be treated like a meal rather than a menu, where organisations must take a full approach to the concept – not just pick and choose which facets to undertake and expect the full range of advantages available from implementing the concept (Hargreaves and Fink, 2011). Lambert (2011) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006; 2011) highlight that sustainable leadership should adopt the principles of sustainability, honouring the past and present to develop for the future. Hargreaves and Fink (2011) suggest that;

"It now becomes leadership for learning, leadership by learning and leadership as learning" (Hargreaves and Fink, 2011:23)

In order to ensure the future is protected and embedded throughout the organisation the other themes of sustainable leadership become critical.

3.4.2 Inclusivity

Along with embedding the practices throughout the organisation, sustainable leadership authors highlight learning and development should include employees from throughout the organisation rather than just select groups of employees (Davies, 2007;

Lambert, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Building capacity and resourcefulness are elements of concern for sustainable leadership in relation to the way in which opportunities are available for staff throughout the organisation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007; Lambert, 2011). Throughout their research Hargreaves and Fink (2006, 2011) pinpoint sustainable leadership must be embedded throughout to ensure it is embraced by everyone. One way to achieve this, they argue, is to engage in distributed leadership, Dive (2008) corresponds with this and suggests distributed leadership is a *"foundation of sustainable leadership"*. Davies (2007) argues to be effective sustainable leadership must be integrated into all levels and practices of an organisation. Lambert (2011) agrees and suggests a commitment from throughout the organisation is pivotal, therefore he sees it as an all or nothing approach and argues that in order to have successful outcomes sustainable leadership must *"…build a leadership culture based on moral purpose which provides success which is accessible to all"* (p.136).

Leadership development is an area of consideration for many organisations and can be undertaken on an organisational or individual perspective, as Casserley and Critchley (2011) and Lambert (2011) discuss sustainable leadership should develop leadership skills of leaders throughout the organisation on a range of levels. An important consideration is that although sustainable leaders can be developed *"sustainable leadership is not self-centred; it is socially just"* (Hargreaves, 2007, p.225) therefore it must extend beyond an individual. *"It demands that top management adopts a macro view of the organisation"* (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015, p.280). The concept of sustainable leadership emphasises leadership as 'being' or an authentic approach to fostering and developing individuals throughout the organisation and multi-level considerations are crucial for responsible strategic decision-making related to organisational development and achievement of targets (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, 2011) stress sustainable leadership must ensure leadership succession and enhancement throughout the organisation therefore leadership must be a continuum and not focused on individuals. It must also be developmental and learn from the past in order to improve the future (Lambert, 2011). Arguably, succession planning plays a major role in recognising, rewarding and developing and in all the proposed frameworks of sustainable leadership succession planning plays a major role

(Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007; Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Lambert, 2011).

It is vital to comment that the concept of sustainable leadership, unlike traditional leadership literature doesn't advocate a certain style, list of behaviours or traits of individual leaders, as such the development of sustainable leadership can be diverse as it must be authentic to the individual (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015). Issues in implementing a blanket leadership development programme arise as a result, however individuality within can come from fostering and encouraging reflection on experiences and engaging in discussions surrounding these reflections. Ultimately, the concept can be viewed as applying the fundamentals of sustainability to the organisation, individuals and their followers, which in other words ensures that they continually develop for the future and reflect on actions taken (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015). Sustainable leadership is arguably a 'humanistic' view of management (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011a). Therefore it views the leader and their role as more important than the actual skills/qualities/characteristics of leadership positions and ticking certain 'leadership boxes' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007). Hence, it can apply to either formal or informal leadership positions and should be integrated throughout the organisation to allow a variety of opportunities for individuals (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Nevertheless as Lambert (2012) emphasises leadership development and development opportunities should be fostered at an organisational level in order to encourage sustainable leadership principles and approaches. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) discuss the ideology that leadership should be lengthened which refers to the sustainability of leadership within the organisation, emphasising the importance of succession planning (Hargreaves and Fink, 2011). Within this aspect, Clarke and Stevens (2009) emphasise the importance of an individual leader avoiding burnout; which aligns with the individual level of sustainable leadership proposed by Casserley and Critchley (2010). Importantly Hargreaves and Fink argue that sustainable leadership is not about short-term fixes and should continue no matter who the 'leader' is as it sets a long-term strategy for the organisation (Lambert, 2012).

3.4.3 Short and long-term objectives

There have been numerous debates that emphasise the need for organisations to switch

their thinking from a single profit maximisation stance to a TBL and stakeholder emphasis (Middlebrooks *et al.,* 2009; D'Amato, Eckert, Ireland, Quinn and Van Velsor 2010; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Kantabutra and Saratun, 2013; Kantabutra and Avery, 2013). As Tideman *et al.* (2013) state;

> *"…the 'business as usual' approach, in which the short-term financial interests of shareholders tend to take precedence over long-term interests of stakeholders, is no longer an option from a long-term survival viewpoint" (Tideman et al.,2013, p.19).*

Arguably, new mind-sets and skill-sets are essential in *"succeeding in sustainable business transformation and contributing to building sustainable economic systems" (Tideman et al., 2013, p.30).* This work reinforces the importance that organisations must make a switch in mind-sets however, contemplating how this looks in organisations there are many tensions surrounding short and long-term objectives that must be considered (Davies, 2007; Lambert, 2011).

When considering embedding sustainable leadership throughout the organisation, it is also vital to ensure that the overall strategy of the organisation undertakes a paradigm shift (Ilisko and Badyanova, 2014). Johnson (2011) highlights

> *"…organisations taking a longer-term perspective will tend to change incrementally and continuously such that stability is accepted to be gradual improvement. This continuous change is guided by the organisation's vision which provides a view of the future desired by all and thus when accompanied by empowerment serves to engage all employees" (Johnson, 2011, p.67).*

The shift in focus from shareholder value and finances to longer-term stakeholder views emphasises the importance of achieving balance in organisations. Sustainable leadership advocates undertaking this longer-term stakeholder view because simply focusing on short-term objectives is unsustainable (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). However Davies (2007) highlights short-term objectives cannot be ignored, instead they need to be balanced with the long-term as short-term objectives can be used as indicators of long-term success. Lambert (2011) suggests that sustainable leadership isn't about seeking short-term gratification but rather long-term goals, and hence the principle of patience is a core consideration. However this is hard to achieve due to society's concentration on shorter-term goals which again underlines the shift in mind-

set required within organisations (Lambert, 2011). Therefore having complimentary goals which facilitate sustainable development by balancing short and long-term objectives is the most realistic approach organisations can adopt. Makipere and Yip (2008) agree and utilise Dow Jones' definition of corporate sustainability as

> *"a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economic, environmental and social developments" (Makipere and Yip, 2008, p.65).*

Therefore this idea of managing risks, achieving a balance and creating a focus on the future is central. Lambert (2012) emphasises sustainable leadership will not provide short-term fixes but rather a longer-term trajectory for the organisation. He disagrees with the proposition that short and long-term objectives are incompatible, and highlights that they should complement one another and with sustainable leadership this could be achieved. Conversely, as other authors stress the focus on short-term objectives which maximise shareholder value can be seen as detrimental to organisations (Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011), Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) indicate that adopting a long-term perspective is central to sustainable leadership. Hargreaves (2009) proposes that leaders must be constantly 'scanning' the environment. This involves both the internal and external organisational environment therefore the move from a primary focus being on the short-term objectives of the organisation must be undertaken. Instead, sustainable leadership places emphasis on the longer-term objectives but as the authors highlight a consideration of the short-term objectives is pivotal.

3.4.4 Stakeholder considerations

Understanding the diverse interests of stakeholders whilst ensuring a sustainable employment relationship is imperative to effective long-term organisational performance (Ferdig, 2007; Paauwe, 2009; Francis, Holbeche and Reddington, 2012; Barr and Dowding, 2012). All seminal authors of sustainable leadership agree and highlight the emphasis must be on all internal and external stakeholders. MCann and Holt (2011) correspond and state, *"…to survive over time in volatile and uncertain times, organisations must satisfy their stakeholders" (p.6).* This is important as stakeholders play a fundamental role during decision making of the organisation (Quinn and Dalton,

2009; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011), hence it is imperative to not only satisfy but also engage stakeholders. As Sharma (2019) stresses;

> By *"keeping stakeholder's interest at the centre, leaders can enhance organisational reputation and long-term benefits […] for leadership to be sustainable at individual and organisational levels; it ought to be based on values, ethics and humanistic principles"* (Sharma, 2019, p.165)

Therefore, the internal environment should be supportive and developmental in nature for sustainable leadership to be achieved (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007; Lambert, 2011). Ferdig (2007) emphasises that this sustainable thinking does not necessarily provide all the answers but rather enables a conscious decision making process to enable sustainable leadership within organisations. Organisations values should be embedded with this in mind in order to be true to what is being achieved. Employees should be aware of and engaged with the values of leaders within the organisation as they enact the organisation's espoused values. The role that leaders and employees play in the culture of the organisation is noteworthy (Northouse, 2013; Middlebrooks *et al.,* 2009) and arguably the leader must create circumstances vital for sustainable practices (Quinn and Dalton, 2009). Holbeche (2012) stresses sustainable outcomes are achieved more often in organisations where employees are engaged, motivated, where their health is catered for and organisational performance are all central considerations.

> *"Sustainable practice includes recognising the need to plan for succession, and providing adequate developmental opportunities for those who are likely to become leaders"* (Bosanquet, Cameron, Marshall and Orrell, 2009, p.2)

This aligns with the views of Davies (2007) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006) who emphasise the role of not only building capacity of employees but also involving employees in dialogue surrounding building a successful future. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Lambert (2011) also discuss the idea of social inclusion and cohesion within the organisation. A fundamental fact is that the relationship between leaders and employees is crucial for enhanced leadership (Barr and Dowding, 2012) and sustained organisational performance (Middlebrooks *et al.,* 2009). Additionally the ideology of inclusion within the organisation (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) involves building the capacity of staff (Lambert, 2011) and succession planning (Davies, 2007); hence the

relationships between leaders and their followers are central to the effectiveness of sustainable leadership. Sustainable leadership has emerged as an alternative to the prevailing Anglo/US model that promotes short-term and shareholders-value (Tuan, 2012) [uses support from Avery, 2005; Kantabutra, 2006; Piboolsravut, 2004; Wilson, 2003] by undertaking the stakeholder view. Therefore, relationships between the organisation, leaders and their stakeholders are of critical importance (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011).

When considering if sustainable leadership makes a difference Avery and Bergsteiner (2011a) state *"…a considerable body of evidence shows that sustainable practices are more likely to enhance business performance than the shareholder-first approach" (p.11).* Therefore, the authors emphasise the significant difference sustainable leadership can make in organisations, however individualisation and context of adoption must be taken into consideration which is why a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. Further, when analysing Hargreaves and Fink's framework Lambert (2011) separated their practices into two main themes;

➢ Inclusiveness – socially inclusive and celebrates diversity, but is also inclusive with other organisations, seeking out strategic alliances and collaboration, rather than competition.

➢ Developmental – sustainable leadership spreads throughout the organisation, it becomes infectious, it identifies potential talent early on, learning from the past to develop future leaders and going beyond any one individual.

Kantabutra and Saratun (2013) propose that;

> *"Sustainable Leadership practices reflect good management, often lower costs, and enhance reputation and brand" (Kantabutra and Saratun, 2013, p.363)*

Ultimately, it does so by taking into account a wide range of stakeholder views (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015).

3.4.5 Individual reflexivity

The discussions presented emphasise the importance of moving from a shareholder focus to a stakeholder view which undertakes wider considerations (Simmons, 2004). On an individual level this difference in foci and in embedding sustainability can be considered if employees experience burnout or derailment as researched by Casserley and Megginson (2008). Casserley and Megginson (2008) define burnout as;

> *"a state of extreme exhaustion that occurs, regardless of culture, in high demanding work environments among career-driven younger employees who become overwhelmed by prolonged work pressure and are no longer able to cope" (Casserley and Megginson, 2008, p.16).*

The burnout literature advocates that there are three factors which contribute to an individual experiencing burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and professional accomplishment (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2010). Employees who are experiencing burnout demonstrate unsustainable approaches to their working life which can have detrimental effects on the organisation (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). Du Toit *et al.* (2011) also focused on individuation being determined from the level of maturity of the leader, how the individual is able to learn and develop on this and then aid others in reaching the same/similar level of individuation. Their ideology of maturity and reflexivity, which should be developed and harnessed within organisations, aligns with Casserley and Critchley's (2010) depiction of a sustainable individual. Therefore emphasising burnout as an extreme consequence of approaching work in an unsustainable way (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). Hence underlining how sustainable leadership could solve unsustainable working practices. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) discuss resourcefulness and argue leaders' energy should be conserved and renewed, not burnt out or depleted as many leaders within todays organisations' may (Allio, 2013).

Casserley and Megginson (2008) explored individual burnout by evaluating experiences of high flyers and found greater emphasis needs to be placed on the individual to know their limitations so as not to reach this burnout phase. However also identified responsibility also lay with organisations to promote positive working practices and to 'hold' employees if they did reach and experience this burnout phase. By doing so, they

will allow the individual to become reflexive and learn based on such personal experiences to develop sustainably.

Kopp and Martinuzzi (2013) correspond with the ideology that to be sustainable leaders must *"…reflect on one's own values and to constantly develop oneself on a personal level" (p.206).* In order to achieve this personal development Casserley and Critchley (2010) present hallmarks of sustainable leadership which they argue are key components to achieving sustainable leaders on the individual level (see Table 8).

Table 8: Hallmarks of Sustainable Leadership

Reflection on Action	Learning through doing/from experience – seriously reflecting and therefore learning (action learning) from your actions
Psychological Intelligence	Having a clear sense of personal purpose and an awareness of personal assumptions and motivations – attempting to ensure that these are intrinsically and not extrinsically based – as extrinsic is problematic
Physiological well-being	Effective management of stress and sufficient self-care – having the reflexive ability and paying attention to the practices that improve well-being
Negotiated engagement – sometimes seen (wrongly) as a nice add-on	Playing an active role in determining how they engage with the culture of the organisation - therefore the leader is determining what they are engaged in

Adapted from: Casserley and Critchley (2010)

When discussing the Hallmarks of Sustainable Leadership Critchley (2011) advocates

"it is the integration of the first three, followed by their engagement with the organisation which constitutes effective leadership development and generates sustainable leaders, and is more likely to create sustainable organisations" (Critchley, 2011, p.25).

The hallmark of reflection on action aligns with the arguments presented by Ferdig (2007) that conscious thinking of sustainable leaders should be fostered and embedded to encourage a deeper understanding of the challenges and actions of sustainable leadership. Casserley and Megginson (2008) and Du Toit *et al*. (2011) both argue that within the right circumstances an individual can mature and learn from the burnout

situation in which they find themselves. The authors also advocate the need for an individual to reflect on the situation; which involves reflecting on how they got to that point and then how they felt during the 'experience'/journey (Casserley and Megginson, 2008; du Toit *et al.,* 2011). Day and Schmidt (2007) agree and suggest an individual's resilience is a vital element of development.

> *"resilience encompasses the individual's capacity to deal effectively with stress and pressure, to cope with everyday challenges, to rebound from disappointments, mistakes and adversity, to develop clear and realistic goals, to solve problems, to interact comfortably with others, to treat ones and others with respect and dignity, and to have the ability to meet life's challenges with thoughtfulness, confidence, purpose, responsibility, empathy and hope" (Day and Schmidt, 2007, p.68).*

In line with this and to underscore the importance of reflection, Casserley and Megginson (2008) assert;

> *"Leaders cannot be produced or even developed; they emerge as the result of choices made in an individual life" (Casserley and Megginson, 2008, p.203)*

Importantly, although organisations cannot make these decisions for individuals', they can guide and aid them hence encouraging development as a sustainable leader (Casserley and Megginson, 2008). Equally, such experiences will be vital to develop leaders' resilience and ensure they are able to cope with growing pressures and contribute effectively to organisations. This insinuation of the role of the organisation in encouraging and facilitating is arguably forgotten in the majority of organisations, however Casserley and Critchley (2010) argue the relationship between the leader and their organisation is pivotal. The important thing to consider is that there is no 'one' way to make leadership practices sustainable but it is vital to embed aspects of sustainable working within organisations (Morsing and Oswald, 2009).

The underpinning 'burnout' issue is becoming more and more important within today's organisations as recent research by Towers Watson (HR Consultants) confirms (Churchard, 2012). In demonstrating the importance of understanding and addressing burnout it was discovered that a third of employees are at risk of burnout, whilst concerns were raised over the general health of the public and worries that burnout is becoming normal (Churchard, 2012). This research highlights the crucial need for

organisations to act in order to protect their employees, not only for the individuals' but for the long-term sustainability of the organisation. However many organisations, especially within today's world are ignoring these facts and want to achieve short-term targets and almost encourage behaviour which can be associated with burnout.

3.5 Sustainable leadership development

The development of sustainable leaders is founded within mainstream leadership development literature, however an important distinction is on the reflective nature and the multi-level foci of developing as a sustainable leader. Arguably, a sustainable leader will ensure they continually reflect and develop whilst responding to the situational, context and stakeholder needs as the narrative around sustainability suggests (Peterlin *et al.,* 2013).

To illustrate this multi-level development, Casserley and Critchley (2010) and Peterlin *et al.* (2015) argue and discuss leaders must be developed on a number of levels; from personal to ecological levels; highlighting by developing across these levels, a number of relationships can be positively and mutually beneficial for an effective leader, as demonstrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Levels of sustainable leadership

Personal Level
Sustaining personal psychological and physiological health

Organisational Level
Sustaining a work environment in which people are enabled to flourish and realise their own potential in the service of organisational purposes they see as worthwhile and congruent with their own sense of personal purpose

Sociological level
Playing a responsible part in the local community

Ecological level
Sustaining the environment

Adapted from: Casserley and Critchley (2010)

Predominately central to the individual level is encouraging individuals to learn from their actions and burnout experiences along with the associated symptoms, rather than succumbing to it as an individual (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). Such an individualistic view of leadership is important, as Day (2000) suggests leaders need to look not only outwardly, as is obvious, but also inwardly, which is often forgotten; an argument also supported by Davies (2007). It is important at this stage to comment on the individualistic side of sustainable leadership, where the question surrounds developing leaders on an individual level for the organisational good, versus historical leadership literature and ideologies surrounding a focus on the leader in an individualistic 'great man' sense. Casserley and Critchley (2011) advocate that leaders are not 'developed' as such, but instead emerge as a result of a number of decisions made by the individual, hence du Toit *et al.* (2011) argue;

> *"...the emphasis of future leadership development should clearly be on self-knowledge and self-understanding" (du Toit et al., 2011, p.9).*

Casserley and Critchley (2010) accentuate a similar stance and highlight that in order to develop individual's must place a greater emphasis on understanding his/hers own

strengths and weaknesses and as Casserley and Megginson (2008) advocate;

"Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself" (Casserley and Megginson, 2008, p.203)

Therefore this highlights to be a sustainable and mature individual and leader, that person must undertake the initial individual developmental stage. Casserley and Critchley (2010) highlight that the way in which an individual matures and is developed within an organisation is very important as the role of organisations can be seen as crucial. They also argue and underline the importance of supporting employees through challenging times by using techniques such as coaching and mentoring throughout the organisation, from leaders to employees, to ensure each individual has the opportunity to make the journey of development towards being more sustainable (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). Sharma's (2019) research corresponds with this who further emphasises focusing on developing attributes, values, ethics and humanistic principles is vital. Peterlin *et al.,* (2013) provided a range of arguments around developing as a sustainable leader and once more affirmed different foci that are required, their framework is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Peterlin *et al.*'s (2013) Conceptual model of sustainable leadership development
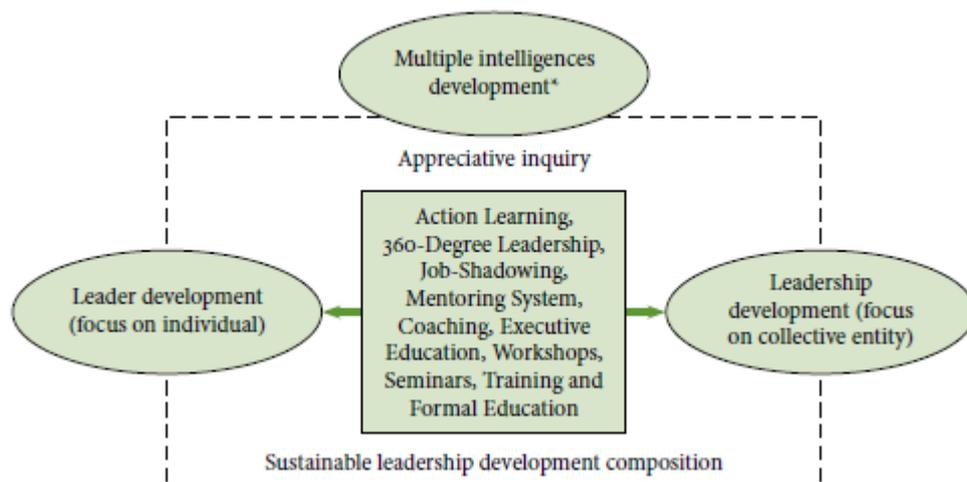
Source: Peterlin *et al.* (2013, p.209)

"Sustainable leadership development over time is only possible if leadership development is considered as a complex process, combined of leader, relationships with followers, organisational culture and wider environment"

(Peterlin et al., 2013, p.214).

Further, Peterlin *et al.,* (2015) highlight the value of integrative thinking which similar to Casserley and Critchley's levels of sustainable leadership underlines the need to think of the inter-connecting relationships between the individual, team, organisational, business and societal levels.

3.6 Summary of literature review

There are a number of underpinning concepts and theories which are crucial to the understanding and evaluation of sustainable leadership. By exploring the contested subject of sustainability and the common aspects which are critical to it, this has led to the understanding and development of the concept of sustainable leadership. Corporate social responsibility and corporate governance highlight that organisations must develop from a singular focus on shareholders towards a stakeholder focus which looks to ensure the organisation can achieve their TBL. The role of leaders and people focused approaches to leadership have become commonplace within leadership literature. Simultaneously leaders play a pivotal role in building an effective sustainable culture where individuals and organisations contribute extensively to their wider environments is emphasised. Following these discussions exploring the seminal frameworks of sustainable leadership led to themes being derived which allow the concept of sustainable leadership to be scrutinised and an overarching conceptual framework to be derived.

Approaches to sustainable leadership hinge on being embedded throughout the culture of the organisation, as such they should be embraced by all leaders throughout the hierarchies. Consequently, developing leaders formally and informally is key to ensuring the sustainable leadership approach extends beyond a singular leader. To do so an inclusive approach, which values multiple stakeholder views, must become the 'norm' and this will rely on the balance of differing demands. Fostering approaches that compliment short with long-term goals in organisations will take engagement by multiple leaders however can be imperative to ensuring a sustainable future. Focusing on short-term can lead to unsustainable approaches being adopted by individuals and

leaders throughout the organisation which can lead to situations of burnout. Therefore fostering and harmonising a balance between short and long-term goals is imperative, not just for the organisation but also for leaders who must have opportunities to develop and reflect on their actions will ensure they are able to adopt reflective and multi-level foci within their roles.

3.7 Sustainable Leadership in Scottish Higher Education

To date, sustainable leadership has not been researched or explored in the Scottish Higher Education sector, it has been reviewed in a number of different organisations and in a number of different ways (see Table 6). Therefore creating common themes across the seminal sustainable leadership literature allows a robust consideration of the theory within the Scottish HE sector. These themes as explored in this chapter draw on the work of the seminal authors of sustainable leadership theory. Table 7 presented these themes alongside the seminal authors work, to develop this and apply these themes to the discussions in chapter 2, literature of the Scottish Higher Education Sector the themes are represented with the linkage to Scottish HE in Table 9.

Table 9: Sustainable Leadership Themes applied to Scottish Higher Education

Theme Identified	Brief Description of theme from literature	Aspect of seminal author's framework	Link to Scottish Higher Education
Embedding sustainable leadership throughout the organisation	• Integrated in the organisational culture • Adopted as an organisational approach and intertwined with all practices/policies • Embraced and championed by all leaders	• Culture (Avery and Bergsteiner – higher level practice) • Length – ensuring it extends beyond the individual leader (Hargreaves and Fink) • Process not plans – around dialogue (Davies) and reflection on action (Casserley and Critchley) • Conserving – learning from past	Influence of managerialism and new public management • Improvement of efficiency and effectiveness • Impacts of resources – affects a number of practices in HEIs • Internal competition and need to do more with less could hinder

		and built into culture (Lambert and Hargreaves and Fink)	
Inclusivity	• Adopting an inclusive and collegiate approach to working throughout the organisation • People are given the opportunity to learn and develop (via formal and informal development) • Leader acts as a role model and supports staff	• Building capacity of staff (Lambert) • Developing People (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Succession Planning (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Building Capacity and Creating Involvement (Davies) • Importance of continual development (Casserley and Critchley)	• Limited resources • Time constrained, need the operational day-to-day to run effectively Impacts of mass higher education and globalisation • Market orientation may have more prominence than educational rationale • Increasing numbers attending HE and limited resources
Short and long term objectives	• Mutually reinforcing objectives • Attempting to balance demands between short term needs and long term goals • Working towards creating a sustainable long-	• Balancing short and long term objectives (Davies) • Long or short term perspective (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Builds long term objectives from short term goals (Lambert) • Avoidance of focusing on the	• Short-term focus on outcomes (due to league tables) • Prominent tensions derived from balance of quality over demand • High levels of metrics used to 'assess' HEIs • Growing need to

	term view	short term (Casserley and Critchley)	excel in every field
Stakeholder considerations	• Involves all stakeholders • Should create a supportive, developmental environment and culture in organisations that benefits all stakeholders • Moves away from singular profit based approach	• Ethical behaviour (Avery and Bergsteiner) • Justice - Improving internal environment and being socially just not selfish (Hargreaves and Fink) • Trust (Avery and Bergsteiner – higher level practice) • Diversity – social inclusion and cohesion (Hargreaves and Fink and Lambert) • Conversations - Developing individuals and succession planning	• Growing expectations of students • Competitive marketplace – viewing students as customers • Impact of limited resources means doing more with less • Silo working (especially separation between academic and professional services)
Individual reflexivity	• Encourages individual sustainability • Avoiding burnout of individuals via reflection on action • Developing resilience	• Resourcefulness (Hargreaves and Fink) • Links to burnout foundations (Casserley and Critchley) • Developing People (Avery and Bergsteiner)	• Participative and collaborative approach to leadership rhetoric • Balance between 'career managers' and 'manager academics' • Growing expectations of long working hours (due again to limited resources)

By linking the themes derived from the sustainable leadership literature to key aspects of the Higher Education sector, it becomes evident that the challenges the HE sector face link well to the principles and themes of sustainable leadership. The relationships between the elements in the 'links to Scottish Higher Education sector' column of Table 9 are interdependent, just as the sustainable leadership themes are. Therefore although separated to demonstrate links between the HEI context and sustainable leadership literature themes the 'links' should not be viewed in isolation.

The Higher Education context literature demonstrated a number of key aspects which will influence HEIs and leaders throughout the sector, by linking these to the sustainable leadership literature it allows a presentation of how current demands and pressures experienced within the sector can potentially be aided by the sustainable leadership approach. It is not the purpose of this research to prove or disprove these links rather illustrating how the debates and discussions interlink demonstrates the cohesion between sustainable leadership and the HE sector. As the overarching sector of this research, the conceptual framework presented places the context of the Scottish Higher Education sector as the overall culture and context in which sustainable leadership will be explored in this research.

In line with objective 2, Figure 8 provides the researchers conceptual framework of sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education with a detailed description following the presentation of the framework.

Figure 8: Researcher's Conceptual Framework of Sustainable Leadership in Scottish Higher Education (based on literature)
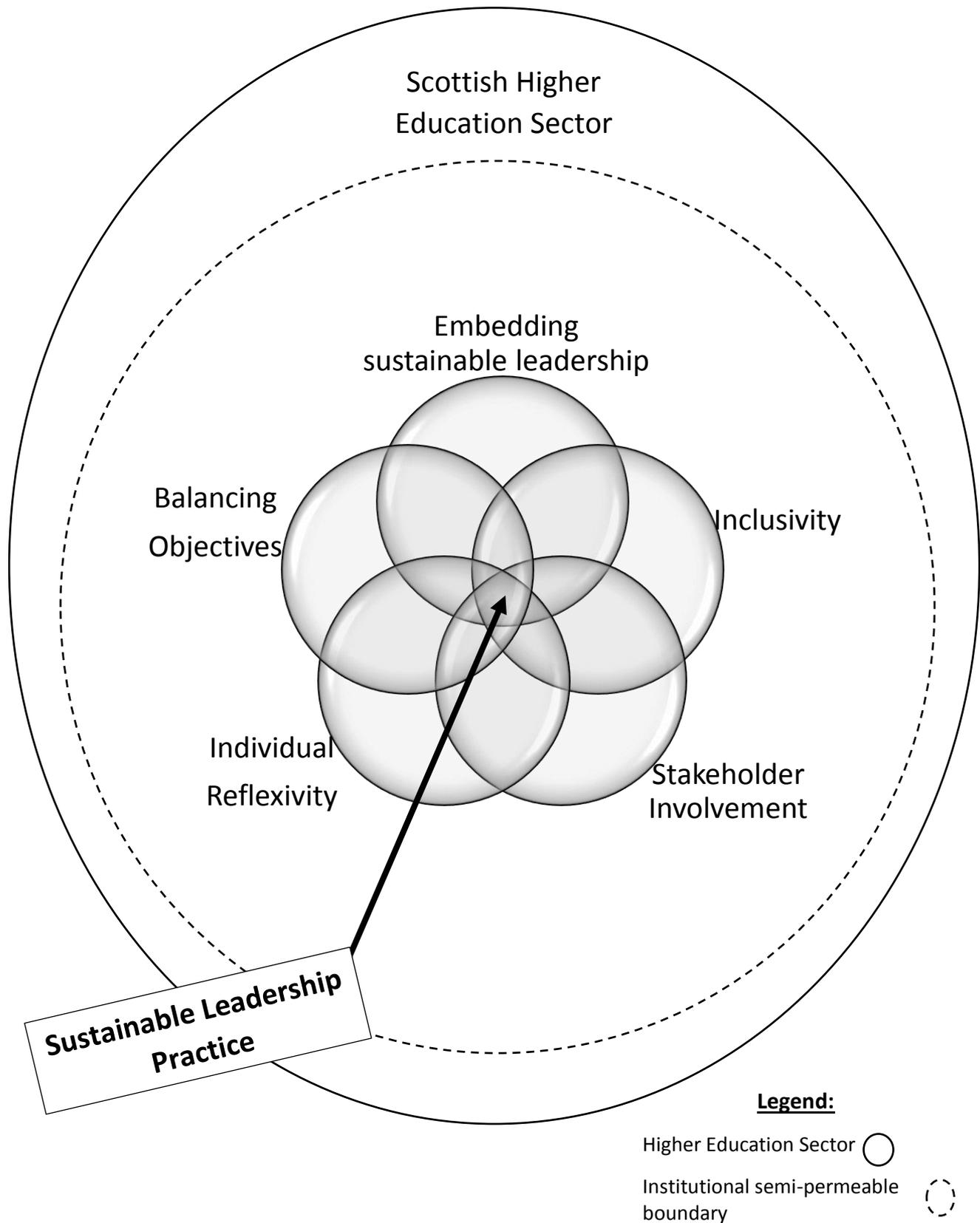
This conceptual framework depicted (Figure 8), utilises each of the a priori themes of sustainable leadership discussed in this chapter (chapter 3) as sustainable leadership facets. Their inter-dependent relationships and connections are demonstrated via the Venn diagram with the central point where all aspects overlap equalling a sustainable leadership approach and practice. This illustrates collaboration between the facets is crucial to enable sustainable leadership and facilitate a shared sense of purpose towards embedding the approach.

From the literature it has been deduced, all five facets are interdependent and reliant on one another, they interact with one another and so all have an established connection. However it is only when they are all present and managed effectively that sustainable leadership practice can occur.

All authors have mentioned at least three or more of the themes; as demonstrated in Table 9 with the column 'aspect of seminal authors' framework. 'Embedding sustainable leadership throughout the organisation' is mentioned by all seminal authors, however from the literature there is no discussion related to this being more or less important than the others, it is just more frequently discussed across the literature.

Therefore the facets are viewed as having equal importance and interconnected within institutions which are affected by the wider context they exist within, in this study the Scottish Higher Education sector.

This conceptual framework is used as basis for the empirical research undertaken in this research, more on its application and influence on the research collected will be undertaken in chapter 4: Research design and methodology.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters of this thesis have provided a critical analysis and examination of the underpinning theory and literature surrounding sustainable leadership and the Scottish Higher Education sector. Ensuring the research is rigorous and outlined sufficiently is key when considering the research design and methodology (Holliday, 2016).

To do so, this chapter will explore the underpinning epistemological, ontological and methodological considerations whilst considering alternative approaches. The impact of the chosen philosophy on the data collection methods is undertaken and decisions made on the empirical data strategy along with the sampling strategy is provided. This is followed by a consideration of the research instrument and a discussion of the data analysis technique applied. Considerations were made related to the ethical implications associated with this research.

4.2 Philosophical underpinning

> *"The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology), which are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.16).*

The philosophy of the researcher is vital to explore how the data collected is influenced and understood throughout the research. Acknowledging the researchers view of the world is vital to understand in any research study (Creswell, 2014). To explore this the epistemological, ontological and methodological stances adopted within this research will be explored. For this study the social world and exploring the social world and lived realities of the participants is important.

> *"An epistemology is a set of axiomatic assumptions (within a philosophy of science) that define the way knowledge about a particular view of reality (that is, an ontologically well-defined reality) is to be generated, represented, understood and used" (Hallebone and Priest, 2009, p.27)*

The interpretive paradigm emerged in the 1970s as an alternative to the dominant positivist approach and although there are a number of key differences, they should be viewed on a continuum rather than as direct opposites (Creswell, 2014; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Nevertheless, the foci of the approaches differ due to the associated view of the world and emphasis on data to be gathered. A positivist paradigm views the world has an objective reality, which exists independently of individuals (Collis and Hussey, 2009), seeks universal truths (Willis, 2012) with the properties of the external world measured via objective methods (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). Interpretivism on the other hand emphasises and explores subjective reality shaped by individuals perceptions (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008) which will be adopted in this research.

A **subjectivist epistemology** centres on socially constructed realities, subjective meanings, perceptions and interpretations (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Further, it is applicable in this research as it seeks to explore, describe and analyse the subjective meanings of experiences as lived and perceived by individuals (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008) along with an understanding of the context which is critical in interpretive research (Willis, 2012).

> *"The researcher's intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. Rather than starting with a theory, inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning" (Creswell, 2014, p.8).*

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) stress that there is *"no single 'truth'. All truths are partial and incomplete"* (p.106). Acknowledging this, gathering perceptions of individual's understandings ensured that such variety of experiences were included and evaluated.

> *"An ontology is a set of axiomatic assumptions (within a philosophy of science) that define the way a reality is conceived and perceived." (Hallebone and Priest, 2009, p.26)*

An **interpretivist ontology** explores how our social world centres between people and their activities and interactions thus *"social realities, identities and knowledge are created and maintained in interactions, and are culturally, historically, and linguistically influenced"* (Thorpe and Holt, 2008, p.201). The focus and role of interpreting experiences is central to this study, exploring differing perceptions and subjective

meanings is central to this, allowing for complexity of views to be sought and explored (Creswell, 2014). Hallebone and Priest (2009) further these explanations by stating that within an interpretive ontology *"…reality as perceived relative to a participant's explicit and enacted experience and consequently being socially constructed by, and relative to, different humans"* (p.76).

Therefore, the focus is not just on the social reality itself but how it has been brought into being and explores how this reality is understood and sustained (Silverman, 2014). Individuals construct meaning for themselves due to the way they interpret the world, as a result understanding and exploring how individuals construct meaning of their experiences is of the utmost importance (Crotty, 1998). The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions and experiences of the participants by engaging in extensive in-depth conversations (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). As change is encouraged to develop sustainable leadership, **a managerial axiology** will be adopted. By reviewing this meaning and understanding leads us to the methodology adopted which Crotty (1998) suggests;

> *"…under the rubric of 'phenomenology' is a quite single-minded effort to identify, understand, describe and maintain the subjective experiences of the respondents"* (Crotty, 1998, p.83).

By adopting a **phenomenological methodology**, individual's experiences are the focal point in order to illuminate multi-faceted perceptions formed due to individual subjectivity (Thorpe and Holt, 2008).

> *"The methodology that is applied is embedded in the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie our research"* (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p. 12)

Therefore, the concentration of a phenomenological methodology is *"…on the process of interaction and active construction of meaning"* (Barbour, 2014, p.31). Therefore, the relationship between the individual and social world is inseparable containing a constant interaction influencing experiences of individuals (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). Holliday (2014) suggests that 'bracketing' should take place in order to *"make the familiar strange"* (p.180). However as the researcher is a practicing academic working within a

Scottish HEI, the researcher does not intend to be bracketed out of the research as would be required in descriptive phenomenological analysis.

Prasad (2005) highlights that within the 'interpretive tradition', phenomenology can be applied as a result of the deep understanding and insight it provides to research. Understanding the stories, experiences and perceptions of the participants was crucial to this qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011); therefore by selecting a phenomenological methodology the researcher could explore the lived experiences of the interviewees.

> *"…we attempt to understand what is unobservable about people in organisations […] their thoughts, their emotions, their values, […] and the meaning of their actions that reflect their private world of experience [interpretative phenomenological analysis]" (Thorpe and Holt, 2008, p.94).*

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) allows the researcher to gain an 'insider perspective' with a clear and rigorous analytical procedure (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest IPA *"requires 'rich' data"* (p.56) and is a methodology which;

> *"…will invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their expectations" (Smith et al., 2009, p.56)*

Barbour (2014) emphasises utilising IPA as an approach to data analysis can allow for a number of research methods however it does favour semi-structured, in-depth interviews which explore individuals experiences and perceptions. Smith *et al*. (2009) also argue as method facilitates the rich, deep data required in IPA. This compliments the research aim of exploring leaders' perceptions of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE.

4.3 Research design and approach

4.3.1 Qualitative and quantitative data collection

Data can be qualitative or quantitative in nature which have associated positives and negatives that must be considered when making decisions surrounding the research study (Holliday, 2016). This research will undertake a qualitative approach to data to

address the research aim and objectives to explore leaders' perceptions of the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership due to the underpinning philosophical stances.

> *"Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.10)*

The interpretivist ontology compliments qualitative data as it allows an exploration of people's understanding and investigates a number of issues by engaging in in-depth conversations (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). Qualitative research is flexible, rather than controlling variables as quantitative data would (Holliday, 2016). It is not a specific or rigid approach to data collection but rather focuses on interpretation of opinions and experiences (Holliday, 2016; Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

Ultimately, it is vital within an interpretive paradigm to ensure the integrity of the data and a qualitative method allows for contextualisation (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Therefore, as Silverman (2014) and Barbour's (2014) suggest when seeking deeper understanding and exploring perceptions within a specific context, a qualitative approach is favoured and will be used as opposed to quantitative.

4.3.2 Inductive and deductive research approach

This research will adopt an inductive approach which Holliday (2014) argues builds data into broad themes which are then applied to literature in order to build similarities and generalisations which apply to the theory and research. This is important as it *"…represents interconnected thoughts or parts linked to a whole"* (Holliday, 2014, p.66). The alternative deductive research approach in comparison attempts to 'confirm or falsify' a theory (Tracy, 2013). In accordance with the aim of this research, the deductive approach is rejected as the research will not confirm or falsify a theory, rather it will explore leaders perceptions and develop a conceptual framework based upon leaders perceptions in alignment with literature.

4.3.3 Primary and secondary data

Within any research process secondary sources and literature play a vital role underpinning development of the study and the knowledge the researcher seeks (Aurini,

Heath and Howells, 2016).

> *"Data driven conceptualisation includes both secondary and primary sources…secondary sources are generally one step removed from the original event or people and include published academic and professional articles, commonly referred to as 'the literature'. Primary sources include materials that are produced […] by persons who have direct and intimate knowledge or experiences" (Aurini et al., 2016, p.10).*

This study will follow an interpretivist philosophical underpinning collecting qualitative data. The primary data method employed in qualitative research are important to consider and can include a wide range as demonstrated in Table 10. Silverman (2014) highlights that predominantly in qualitative data, interviews are the main form of data collection however, this does not mean that it is the only qualitative method, which is why a consideration of the various methods is important (Barbour, 2014). The purpose of the research and philosophical approach should inform and underpin the research design and chosen data collection method (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2008).

Table 10: Qualitative Data Methods

Qualitative Method	Description
Interviews	Most commonly used method which uses open ended questions to allow differentiations depending on the interviewer and interviewee.
Focus Groups	"Focus group discussions focus on the interaction between participants" (Barbour, 2014, p.19) The relationship between participants can be explored and refined through interaction in this method.
Observational Fieldwork	Allows researchers to see how work or social practices are enacted on a daily basis (Barbour, 2014, p.19)
Documentary Sources	Utilising pre-existing materials as sources of data and can allow the researcher to see how processes and sense-making activities develop
Diaries	Asking participants to keep diaries and usually used in mixed method studies
Online Research	Using new technologies of ready-made data online (such as from online chat rooms, discussion groups and social media)
Visual Methods	Employing photographs, advertisements, images, artworks or video clips as stimulus materials

Adapted from: Barbour (2014)

The mono-method of primary data collection adopted in this research is interviews, chosen to facilitate deeper understandings of leaders' experiences whilst exploring their perceptions of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE. Secondary data including legislation, government and practitioner reports along with published literature will supplement the in-depth interviews in this research.

4.4 Data collection method – Interview

In accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) argument that *"the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences" (p.1).* King (2004) suggests the goal of interviews is to explore and understand the interviewee's perspectives and views. One-on-one interviews were the most appropriate research method for this study as they allow in-depth *"conversations with a purpose"* to explore stories and perceptions (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.109). This was important due to the nature of the topic and the aim to seek detailed insights from the interviewees (Aurini *et al.*, 2016; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012; Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, the benefits of interviewing involve *"eliciting relevant, valuable and analytically rich data"* (Barbour, 2014, p.112) and arguably in-depth interviews are the best approach to explore and understand individuals' perspectives on their experiences (Aurini *et al.*, 2016). Further, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) affirm;

> *"The primary concern of IPA researchers is to elicit rich, detailed, and first-person accounts of experiences and phenomena under investigation. Semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews are the most popular method to achieve that" (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012, p.365).*

Nevertheless, it is vital to acknowledge the critique surrounding interviews and the possibility of limited information sharing which may occur, plus interviewer bias must be considered and how the interviewer may influence the interviewee responses. However, this could be overcome via the skill of the researcher, particularly if trust and rapport between the research and interviewee is built and sustained throughout the interview (Roulston, 2010; Hennink *et al*, 2011). Therefore the skill of the researcher plays a vital role in ensuring the quality of the data collected to ensure the knowledge is

useful and addresses the research aim (Patton, 2015; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2008). Arguably this is achieved using a semi-structured interview guide, asking questions in an open, empathic way whilst encouraging interviewees to share their stories by probing (Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

These elements were crucial during this research and facilitated the purposeful conversations, which allowed an exploration of the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership to be readily discussed.

4.4.1 Interview type

There are varieties of interviews one may choose to undertake in qualitative research, including group interviews, panel interviews, structured interviews or in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2014; Roulston, 2010). This research used in-depth, one-on-one interviews in-line with the underpinning research philosophy (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2008). Interviews can take on a range of structures from highly formulised, structured interviews to unstructured, free flowing conversations, as illustrated and critiqued in Table 11.

Table 11: Variations in interview instrumentation

Type of interview	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Informal conversational interview (unstructured)	Questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things; there is no predetermination of question topics or wording.	It increases the salience and relevance of questions; interviews are built on and emerge from observations; the interview can be matched to individuals and circumstances	Different information is collected from different people with different questions. It is less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions do not raise naturally. Data organisation and analysis can be quite difficult
Interview guide approach (semi structured)	Topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in outline form; interviewer decides the	The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat	Important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in

	sequence and wording of questions in the course of the interview	systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.	substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses.
Standardized open-ended interview (structured)	The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order. Questions are worded in a completely open-ended format.	Respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing comparability of responses. Interviewer effects and bias are reduced when several interviewers are used. It facilitates organisation and analysis of data	There is little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individual's and circumstances; standardised wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers.
Closed, fixed-response interview	Questions and response categories are determined in advance. Responses are fixed; respondent chooses from among these fixed responses	Data analysis is simple; responses can be directly compared and easily aggregated; many questions can be asked in a short time.	Respondents must fit their experiences and feelings into the researcher's categories; the interview may be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant, and mechanistic and can distort what respondents really meant or experienced by so completely limiting their response choice.

Source: Patton (2015, p.438)

When implementing an interview type, the important thing is to achieve a balance between the researchers focus and allowing the interviewee to share and provide their insights and reflections (Barbour, 2014). Gibson and Brown (2009) further highlight adopting a semi-structured approach allows the researcher to follow the 'natural flow' of the conversation structured around key themes formulated as key questions, although the question order can be flexible and probes may be different for each interview.

For this research, a priori themes were identified to be explored, and by adopting a phenomenological methodology and having the focus on the interviewees' experiences, adopting a semi-structured approach to the interview guide allowed an individual focus to be adopted during each interview. This allowed the researcher to adapt and ask probes to interpret the experiences depending on the responses of each interviewee (Roulston, 2010; Smith and Osborn, 2008). It is important to emphasise the discovery and understanding of participants' views were crucial to uncover why they thought the way they did, as without this superficial data is collected (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2008).

4.4.1.1 Interview mode

Creswell (2014) and Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest one of the key considerations of interview design is the location of the interview, namely face-to-face, video, telephone or internet interviews (Aurini *et al.*, 2016). Face-to-face interviews can garner stronger rapport, richer responses and witness non-verbal communication although convenience of time and flexibility can be facilitated via telephone interviews (Aurini *et al.*, 2016), hence in practice multiple modes may be used (Gibson and Brown, 2009) as was the case in this study. The majority of interviews were undertaken face-to-face, 29 out of the 35 interviews. All interviewees were offered the convenience and flexibility of a telephone interview, which 6 opted for. On average, the interviews lasted one-hour; the longest 97 minutes and shortest 42 minutes. The interviews were deemed appropriate as Smith *et al*. (2009) advocated in-depth interviews for IPA should last one-hour.

A key element of this research was that all interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed (see 4.4.4). Smith and Osborn (2008) emphasise that in-depth interviews who will adopt an IPA approach must be recorded to ensure that all aspects of the interviews are garnered, which would be near impossible if note taking was solely relied upon. Ethical considerations related to audio recording were undertaken for this research (see 4.7).

4.4.2 Interview design

Within an interpretive research design … "In-depth or focused interviews would be conducted […] to explore concepts from the literature, […] that emerge from participants' reported experiences and the meanings they draw from them. In this way, qualitative data are continually generated and

progressively analysed to create new insights into the topic" (Hallebone and Priest, 2009, p.55-56).

By utilising in-depth semi-structured interviews there are a number of benefits which are crucial to elicit rich data and the design of the interview schedule is crucial to achieving this (Barbour, 2014). The a priori themes used, which are central to the interview design, were derived from the literature explored in chapters 2 and 3. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) discuss the importance of incorporating theory into qualitative research as well as using it as a crucial underpinning to ensure that the research is valid and contributes to the wider knowledge in the field. Within this study, using semi-structured approach was important to ensure that interviewees fed-forward their views; therefore, the interview guide was a tool to *guide* and not to direct the interview. Therefore, although the flow and sequence of the interview questions did differentiate they were all underpinned via a robust design (Barbour, 2014).

The conceptual framework (Figure 8) was used as a basis for the interview question design. However to allow an open dialogue and exploration of leaders perceptions of sustainable leadership within HE the interviews did not follow a rigid thematic approach. Rather they flowed through the key principles by asking a variety of questions related to the leaders' experiences and perceptions of a sustainable leadership approach. An example interview scheme can be found in appendix 5.

At the outset of the interview it was important to establish a basis for sustainable leadership by exploring the interviewee's current (and in most cases previous) leadership roles to explore their existing perceptions of leadership before moving on to discussions around sustainable leadership. This was important as it allowed interviewees to share any challenges they currently faced as well as discussing their perceptions of the roles and importance of leaders in HE. Following this a direct exploration of sustainable leadership was undertaken, this involved asking for current understandings or perceptions of the topic before sharing a definition by Avery and Bergsteiner (2011, p.5) to explore leaders views on the perceived value in the sector. The leaders often then explored their perceptions of the different elements of the definition, sometimes directly applying it to their experience and/or the sector, or on some occasions exploring it conceptually. By focusing discussions of leadership and

sustainable leadership in the HE context at the outset, the leaders shared experiences and challenges faced in their roles which progressed to discussions of their own development and their relationships with leaders and peers. These individualised discussions demonstrated the variety of experiences of leaders. Equally important and as a result of the inductive research approach adopted it was vital to explore leaders experiences and perceptions to allow generalisations and similarities across the leaders to enable an exploration of sustainable leadership Scottish HE.

4.4.3 Transcriptions

As a result of the interpretative, qualitative nature of this research plus the many meanings words can have it is important to consider how they will be managed and navigated, as they are more unwieldly than numbers (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In order to identify these words, when an interview is audio recorded; as was the case for all interviews in this research; a transcript is made and becomes a written record of the interview (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). "*Transcription is a topic about which there can be a tendency for 'preciousness'*" (Barbour, 2014, p.256). Arguably full verbatim transcripts are one of the most important ways this can be accomplished, as they *"include everything that is said in the interview"* (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.211). This is vital to ensure that no aspects of the interviews are lost or omitted (Bazeley, 2013), hence they act is a hybrid between the live interview and a full text version of the interview (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Once the transcript is complete, the researcher can then make a decision on the elements that are most important for the research (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Smith and Osborn (2008) stress that the researcher *"…needs to see all the words spoken including false starts; significant pauses, laughs and other features are also worth recording"* (p.65). Therefore the words should also be reviewed and interpreted alongside reflections, notes from the interview and the overarching context (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

As the researcher made use of an audio typist to transcribe 30 of the 35 interviews, detailed conversations between the researcher and individual ensured correct emphasis was gathered. Additionally, immersion in the data by reflecting on the complete transcriptions alongside the raw data ensured the reconstruction of the exchange was

accurate and appropriate. This also began the initial stages of analysis with the researcher supplementing the words by providing observations and insights from the interview (Barbour, 2014). The context-dependency of interviews is vital and as Alevesson and Deetz (2000) argue, *"the metaphorical, constitutive, and performance-oriented aspects of talk cannot be disregarded"* (p.195). This is crucial as it underscores the important fact that transcriptions are not too heavily relied on but rather that they are used alongside the original raw data and therefore nuances of the data are not lost (Gibson and Brown, 2009; Bazeley, 2013). This is vital as Gibson and Brown (2009) emphasise transcription is not simply about *"writing down what someone said or did"* (p.109) rather it is about analytical decisions taken by the researcher to represent a piece of data that has been gathered as will be further discussed in section 4.6.

4.4.4 Interview pilot

Undertaking a pilot is crucial in any research study to ensure the data collection method is put through a 'dry run' and deemed suitable, rigorous and reliable (Silverman, 2014; Bazeley, 2013; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

> *"However, even with piloting and forethought with regard to the content and order of questions, there are likely still to be some surprises in store, provided that purposive sampling has endured a supply of interviewees with differing characteristics and experiences" (Barbour, 2014, p.121).*

In this research, a pilot sample of 4 interviewees were selected who met the requirements of the sampling strategy but were critical friends who provided feedback on the interviews. These were informative and crucial as they confirmed Silverman's (2014) view that the interview questions were suitable, clear and uniformly understood and provided a clear foundation for effective interviews, no changes were required as they allowed flexibility to explore individuals experiences. The participants selected for the pilot ranged in experience and leadership level. This was deemed appropriate as the pilot sample represented the target interviewee sample (Barbour, 2014). As a result, the researcher decided these would be included in the final research data due to their value (Bazeley, 2013) and no other pilot interviews were required (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

4.5 Participant Recruitment

Following the research philosophy and qualitative research strategy applied, it is now vital to contemplate the whom and what of qualitative data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) or in other words the study population (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). The nature of qualitative research impacts on this as;

> *"the purpose of qualitative research is to gain a detailed understanding of a certain phenomenon, to identify socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon and the context in which a phenomenon occurs" (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.84).*

As a result, it is common within qualitative research to have a target group rather than seeking a generalised population sample. Probability samples aim to ensure that everyone across the sample population have the opportunity to participate in the research (Morgan, 2008). Within such an approach, a representative response rate is required to ensure the population is equitably represented (Morgan, 2008). Alternatively, in non-probability sampling, participants are chosen because they meet pre-established criteria (Saumure and Given, 2008). Non-probability sampling can involve convenience, purposive and snowball sampling, within each approach the researcher will determine the participants to be included in the research.

As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest qualitative researchers will seek out groups who fit certain criteria and therefore can follow a more purposive sampling strategy. Within research that follows an IPA approach, the sample size is often closely defined and can be quite small, the important aspect is that the sample should be guided by the research and who are the best participants to address the research aim (Smith and Osborn, 2008). For this research, participants were purposively chosen due to their particular leadership characteristic and/or experiences (Easerby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). This allowed the participant recruitment to be deliberate in relation to the people who could contribute and provide key experiences but also flexible in the number of people to be interviewed with the ultimate aim focused on exploring perceptions of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE (Hennink *et al.*, 2011; Easerby-Smith *et al.*, 2008).

4.5.1 Snowball sampling strategy

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) outline that snowball approach to sampling allows the researcher to explore experiences until saturation is reached via commonalities in experiences due to the flexibility offered in purposive sampling (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). It was determined that a snowball sampling technique would be applied to allow different leaders to be discovered and interviewed as part of the research, in-line with identified characteristics (Silverman, 2014; Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

> Snowball sampling *"…involves asking a study participant or a key informant whether they know anyone else in the community who meets the study criteria […] then, after interviewing the referred person, asking them whether they also know others in the community with the specific criteria, and so on"* (Hennink et al., 2011, p.100).

The snowball sampling strategy is therefore beneficial in identifying participants who are out with the researchers' own network who can add differing opinions to the research findings (Silverman, 2014). Another key benefit of this strategy is the level of trust can be enhanced due to the recommendation from peers to participate in the research which is extremely beneficial in qualitative research (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). However it can be challenging to guarantee recommendations who complement the research objectives or the sample could become too homogeneous (Aurini *et al.*, 2016).

As a result, it is important that within this qualitative research the snowball sample is theoretically guided, rather than statistically guided, relating to theoretical propositions over population generalisations as quantitative research would (Silverman, 2014). Additionally, the sample size and ability to generalise the findings is not a central a concern as it is in quantitative data, due to the fact that the in-depth nature does not require a large, representative sample size (Hennink *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, within this study ensuring a wide variety of opinions were included was important which was one of the reasons that a purposive snowball sample was used. This ensured variety of experiences were discovered, allowing perceptions to be comprehensively explored from differing perspectives due to careful management of the sample (Aurini *et al.*, 2016).

4.5.2 Pre-established criteria applied to funnel the research participants

The pre-established criteria for possible participants of this research were made in relation to considerations of the organisational context and stakeholders who could potentially be involved. However, it is important to be flexible before and during purposive sampling (Silverman, 2014). Hennink *et al.* (2011) discuss refining the population and posit this begins by forming a priori study populations at the outset of the research design but subsequently narrowing as a result of the research question and focus of the research. It is also important here to demonstrate how a purposive funnel was applied to the potential research participants in order to guarantee continuity and rigour throughout the study and data collected.

The a priori study population of this research was 'leaders in higher education'. Following the literature review and analysis of the realities of what it takes to be a sustainable leader this was briefly narrowed to include only senior leaders within the sector. However when considering how to guarantee privacy and anonymity to participants this altered and was expanded to include a wider variety of participants, adding to the rigour of the research but also ensuring privacy could be upheld to a greater extent due to the wider sample pool. Consequently leaders at differing levels of HEIs were included, definitions of leaders levels allocated by the researcher is displayed in Table 12.

Table 12: Defining the levels of leaders included in the research

Levels of 'leaders'	Definition
Leaders	Individuals at 'grade 7' with line management responsibilities in current or previous role
Senior Operational Leaders (SOL)	Individuals in formally appointed leadership positions at school level, e.g. 'Head of Subject', 'Dean of School'
Senior Institutional Leaders (SIL)	Individuals in formally appointed institutional positions e.g. 'Director of area', 'Principal' or 'Vice Principal
Key Informants	Individuals in senior positions in policy making organisations within the HE sector

When approaching potential interviewees, the researcher followed the steps outlined in the previous section and invited a total of 55 participants, with a total of 35 scheduled. The target number of interviewees fell between 25-35 with the final number having flexibility applied as a result of the sampling strategy (Silverman, 2014) and being ultimately decided upon due to saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which is only evident during the data collection phase (Hennick *et al.*, 2011). As Morse (2018) states, *"saturation is obtained through ensuring an adequate sample that provides enough data to replicate the data sort within each item" (p.809).* Therefore, as the interviewees discussed, reflected upon and applied similar elements and considerations to different contexts, this study reached saturation level at 35 interviews. Within qualitative data the final number is justified through the entire, iterative participant sample process (Silverman, 2014; Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

In the 35 interviews undertaken, 32 leaders were identified as 'interviewees' and allocated a number, additionally 3 key informant interviewees from policy making organisations were involved in the research in order to represent the HE sector and named 'key informants'. These organisations were Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government. The researcher discussed the identifier given to the interviewees with each of the leaders in order to clarify with them and ensure they felt it represented their role, each of the leaders were happy with the identifiers and agreed with them. Table 13 presents all interviewees identifiers along with their leadership level and type of institution.

Table 13: Interviewees included in this research

Interviewee Number	Role	Interviewee Number	Role	Interviewee Number	Role	Interviewee Number	Role
1 Pilot	Leader in Ancient University	11	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	21	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	31	Senior Operational Leader in New University
2 Pilot	Senior Operational Leader in New University	12	Senior Operational Leader in Ancient University	22	Senior Operational Leader in New University	32	Senior Institutional Leader of New University
3 Pilot	Leader in New University	13	Senior Operational Leader in New University	23	Senior Operational Leader in New University	Key Informant 1 Policy Making Organisation	
4 Pilot	Senior Operational Leader in Ancient University	14	Leader in Chartered University	24	Senior Institutional Leader in Small Specialist Institution	Key Informant 2 Policy Making Organisation	
5	Senior Institutional Leader in Ancient University	15	Leader in New University	25	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University	Key Informant 3 Policy Making Organisation	
6	Leader in New University	16	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	26	Leader in Chartered University		
7	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University	17	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	27	Senior Operational Leader in New University		
8	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	18	Senior Operational Leader in New University	28	Senior Institutional Leader in Chartered University		
9	Senior Operational Leader in New University	19	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University	29	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University		
10	Senior Operational Leader in New University	20	Senior Institutional Leader in Ancient University	30	Senior Institutional Leader in Chartered University		

4.6 Data analysis

"Qualitative data analysis involves a process of immersion in data, through which you can identify and interpret the experiences of your study participants" (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.205).

Arguably data analysis is the most important aspect in the 'success' of a study as it is only through managing and dealing with the data that the researcher can achieve the aim and make interesting findings as a result of engaging with the data collected, rather than just describing it (Gibson and Brown, 2009). Within qualitative research, it is important to be systematic whilst considering and remaining vigilant of the challenges, which may present during data analysis (Barbour, 2014). For this study, it was vital to ensure that the lived experiences of the interviewees can be interlinked with the social world and meaning constructed in an analytical way (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

"There is something very nebulous about analysis, which somehow seems to evade tight description" (Gibson and Brown, 2009, p.1). Due to the *"…intense, engaging, challenging, non-linear, contextualised, and highly variable … [nature of the collected research, with] … fresh insights and deep understanding"* (Bazeley, 2013, p.3), there are no pre-determined set of steps to always follow when undertaking qualitative data analysis (Collis and Hussey, 2009). As a result, immersion in the data is crucial to ensure meanings are derived from the research with data analysis allowing a form of chaos (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Therefore the need for both science and art within data analysis requires;

> *"…a balance of both aspects […] to conduct good quality analysis. Without the 'creative' component, analysis would lack interpretive meaning and empirical theory development, and without the 'scientific' component data analysis would lack process, technique and rigour" (Hennink et al., 2011, p.206).*

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest three components of data analysis – data reduction, data display and drawing/verifying conclusions – as interactive and iterative processes which take place before, during and after the data collection and are designed to help navigate without suggesting a step-by-step guide (Bazeley, 2013). This is important to consider at the outset of data analysis to depict how the process is not linear or straightforward but must be grounded in the underpinning philosophy and aim of the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As a result, it is important to make detailed justifications throughout the research process which will aid in the overarching analysis and add rigour to the conclusions to be drawn from the data. As Bazeley (2013) stresses;

> *"effective analysis requires using data to build a comprehensive, contextualised, and integrated understanding or theoretical model of what has been found, with an argument drawn from across the data that establishes the conclusions drawn" (Bazeley, 2013, p.191).*

With this iterative process in mind, the initial coding framework based purely on the a priori themes was amended during the analytical process due to the variety and complexity of the leaders' experiences. Within this section, an overview of how the data will be analysed via the interview (transcriptions) will be provided by reviewing how this raw data will be analysed using the IPA approach with the help with NVivo.

4.6.1 Coding

"Coding is analysis…codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information complied during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size – words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.56).

Such codes and identifiers of relevant 'chunks' of the data are used to help synthesise and cluster segments which are beneficial in addressing the research aim (or questions) (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Codes are important as they occur during analysis, can occur at a range of levels and have differing meanings but most importantly they *"are astringent – they pull together a lot of material, thus permitting analysis"* (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.58). Gibson and Brown (2009) suggest there is no set process but rather guidelines of how the process could take place. Further, Barbour (2014) states researchers will start out with *'a priori'* themes related to the interview questions but that codes will form from the data and should be derived from the correlations made between interviewee views. No matter the approach taken the development of codes is important with a constant review undertaken to identify the best codes for the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Therefore, a number of stages should be undertaken in coding, as discussed in Table 14.

Table 14: Levels of coding

	Description	Adoption in this research
Pre-coding	• Occurs before and during the data collection • Uses preliminary or a priori codes that have been identified	Themes derived from the HE sector and the sustainable leadership literature were used as the a priori themes (see conceptual framework)
First cycle codes (or open coding)	• Developed in the early stages • Usually a large number of descriptive codes are identified • Can be done very precisely or with larger chunks of data	During the initial analysis the same pieces of data fit with the themes from both the sustainable leadership and the HE sector themes with emergent niche similar discussions appearing throughout the interviews coded as 'emergent themes'
Second cycle coding	• As a result of working with the codes identified during the first cycle • Codes are grouped together or segmented depending on the data	While working with the themes and after analysing half of the interviews a grouping process was undertaken to enable stronger correlations between the data to take place, this resulted in the themes presented in the findings chapter

Adapted from Aurini *et al.* (2016, p.194)

Once the coding process has finished and a process of categorisation has been undertaken, themes that represent the big ideas will emerge (Aurini *et al.*, 2016), a theme is an *"outcome of coding, categorisation and analytical reflection, not something that is, in itself coded"* (Saldana, 2013, p.14). A number of authors discuss how thematic analysis and the creation of codes is often referred to as code trees with 'parent' codes at the centre and 'child' codes branching from the parent code (see for example Barbour, 2014; Gibson and Brown, 2009; Crowley, Harre and Tagg, 2002). Richards (2015) emphasises that by using software qualitative research can facilitate the coding process as it provides effectively no restrictions to the numbers of codes or the ability to code rich data to multiple codes, this flexibility allowed the researcher in this study to comprehensively examine and analyse the data. As the development from pre-coding to first cycle was undertaken (per Table 14), reflections were made about the data and with the use of NVivo the researcher was able to reallocate 'nodes' quickly and easily which made the second cycle coding quick and easy. The IPA approach adopted in this research ensured that the leaders' experiences are demonstrated in the data analysis and findings whilst contributing to the overarching discussions, conclusions and findings of the research.

4.6.2 Presentation of data/use of NVivo

In undertaking data analysis for this study software was utilised as a tool to support the process, not to drive or automate the analysis, as the methodological underpinnings discussed will be driving the analysis (Richards, 2015). Bazeley (2013) suggests this is crucial as although there are some concerns surrounding using computers in software these surround the distance between the researcher and the data along with the idea that it does the data analysis itself. These aspects can be overcome if the software is used to support the researcher's analysis and remove limitations of memory and paper processing which are central to the manual process (Richards, 2015; Bazeley, 2013). As Saldana (2013) suggests the iterative analysis process can be powerfully facilitated by the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programmes as they allow coding, recoding, un-coding, grouping, moving and merging to happen in a key stroke. Bazeley (2013) highlights researchers using IPA have slowly started to use CAQDAS programmes, however when it is used the recommendation is to use its

features to record aspects of particular interest whilst creating codes and a thematic structure to be used throughout the analysis.

4.6.2.1 CAQDAS – Computer package to facilitate data analysis

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) software such as NVivo *"…provide you with a set of tools that will* **assist** *you in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data"* (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p.2). There are a number of different software packages on the market including for example NVivo and Atlas-ti (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). They can be used to help facilitate data analysis (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008), to store, sort, organise and search the data (Creswell, 2014). However they do *"not absolve the (researcher) from his/her theorized account"* (Barbour, 2014, p.260) as the analytical work lies with the researcher (Patton, 2015). Bazeley and Jackson (2013) and Crowley *et al.* (2002) highlight using software does not automatically make the research more robust, as that depends on how it is used, rather *"…rigour is strengthened and enacted through utilising an iterative process"* (Barbour, 2014, p.260).

A prominent advantage of using CAQDAS is the efficiency associated with it as opposed to analysing by hand, especially related to the ability to search the entire data set, to assign multiple codes to the same piece of information and explore the interrelated relationships between codes (Creswell, 2014; Gibson and Brown, 2009). Arguably it can *"…both assist with and enrich the [data] abstraction"* (Crowley *et al.*, 2002, p.193). Richards (2015) argues that by utilising computer software the management and record keeping that accompanies qualitative data is chronicled, maintained and can be used to manage the entire study. Therefore having a rigorous data management process is a vital advantage of using CAQDAS (Bazeley, 2013; Saldana, 2013). There is however, debate around how much it can hinder creativity in order to facilitate efficiency (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013).

Within this research, the NVivo CAQDAS was utilised, Crowley, Harre and Tagg (2002) suggest that it is regarded as one of the most *"sophisticated qualitative analysis packages"* (p.194). The researcher's use of NVivo aligns with the arguments of Richards (2015) and Bazeley (2013) as it allowed the creation and development throughout the study more easily than a manual filing cabinet. Within NVivo 'nodes' are used to

represent themes and ideas which are organised into 'trees', are flexible and can be used to interrogate the data (Crowley *et al.*, 2002). This was a key aspect in developing the presentation of the findings in this research, hence the software helped facilitate the research, not restrict the process (Crowley *et al.,* 2002). Rather it allowed the researcher to manage the data and more importantly the ideas surrounding the data by storing reflections and facilitating the analysis of the data by using the different forms Richards (2015) describes, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Using NVivo to manage ideas surrounding the data

Method	Description	How it is used in this study
Annotations	Annotations are comments which belong with the record and refer to its content	Note initial reflections and store comments related directly to quotes from the transcription, assures that the idea can be presented alongside the original piece of data
Memos	Writing about other themes or ideas and allows a place for the study to grow as this ensures that as ideas become more complex and more established	Used in multiple ways; As a diary reflection for each interview Notes regarding each transcription Thematic framework development
Linking data	Links or pointers to related materials within the study or out from it assisting to weave a stronger fabric of data and interpretation	Predominantly used to bring together ideas and show similarities between data transcriptions Allows raw data to be linked to precise areas of literature.

Adapted from Richards (2015, p.91)

4.6.3 Data analysis themes using IPA

Smith *et al.* (2009) outline a typical process of IPA however suggest that *"analysis is an iterative process of fluid description and engagement with the transcript"* (p.81). Therefore, the researcher's approach involved using the levels of coding suggested by Aurini *et al.* (2016) (in Table 14) in conjunction with Smith *et al.*'s (2009) process as will now be discussed. Importantly, the researcher's approach was iterative.

> *"IPA provides a set of flexible guidelines which can be adapted by individual researchers, according to their research objectives…the researcher is advised to be flexible and creative in his or her thinking" (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012, p.366).*

As Smith *et al*. (2009) suggest did not follow steps 1-6 sequentially but did cover all steps. This flexibility and development based on the data was a core component of this

research.

The researcher began the data analysis by immersing in the data by '**reading and re-reading**', Smith *et al*.'s (2009) **first step**. This occurred throughout the duration of the analysis as the researcher listened to each transcript audio whilst simultaneously reading and reflecting on the data individually for all 35 interviews. Whilst reviewing each interview and transcript, **step two 'initial noting'** was undertaken by making annotations in Nvivo for each transcript, these comments related to the themes and literature. The pre-coding of this study (as discussed by Aurini, *et al*., 2016) utilised the themes presented in the conceptual framework (see 3.7 – Figure 8). However, as Crowley *et al.* (2002) suggest these were not prescriptive and consequently developed and amended throughout the research. By reviewing each transcript the researcher was able to thoroughly examine the leaders experiences and perspectives transcript by transcript however *"the project requires [the researcher] to see across the data, and above the individual documents, to themes and ideas"* (Richards, 2015, p.103). This constitutes Smith *et al.*'s (2009) **step 5 'moving to the next case'**, which means reviewing each individually to explore each leaders perceptions and experiences. This moved the data analysis to **step three 'developing emergent themes'**, which allowed codes to emerge from the data as Brooks, McCluskey, Turley and King (2015) suggested. The contextualisation was extremely beneficial to understand the leader's experiences and perceptions. However as Johnston (2006) emphasises when using a CAQDAS software programme it is crucial not to fall into a 'coding trap' and over code just because the software will allow this to happen. As NVivo allows multiple, overlapping identifications to be made this enabled patterns to be visible with multiple dimensions extracted without limits (Bazeley, 2013). This constitutes Smith *et al.*'s (2009) **step four 'searching for connections across emergent themes'** and **five 'looking for patterns across cases'** as commonalities across the interviews were demonstrated, along with Aurini *et al*.'s (2016) **second cycle coding.** However as Hennink *et al.* (2011) and Gibson and Brown (2009) suggested this process was iterative and hard to directly explain. The entire process did as Smith *et al*. (2009) comment allow **deeper levels of interpretation.** Therefore, the researcher progressed to the writing up stage and was able to *"present the results in a full narrative account which is comprehensible, systematic and persuasive*

to the reader" (p.109). Therefore the findings chapter is presented based on the themes and correlations in the data and is structured around four key areas; 5.2 Defining leadership and sustainable leadership in HE; 5.3 Inclusive and collegiate institution; 5.4 Sustainable leadership development; and 5.5 Contextual influences affecting sustainable leadership. By structuring the findings chapter according to these four areas provide an in-depth and accurate account of the interviewees' perceptions and experiences, without reference to extant literature. Then in the discussions chapter the researcher is able to,

> *"…register changes and you place your work in a wider context. Here then you engage in a dialogue between your findings and the existing literature (Smith et al., 2009, p.112)*

Consequently the discussions chapter is presented in line with the conceptual framework (see 3.7 – Figure 8) culminating in the presentation of an empirically based conceptual framework derived from the key findings and discussions of the research.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring ethical considerations have been undertaken and guide the research is very important for qualitative research for a number of reasons (Hennink *et al.,* 2011). Such considerations should not be simple tick box exercises, rather should be instrumental throughout the research design and delivery (Silverman, 2014). During the entire design of this research study ethical considerations have been made and informed decisions. This is demonstrated in the approval of the research from Edinburgh Napier University's Business School Research Integrity Committee on the 1st May 2018. This process involved detailing each stage of the research design and outlining key decisions that informed the collection of the data, the completed form can be found in Appendix 1.

All actual and potential interviewees were contacted via an invite email (see Appendix 2) and accompanying information sheet (see Appendix 3). This provided the individuals with a range of details regarding the study; including research aims, how the data would be used; and why they had been invited to participate (Hennink *et al.,* 2011). Hence ensuring the interviewees were aware of how their data would be used whilst also guaranteeing relevant ethical considerations and elements were upheld before, during

and after the data collection phase of the research (and particularly during the recruitment of research interviewees) (Roulston, 2010).

4.7.1 Informed consent

Informed consent involves providing all research participants with details of all prominent factors of the research along with risk and benefits of taking part in the research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Silverman (2014) suggests informed consent is a process of negotiation and information sharing regarding the research study, should be provided upfront and transparently throughout the recruitment of interviewees for the study (Roulston, 2010). For this research, such transparency helped to provide sufficient detail and guide conversations around the interviewees consent and how their information and experiences would be used in the research. Ensuring informed consent was achieved involved detailing all study aspects in the initial and follow up email correspondence and via the information sheet, whilst also discussing this orally at the beginning of each interview. To confirm the interviewee's informed consent following these conversations they signed a consent form, which detailed the discussions, as suggested by Hennink *et al.* (2011), (see Appendix 4). These discussions also involved negotiations to ensure interviewees were not only happy to participate but also approved audio recording of the interviews. During requests to record the interview, the researcher outlined it would allow the data to be transcribed verbatim, however if the interviewees wished to decline the request to record the interview alternative mechanisms to capture the data would be employed (i.e. note taking). It was also important to highlight to the interviewees that recording could be paused at any time and also could be checked for accuracy by the individuals (Alevesson and Deetz, 2000). Securing full, informed consent is a vital element to ensure research ethics are upheld (Silverman, 2014) and were central considerations made by the researcher during every piece of communication.

4.7.2 Anonymity and privacy

Guaranteeing privacy and protection is crucial in all research, even when delicate, sensitive subjects are not, on the face of things, involved in the research (Silverman, 2014). Hence, one of the most important considerations for this research was to do no

harm and guarantee privacy to all interviewees (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). This was predominately due to the personal and professional experiences shared by the leaders on their own practices and perceptions of peers. As a result, the anonymity of the data was at the forefront of the researchers mind to ensure the security and privacy of the participants (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). By doing so this helped to build trust between the interviewee and participants but also importantly ensured that no one was compromised as a result of taking part in this research. As Hennink *et al.* (2011) accentuate *"anonymising data involves removing any identifiers from the interview transcripts that may provide a clue as to the identity of the participant, but it also includes not using participants' names as files names"* (p.72).

Importantly, during discussions regarding consent the researcher established the identifier associated with each interviewee (for example interviewee X – leadership role) – see Table 13. This was crucial to ensure privacy was upheld and that participants approved with the identifier to be associated with their experiences whilst maintaining their anonymity (Silverman, 2014). This was a point stressed by the research integrity committee and considered in depth by the researcher as it posed serious concerns due to the small nature of the research sample community involved and possibility of identification. As a result, the pre-established criteria to be utilised in the research was carefully considered to ensure that identifiers guaranteed complete anonymity (see also 4.5.2).

4.7.3 Voluntary participation

Ensuring that every participant knew their privacy would be protected was crucial but also confirming individuals' freedom to participate was important (Hennink *et al.*, 2011) and emphasised during all contact between the researcher and individuals. Although individuals were directly contacted by the researcher they had to confirm they were happy to participate before any further communication was undertaken. As a result of the snowball sampling technique used in the research a larger number of participants were contacted as potential interviewees however the voluntary participation meant only those who wished to participate were actually interviewed. To ensure this was clear, information on this voluntary involvement was provided in the invite email,

detailed in the information sheet and also discussed at the beginning of each research interview with the right to withdraw also discussed if the individual wanted to discontinue the interview at any time. In the end, all 35 interviewees were happy with this and demonstrated they understood their voluntary involvement by signing the consent form.

4.8 Credibility and trustworthiness

Within all research studies it is essential to assure the data is rigorous and has reliability, generalisability and validity however *"the meanings of the terms need to be altered"* (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p.400) for qualitative based research. Silverman (2014) argues that simply by undertaking qualitative research this does not excuse the researcher from the rigorous, critical standards which should always apply in research. As a result, terms such as credibility and trustworthiness are seen as more appropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) highlight that *"there is little concern for empirical generalisation"* (p.313) due to the belief that each piece of research should be analysed in a manner that fits the distinctive nature of that phenomenon (Psathas, 1995, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). IPA allows for rigour to be applied whilst allowing for a subjective exploration of perceptions and understanding of the data collected (Thorpe and Holt, 2008).

When discussing credibility of research Silverman (2014) argues validity and reliability are central concepts with *"reliability refer[ing] to the stability of findings, whereas validity represents the truthfulness of findings"* (p.83). Arguably *"without rigour, research is worthless"* (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers, 2002). Since the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985); there have been a number of changes to language used when discussing the rigour that is required for all research. Within this research, ensuring that the study is replicable is important. All interviews were audio recorded (with express consent provided) and carefully transcribed verbatim to ensure they satisfied the 'low inference descriptors' (Silverman, 2014). By recording the interviewees the researcher was able to ensure the quality of information by capturing the live data and allowing for detailed transcriptions with the researcher re-listening to the interviews (Roulston, 2010).

The question of **trustworthiness** is one of the most important questions that is raised in qualitative studies and should be applied during and after the research itself (Morse *et al.*, 2002). Barbour (2014) highlights that no one can ever ensure that people are always telling the truth all the time. The emphasis should instead be on utilising differences to explore the unique insights of interviewees, uncovering subtleties (Barbour, 2014). Therefore, although the qualitative data method can be assessed the idea of truth is not of central concern due to the philosophical underpinning where it is the experience of the interviewees that is crucial and not a solid 'truth'. This is where the idea of trustworthiness can help to evaluate rigour rather than guarantee it (Morse *et al.*, 2002).

4.9 Summary of research design and methodology

Throughout this chapter the researcher has provided detailed descriptions and justifications of the research approach. This approach is founded in a subjectivist epistemology and interpretivist ontology which seek to explore individuals perceptions. As such a qualitative, IPA methodology was adopted which focused on exploring and understanding the individual experiences and perceptions of leaders within Scottish HE. Consequently 35 in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviewees took place with leaders who were met the pre-established criteria of holding a leadership position at grade 7 and above within Scottish HEIs. Interviewees were recruited using a non-probability snowball sampling technique. Additionally, key informant interviews were undertaken with people in policy-making organisations within the sector from Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government. In total 13 out of the 19 Scottish institutions were involved in the research with at least one institution from across the types of institutions involved. The rich, deep data collected during the interviews therefore allowed the researcher to explore differing perspectives and lived experiences. Data analysis was facilitated using NVivo and, via IPA, similarities across the interviewees' experiences were analysed and will be presented in chapter 5. The researcher undertook all ethical considerations carefully, especially related to privacy and protecting the anonymity of interviewees. For this reason, each interviewee was allocated a number and a designated leader level identifier to ensure exact job titles

were not used. Further, no leader who participated in the research can be identified by demographic attributes (such as sex or age) again to guarantee anonymity.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings Chapter

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore leaders' perceptions of challenges and prospects of sustainable leadership in Higher Education. Following objective 3, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews to explore leaders' perceptions of sustainable leadership in order to explore prospects for future development and challenges leaders may face. To facilitate this, the research follows a subjectivist epistemology and interpretivist ontology with a qualitative, interpretive phenomenological analysis methodology. In accordance with this, this research conducted interviews, with a snowball sampling technique, which facilitated a good spread of interviewees throughout the Scottish HE sector. Across all types of institutions in Scotland, 35 leaders participated in interviews and each was allocated a number and their leadership role was allocated into a representative level applied in this research; Leaders (L), Senior Operational Leaders (SOL) or Senior Institutional Leaders (SIL). This allowed the exploration of similarities between or differences across levels of leaders. Table 16 presents a breakdown and definition of each leadership level.

Table 16: Definition of levels of 'leaders'

Levels of 'leaders'	Total No. Included	Definition
Leaders	6	Individuals at 'grade 7' with line management responsibilities in current or previous role in HE
Senior Operational Leaders (SOL)	15	Individuals in formally appointed leadership positions at school level, e.g. 'Head of Subject', 'Dean of School'
Senior Institutional Leaders (SIL)	11	Individuals in formally appointed institutional positions e.g. 'Director of area', 'Principal' or 'Vice Principal
Key Informants	3	Individuals in senior positions in policy making organisations within the HE sector
	35	

The leaders were also identified by their institution type, identified in accordance with Macpherson (2015) (see Table 1), leaders derived from 3 out of 4 'ancient' institutions; 3 out of 5 'chartered' institutions; 6 out of 7 'new' institutions and 1 out of 3 'small specialist' institutions. Table 17 provides a list of all interviewees with their allocated

numbers, level of leadership and type of institution. Throughout this chapter, each leader is referred to as their interviewee number and allocated leadership level, e.g. 'Interviewee 1 (L)'.

Table 17: Allocated interviewee numbers and roles

Interviewee Number	Role	Interviewee Number	Role	Interviewee Number	Role	Interviewee Number	Role
1 Pilot	Leader in Ancient University	11	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	21	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	31	Senior Operational Leader in New University
2 Pilot	Senior Operational Leader in New University	12	Senior Operational Leader in Ancient University	22	Senior Operational Leader in New University	32	Senior Institutional Leader of New University
3 Pilot	Leader in New University	13	Senior Operational Leader in New University	23	Senior Operational Leader in New University	Key Informant 1 Policy Making Organisation	
4 Pilot	Senior Operational Leader in Ancient University	14	Leader in Chartered University	24	Senior Institutional Leader in Small Specialist Institution	Key Informant 2 Policy Making Organisation	
5	Senior Institutional Leader in Ancient University	15	Leader in New University	25	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University	Key Informant 3 Policy Making Organisation	
6	Leader in New University	16	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	26	Leader in Chartered University		
7	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University	17	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	27	Senior Operational Leader in New University		
8	Senior Institutional Leader in New University	18	Senior Operational Leader in New University	28	Senior Institutional Leader in Chartered University		
9	Senior Operational Leader in New University	19	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University	29	Senior Operational Leader in Chartered University		
10	Senior Operational Leader in New University	20	Senior Institutional Leader in Ancient University	30	Senior Institutional Leader in Chartered University		

NVivo facilitated the research analysis of this study (see 4.6) with coding undertaken in line with the IPA approach, (see section 4.6.3.2). Smith *et al.* (2009) propose,

> *"…[the] purpose here [in the analysis and findings] is twofold: you need to give an account of your data, to communicate a sense of what the data are like, and you need to offer an interpretation of your data, to make a case for what they all mean" (Smith et al., 2009, p.109)*

The interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology applied in this study allowed the researcher to undertake an in-depth exploration of the leaders' perceptions and experiences and discuss prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership in

Scottish HE. This chapter presents these experiences and perceptions, subsequently in the discussions chapter (Chapter.6) these experiences are located and discussed in line with existing, wider literature.

5.2 Defining Leadership and Sustainable Leadership in H.E

A number of the leaders discussed and stressed the importance of context, ensuring that the relevance and applicability of any leadership framework is clearly communicated and related back to the purpose of HE, which ultimately Interviewee 25 (SOL) states should centre on students, and ultimately *"…it's putting the university's context around the model".* Interviewee 23 (SOL) importantly stressed leadership in higher education is different from other public sector areas as *"…leadership for impact is in a very different context"* reinforcing the unique position HEIs find themselves. However, as Interviewee 22 (SOL) posits context is central to embedding sustainable leadership, but highlights this must be transferred to the individual decision making level. Therefore although as Interviewee 31 (SOL) proposed *"there's very little new under the sun when it comes to leading",* a recognition of the contextual influences is pivotal and one of the unique aspects of this thesis. As a result, exploring how leaders define leadership and sustainable leadership is crucial before exploring the facets of the concepts within the sector and HEIs specifically in more depth in the remainder of the chapter.

5.2.1 Exploring Leadership in H.E.

Exploring the underpinning concept and perceptions of leadership in higher education is important before focusing on sustainable leadership. This will be done by investigating interviewees' definitions of leadership, the importance of the culture leaders create and role they play in HEIs and will pave the way for an exploration of the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership within Scottish HE.

At different points during the interviews, leaders (14) discussed their perspectives of leadership and the key skills they believed leaders required, illustrating a variety of responses. A number alluded to different perceptions on the ambiguity of leadership as a result of the role, the leaders experience, the aim or definition of leadership itself and as a result varying definitions were shared. Nevertheless, there were common ideas

discussed such as motivating toward a shared sense of purpose (Interviewee 32 – SIL), adopting extra responsibility (Interviewee 3 – L), engaging with people to accomplish objectives by facilitating them towards the achieved goals (Interviewee 4 – SOL), setting a clear direction and creating an environment where people can be successful (Interviewee 8 – SIL).

Ultimately leaders will adopt different approaches, which a number of the leaders suggested was not necessarily a negative. Interviewee 29 (SOL) did suggest the most important element of leadership was to be genuine, not just to the people around the leader but also to one's self. This view is interesting to emphasise the idea of transparency and being true to oneself as a leader can aid in adopting a stakeholder approach where contemplating the impact you have as a leader is vital, which is central to sustainable leadership and underlines the importance the influence leaders have. Therefore, when considering direct reports and stakeholders the leader will work with resulted in a number of the interviewees distinguishing between leadership and management as they discussed their role as leaders in HEIs.

5.2.1.1 Leaders perceived differences between leadership and management

The perceived differences of leadership and management espoused by a number of the interviewees originated from different considerations. Some felt the responsibilities in their role centred around 'management' with others believing their influence was more 'leadership' based, especially if or when they hold no direct line management responsibilities. Interviewee 15 (L) highlights their belief that *"…a lot of what I do is more management than leadership"* and details that their role is about operationalising strategy rather than developing strategy. Herein lies the crux of the idea that leadership and management have different objectives and seen by some to be different. Interestingly Interviewee 3 (L) discusses the idea that increasingly 'leadership' is a requirement of all roles in HEIs. A sentiment also argued by Interviewee 26 (L) who went onto suggest that senior level leaders are often measured on management not leadership. Interviewee 9 (SOL) provides an excellent perspective on this and states;

> *"I think we've had a really interesting situation where 10 years ago,*
> *leadership was by those up the top and there was a managerial role.*
> *Management has become, a less attractive word within the university and in*

fact leadership has been pushed down to those who maybe are not so well skilled in leadership, and those above who are suppose to be leading are now kind of managing and to an extent micro-managing. So you've kind of got a flipped position even to the extent that those in the middle run are expected to give academic leadership, and those higher up, don't even necessarily need to have an academic qualification […] they are very much managing and require to manage everything so it just appears to be that the management and leadership thing is all flipped over. And so that in itself causes a little bit of difficulty" (Interviewee 9 – SOL)

The acknowledgement that the identification of leaders and responsibilities associated with different hierarchy levels leads to interesting considerations of the impacts such individuals may have. Interviewee 20 (SIL) agrees with interviewee 9 however reflects dimensions of the job have changed as they have climbed the hierarchy in terms of size of the budget, size of the team and reach around the institution but fundamentally believes there will always be management responsibilities in their leadership position which are *"…not the same as leadership".* However, Interviewee 29 (SOL) suggests leaders should think of a continuum between management and leadership and not view each as completely separate concepts, which Interviewee 17 (SIL) agrees with by stressing they are indistinguishable. Interviewee 26 (L) provided an interesting reflection on their view of the differentiation by stating;

"…I think I'd rather be involved in leadership than management. Because one you don't have to be a manager to be a leader, and being a manager can be compromising in lots of different ways" (Interviewee 26 – L)

However, Interviewee 29 (SOL) in particular shared an example of the need to challenge this when discussing leadership development programmes in their university. The leader highlighted the need to begin with complex discussions about leaders' perceptions at the outset of any training in order to explore the participants experiences and reflection of management versus leadership debates and if needed challenge underpinning assumptions. Ultimately, Interviewee 6 (L) suggests;

"I think that we often forget in higher education that we need leadership and we need management, and management, to me, is all the transactional stuff, making people do what they're supposed to, and making sure that the job is delivered on time. The leadership style is trying to make sure that you are developing people, you are giving them a vision of what things can be like in moving forward, and helping them to reach that vision." (Interviewee 6 – L)

Interviewees 17 (SIL) likewise discusses differences between leadership and management, Interviewee 7 (SOL) also suggests it is *"not what you do, it's how you do it that's crucial in leadership"*. All interviewees stressed the vital role leaders play however emphasise the competence of leaders is challenged by the demands of the sector and if expectations placed upon leaders is unclear this can compound issues around 'effective' or sustainable leadership. Interviewee 11 (SIL) directly discussed the idea that the purpose of leadership needs to be about *"understanding what you are trying to achieve"* while then communicating that in an effective manner.

Therefore the capability of leaders and strength of what they do can be seen to be core in HEIs. Ultimately, leadership should be based on motivating, engaging and inspiring employees to follow the vision cast by the leader, which Interviewee 8 (SIL) also underlines. Consequently, therefore a number of the interviewees emphasise HEIs need to have the right people in place and these leaders must have clear expectations which are outlined and communicated well by senior leaders and subsequently adopted and brought to life by leaders throughout the HEI (Interviewee 12 – SOL). Often when communication is lacking and there are no espoused expectations this becomes unclear and leaders may adopt different approaches. Yet, as Interviewee 14 (L) argues things will continue to happen and be 'successful' in HEIs "...*because of the individuals. It's because of their skills, and their loyalty, and all the rest of it"*. All the interviewees discussed similar aspects related to the culture they create and ultimately all emphasised the important role leaders' play in motivating, inspiring and engaging people throughout HEIs.

5.2.2 Defining Sustainable Leadership

All interviewees were asked if they had knowledge of the concept of sustainable leadership, 17 had not heard of it, although did provide an overview of what they thought the concept could involve. In doing so, they all discussed one or more of the key facets. The other interviewees were able to demonstrate an understanding of sustainable leadership and discussed it effectively.

"Sustainable leadership requires taking a long term perspective in making decisions; fostering systematic innovation aimed at increasing customer value; developing a skilled, loyal and highly engaged workforce; and offering

quality products, services and solutions" (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011)

After sharing the above definition with the leaders, they often reflected on this and how it matched with their expectations of the concept but also in their understanding of leadership too. Interviewee 17 (SIL) presented a sentiment of unquestionable applicability of the concept, asking, *"…why would you not do it, rather than do you do it?"* This is echoed throughout the interviewees' perceptions with no one suggesting that it would be a negative for Scottish HEIs or the sector. Rather 13 of the interviewees directly discussed the value of the concept which was interesting to consider in relation to how appropriate and achievable the concept could be within the institutions, suggesting it could make for good management and have positive impacts (Interviewee 25 – SOL). However some leaders discussed somewhat problematic language surrounding the definition provided, in particular, almost all of the academic interviewees felt the business and private sector language (e.g. use of word customer) used in the definition was problematic and although it could be translated to HE currently it raises some issues (Interviewee 9 – SOL). Interviewee 3 (L) suggested that although the ideas resonate with the institutional values and strategies the language may not sit comfortably *"…because we're not a production line of BMW, making cars and things"*. However, other leaders, for example Interviewee 10 (SOL) from a professional services background, in particular stated it is *"100% applicable".* This shows the differentiation in perspectives on the current language of the concept particularly between academics and professional services staff who also tended to have differing views on whether HEIs are businesses or not. Nevertheless, Interviewee 21 (SIL) suggested that as HEIs move more toward a business model, adopting commercial language has become the norm, which was supported by a number of the other leaders. For example, referring to students as customers (Interviewee 11 – SIL), responding to the tension between delivering quality education and balancing the books (Interviewee 16 – SIL) and demanding pressures (Interviewee 9 – SOL) has led to a number of challenges throughout the institutions.

Three of the leaders (Interviewees 13, 15 and 17) did directly reflect on the fact that core aspects of the sustainable leadership theory are established in existing leadership literature and so concluded sustainable leadership is not brand new but perhaps had

never had a label attached to it. But there was conflicting views on whether the interviewees believed that the concept resonates in higher education and is not too far removed from what is currently happening (Key informant 2). Others commented they *"absolutely"* (Interviewee 24 – SIL) thought it did, with *"being essential for HEIs"* (Interviewee 6 – L) while others felt it was an ideal and something that was being built towards on a journey (Interviewee 25 – SOL). However as Interviewee 21 (SIL) warns;

> *"[…] the principles are important but we need to contextualise it and have a dialogue about what would that look like in the context of a university, rather than how can we make what seems to work well over there work in here."*
> *(Interviewee 21 – SIL)*

Therefore although only a minority had previous experience and knowledge of the topic a number of the leaders identified and discussed core components of the sustainable leadership theory which will now be explored in more depth to outline the perceived impacts and definition of the theory to ultimately explore the applicability of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE.

5.2.2.1 Fundamentals of Sustainable Leadership: Long-term Thinking

A focus on sustainability and enduring was significant with the majority of the interviewees (12) who directly aligned their definitions with the idea of the long-term and having a leadership style and approach that lasts. Within this a number identified the importance of having a long-term perspective, ensuring the focus is on managing with the future in mind evaluating strategies to enable an achievement of 'effective' outcomes. In order to strengthen the long-term focus a number of the leaders suggested a move away from individual objectives. Rather considerations of how to make the institution and people within the HEI sustainable should be central (Interviewee 7 – SOL). Interviewees 19 (SOL) and 27 (SOL) emphasised that any change in culture does take time but can be crucial to achieving sustainable leadership and creating an effective environment for everyone in the HEI. Arguably, *"communication is key"* to achieving this (Interviewee 27 – SOL). Interviewee 4's (SOL) definition also mirrored this sentiment and their reflection on the concept and its importance is insightful;

> *"[…] leadership is pointless if it ends up by destroying something because of some action or other. Leadership is only effective if it's sustainable, if it's long term […] So, in many ways, good leadership and sustainable leadership might*

be seen as the same thing, because they're both concerned with the
embedding of something for the longer term, not just quick fixes."
(Interviewee 4 – SOL)

The current established culture and prominent focus in HEIs tends to be fairly short-term due to increasing demands throughout the sector however, when considering adopting a long-term perspective and implementing sustainable leadership a number of the leaders recognised that this may not be a simple endeavour.

"I think this is the challenge isn't it. So actually the knee jerk reaction when
things go wrong I think in leadership is to demand the action plans and the
focus on the short-term. But, I suspect sustainable leadership would be about
keeping your eye on the long term." (Interviewee 11 – SIL)

Interviewees 3 (L) and 11 (SIL) suggest that reflecting on previous events is crucial, and this should be done by building a culture which fosters people and encourages them to also be reflective, by being a role model in demonstrating these behaviours. However accountability that accompanies leadership, can compound the struggle to balance between short-term results and longer-term developments, particularly as the sector moves more towards an output based approach (via metrics such as the NSS). For example, Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggests often short-term-ist, knee jerk, toxic behaviours increase especially as the managerialism of the public sector increases. In particular, when discussing the role of principals in HEIs the leader states results are a prominent concern as;

"...it's much more cut throat [...] hard nosed, going more like football
managers, being judged by results, however simplistic that is, and if you don't
get the results you're out." (Interviewee 8 – SIL)

Therefore this again underscores the pressures, demands and measurements increasingly being placed on leaders can mean the balance between short and long-term objectives can be difficult to achieve and as a result the negative impact it can have on leaders and on individuals. This sentiment was not just echoed by those at senior institutional levels, leaders at all levels in this study emphasised the importance within HE of not simply focusing year-on-year but rather suggest that somewhere between 3-5 years seems to be the norm for the sector. Particularly as 10 years is somewhat unattractive to businesses and funders (Interviewee 14 – L) therefore this illustrates long-term thinking in HE may be very different to private sectors. However, a number of

the leaders highlight change can be very slow in institutions (Interviewees 16 – SIL, 17 – SIL). Interviewee 12 (SOL) suggesting change and fluctuations within HEIs is like moving an oil tanker, which can take a long time and can be difficult to control which means major changes are rarely achieved quickly, Interviewee 15 (L) in particular suggests changes can take 7-8 years to demonstrate positive and/or negative results. However a number of the interviewees highlight that having good plans in place will not stop unexpected events happening or issues arising therefore flexibility is required to ensure effective delivery (Interviewees 15 – L, 16 – SIL, 31 – SOL and Key Informant 3). However it is important to highlight that often in institutions (such as the ancients) where there is an established long standing culture individuals often have the view of 'we don't do it like that here' (Interviewee 16 – SIL) and can resist change (Interviewee 27 – SOL). Consequently, Interviewee 16 (SIL) argues the slow moving change in HE can frustrate senior institutional leaders who attempt to change something. Interviewee 13 (SOL) further suggested senior leaders may already think they are adopting such approaches (i.e. long-term, sustainable approaches) but in reality they are not. Further, Interviewee 21 (SIL) discussed the reality that within their experience across the sector in a number of institutions serious approaches to sustainability do not appear to be happening. Therefore, the leader may make a number of plans for the long-term, but employee attitudes, issues or short-term demands can derail these plans. Hence although an individual can try to do everything they can, some aspects will always be out with their control or may take too long to implement effective change and therefore practices can be perceived as unsustainable.

The interviewees were very much in agreement that the sustainability of the organisation or HEI was of the utmost priority however cannot be achieved without a robust organisational culture which stems from the institutional strategy and is fostered by senior management then operationalised by leaders throughout HEIs (Interviewee 29 – SOL). Arguably this is only possible by *"helping people get on board"* (Interviewee 27 – SOL), being *"explicit with the way that we're leading and managing people"* (Interviewee 29 – SOL) then ultimately relying on and fostering individuals the leader will work with which will now be explored in more detail.

5.2.2.2 Achieving Sustainability through People

A number of the leaders reflected on how you cannot separate the long-term strategy of what you are aiming to do from the people it will affect regardless of the wider contextual implications (particularly Interviewee 10 – SOL). This involves the relationship directly between leader and follower, the culture and environment created and fostered by leaders as well as how individual leaders respond to certain aspects. However in the context of the growing marketization and competition in which universities are competing Interviewee 12 (SOL) highlights that senior leaders need to think about how they will have a positive impact both on the outcomes of the institution but also on all stakeholders. On the other hand, these sentiments cannot be forced, and Interviewee 18 (SOL) provides an interesting reflection on personal experience where the tensions in organisational culture can potentially be overcome by building effective relationships with employees but also throughout other levels of leadership. However, Interviewee 32 (SIL) emphasised there are a number of challenges to building such a culture and ensuring it becomes a dominant culture. Interviewee 6 (L) discusses one such challenge involves the focus of the HEI, in particular the balance between a focus on students or balancing the books which can cause limited *"confidence in the integrity of the university"*. This highlights the relationships between employees, leaders and overall HEIs is vital but that in attempting to balance demands these relationships can be damaged. Therefore, adopting a long-term perspective in the way leaders approach and manage staff is important but the culture of the organisation plays a pivotal role in fostering these relationships.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the role senior leaders play in influencing this culture and overarching leadership approach of HEIs. Therefore, arguably sustainable leaders should extend their focus to their followers and stakeholders. To achieve this, Interviewee 4 (SOL) suggests positive culture and behaviours should transcend one single leader. Therefore a number of the leaders discussed how being sustainable wasn't necessarily about a personal sustainability but more an embedding of this within their team and creating an effective environment surrounded by personalities who are doing things for the right reasons. Interviewee 5 (SIL) speculates around the lasting impact of a leader and questions if the same team continue to do the same thing will they be able

to last, will they continue to be innovative and effective, therefore the idea of investing in and developing key talent can be a core aspect of ensuring fresh ideas are embedded. Interviewee 27 (SOL) emphasises;

> *"[…] sustainable leadership is about having a model or a process that enables you to have successors, […] with minimal disruption and minimal time, so that performance could be sustained." (Interviewee 27 – SOL)*

Interviewee 2 (SOL) took this sentiment further and suggested that it could be about a distribution of leadership so that it was *"sustainability beyond the leader"* which enables the culture and ideas to sustain (Interviewee 19 – SOL)*.* To achieve this, Key Informant 1 emphasises the potential impact on the entire institution by suggesting the building of…

> *"…a continuing and effective leadership contribution that does enable the institution to succeed." (Key informant 1)*

Interviewee 21 (SIL) also suggests 'distributed academic leadership' where sharing responsibility and devolving tasks to others can be an important element of sustainable leadership and in particular in embedding inclusivity within the HEI. Interviewees 16 (SIL) and 30 (SIL) both discuss the continuity and sustainability of leadership and ensuring someone is ready to *"move into that position"* (Interviewee 16 – SIL). Interviewee 20 (SIL) further suggested by failing to do this often within HEIs, both in leadership and in specialist positions there is often a 'single point of failure', in that no-one can step into the position immediately. Particularly from a leader's perspective if they have not shared any responsibility, deputised or been transparent in what their aims are. These ideas of continuity and longevity were central and led to a number of the leaders underlining the vital role of leadership development (see section 5.4) and emphasising the importance of extending beyond one individual, suggesting using distributed or shared responsibility can facilitate this and enable development on a number of levels (see also section 5.3). As Interviewee 26 (L) also ponders;

> *"…leadership is not an end in itself, it needs to be regenerated, refreshed, etc., in order to meet the challenges that, whether individuals, groups, organisations, face, etc., and you'd want to grow it […] I imagine it's meant to be a way in which to make this a kind of a cultural thing, perhaps, 'this is in our DNA' rather than something that we are tasked to do and the moment we're not tasked to it, it falls by the wayside in some shape or form."*

(Interviewee 26 – L)

This is where the longevity is emphasised and suggests that the HEI or organisation will continue along with the people in it even if one leader leaves. Interviewee 16's (SIL) considerations and sustainable leadership definitions agree with this, as the leader suggests that when a HEI has an engrained, established culture no one would question the practices and behaviours that are expected,

> *"…in a well established organisation I think sustainable leadership just goes without saying, you could probably manage perfectly well without a leader for quite a long time, or even bring somebody in who's quite different and things wouldn't really, really change." (Interviewee 16 – SIL)*

Extending the idea of developing as a leader, when considering individual leaders sustainability four of the interviewees highlighted the importance of leader's resilience with these leaders discussing the ability to 'make things last'. But more directly and importantly focused on preventing burnout and considering the individual resilience of leaders; developing skills in leaders to ensure that the strategy could be achieved; ensuring succession planning, being able to have options to replace current leaders if the need arose; all whilst ultimately again thinking about embedding these practices and this culture throughout the organisation. However, it was reflected on by a number of leaders that often these elements may not be realistic even though they are ideals. Additionally, many discussed the reality of burnout within leadership positions particularly at senior operational leader level had experienced the effects personally (in particular Interviewees 18 - SOL and 19 - SOL) and emphasised being role models to encourage others to learn from them and to avoid aspects of burn out (for example, Interviewee 2 - SOL). Alternatively, Interviewee 20 (SOL) suggests having a mentor is a fantastic way to develop employees, however as Interviewee 27 (SOL) posits this type of learning culture does not happen overnight and time must be provided and trust built to foster the development of a sustainable leadership culture. As a result, Interviewee 32 (SIL) emphasised they believed sustainable leadership must be about building leadership capacity and capability with resilience built into the organisation via the people working within it. Interviewees 4 (SOL), 29 (SOL) and 32 (SIL) all underlined the idea of having a cascading approach across the HEI (Interviewee 4) with *"cheerleaders"* at senior institutional levels (Interviewee 29) which is embraced and embedded by those

at the top (Interviewee 32). Therefore facilitating the development of sustainability through people in HEIs, beginning with senior institutional leaders and subsequently adopted by everyone throughout the HEI is crucial.

5.2.3 Defining leadership and sustainable leadership in HE Summary

All leaders in this research discussed elements and underpinnings of sustainable leadership with many suggesting the benefit of it although there is a recognition of a number of challenges to be overcome. When considering what they would regard as effective leadership the competence of the individual and the culture they create and foster is pivotal for everything that follows. This leadership competence arguably also differentiates between leadership and management approaches and how leaders handle situations, ultimately leadership centres on casting vision, motivating, engaging and encouraging staff and their development throughout HEIs. Therefore, if a leader is to be sustainable a number of the interviewees stated to them this meant adopting a long-term approach to their thinking, considering a continuity of leadership by going beyond the leader, and effective management of individuals by avoiding burnout. However, the demands of the HE sector and how HEIs respond to these demands influence the development of sustainable leadership, as a result fostering a culture which enables a sustainable leadership approach is vital for implementation. Overall the interviewees believed that sustainable leadership could be of benefit within HEIs however suggested this is dependent on how it is communicated and embedded by senior institutional leaders throughout institutions, approaches taken by leaders and how employees respond to building a sustainable leadership culture. As a result, moving beyond considerations of a singular leader and involving as many employees and leaders as possible leads us onto the inclusive and collegiate institution theme of this research.

5.3 Inclusive and collegiate institution

> *"So, I think you kind of need a collaborative or sustainable approach to leadership […] we've not got all the answers, the UK government clearly doesn't have all the answers and they're just waiting to tell us, so you need to kind of work with stakeholders in that kind of way." (Key Informant 3)*

This corresponds with the perceptions of the majority of interviewees and underlines the inclusive and collegiate environment created by leaders throughout the sector is vitally important. Additionally this is essential to creating the right environment to enable HEIs to respond to the demands of the sector and facilitate a shared approach to managing demands on an institutional level (Interviewees 5 – SIL, 21 – SIL and 32 – SIL) but also to dealing with such demands on an individual basis (see section 5.5.2). Therefore encouraging and facilitating leaders' and employees development in order to avoid burn out and share responsibilities to enable everyone to become sustainable is a key element that is often overlooked in institutions, as we will explore in this section. Arguably, the culture leaders create can help manage demands of the sector via leaders acting as key role models, sharing responsibility (via democratic forms of leadership) and ultimately creating an environment that fosters effective, shared values by all stakeholders.

To enable this, Interviewees 9 (SOL) and 20 (SIL) suggest that the clear direction required from above regarding the benefits and greater good of higher education can be essential for current and future staff. This demonstrates that the vision and values espoused by senior leaders and having a collective understanding of what the HEI aims to achieve, accompanied by an open culture and reflection on the achievement of the vision, which is embedded throughout the institution is vital (Interviewee 30 – SIL). Therefore encouraging others to get involved and come along with the leader although difficult is significantly worth it. Although Interviewee 1 (L) stresses this emphasises the need for leaders to have strong negotiation and communication skills to be able to encourage others to help and knowing when and what to delegate are crucial.

Exploring how leaders not only encourage this but also adopt an inclusive environment and involve other employees and leaders in a variety of different ways is important. Interviewee 5 (SIL) also agrees with this sentiment of devolving and sharing responsibility and declares ultimately it is the culture created by institutional leaders and how this is embedded which are key drivers to achieving this. Moreover, Interviewee 11 (SIL) emphasises encouraging employees to have confidence to share their voice and opinions while feeling part of a community, no matter their role, is essential. To achieve this, Interviewee 25 (SOL) suggests this must stem from the values

and vision of the HEI whilst engaging with different audiences throughout the institution. But as Interviewee 6 (L) reminds us involving people and ensuring you have the right people in the right place at the right time, encouraging the sharing of information, views and reviewing essential elements is a key role of leaders within any team. These aspects are vital because if ignored staff can feel alienated, unsupported and potentially feel they need to 'firefight' and have quick reactions to situations which will often not result in the best solution (Interviewee 3 – L). As Key Informant 3 suggests in order to respond to the fast moving changes in the sector an inclusive environment can aid in this but there are a number of elements to consider in making this a reality. Building an inclusive and collegiate institution as a leader will be explored in more detail in this section.

5.3.1 Formal and Informal Leadership Positions

Throughout the interviews, there were many in-depth discussions about the purpose of different positions within HEIs, particularly related to having both formal and informal leadership positions, importantly reinforcing how these opportunities can foster a sense of sustainable leadership. The labels of 'formal' and 'informal' leaders are distinct in that formal leaders have been officially appointed as a leader, they do not relate to leadership approaches (as supported via literature such as Ashford and Sitkin, 2019).

'Academic leadership' as Interviewee 2 (SOL) discusses can mean a variety of things and ultimately is about people adopting responsibilities, bringing people along with them and showing leadership capability in their roles. Interviewee 26 (L) agrees and shared this was true in a number of different roles (from module leadership through formal line management responsibilities) although to differing degrees. Interviewee 29 (SOL) advocates;

> "….leadership happens at all levels. You don't have to be a formal leader to be a leader." (Interviewee 29 – SOL)

Therefore, leadership should not just be about formal leadership skills development or people who opt to go into formal leadership roles (for example Dean of School), which Interviewee 19 (SOL) and others suggest, is a very deliberate move into a management role at that level of seniority. Rather a number of the interviewees highlight leadership

development must start before such formal positions and therefore should involve nurturing natural skills and allowing people who have the ability to both take the initiative and demonstrate their strong academic credibility, which will mean people will 'follow' whether they are in formally appointed positions or not (Interviewee 17 – SIL). Consequently, Interviewees 17 (SIL) and 28 (SIL) suggested 'informal' positions can garner influence and authority if leaders are given the chance to develop. Moreover, Interviewees 2 (SOL) and 20 (SIL) reflect everyone will demonstrate leadership skills, especially employees adopting roles such as module or programme leadership. These roles do not have any direct line management responsibilities, which can be a challenge to individuals (Interviewee 32 – SIL) however, such positions will allow key skills development (such as concise communication and influencing skills). Interviewee 1 (L) in particular supports this and reflects on these skill developments during their time in such as position and emphasises their belief this role and associated development played a pivotal role in their subsequent promotion. Interviewees 2 (SOL) and 19 (SOL) also reflect on their incremental development through leadership positions which although not always 'planned' allowed progressive skills development. Consequently, Interviewee 15 (L) contends often informal positions can be used as stepping-stones to progress up the management hierarchy, as their natural leadership skills can be fostered by taking on different responsibilities. Interviewee 3 (L) interestingly posed that leaders will often take on roles without framing it as a new 'leadership' role, the leader suggests that often *"…it's just things you do"*. Therefore incorporating and encouraging informal leadership can ensure that the development of leaders and individuals' leadership capabilities and skills are fostered, that individuals can have an influence and as a result develop as sustainable leaders (Interviewee 6 – L). Interviewee 9 (SOL) for example discusses how taking on a deputy position was crucial for their development, to learn from their leader but equally to garner respect and credibility. As a result, is something that they have instilled now in their position to ensure they have a 'number 2' (an informal position) who can occupy the position if required whilst aiding in their personal development. Equally, Interviewee 3 (L) also emphasises the importance of having people at different levels involved. This reflects again on the inclusive nature that should be embedded throughout HEIs but also where this identification and allocation of having different responsibilities enables personal, career and organisational development with

different people taking on different responsibilities at different times. Further, Interviewee 8 (SIL) also emphasised the major challenges employees face when taking on such roles in terms of inspiring and influencing those around them and importantly encouraging specific behaviours, however stressed they are key development activities. This aspect of learning incrementally via opportunities will be discussed more in section 5.4 but for now considering how sharing responsibilities in formal leadership roles via rotating leadership positions will be extremely beneficial.

5.3.2 Rotating leadership positions

Following on from this idea of sharing and encouraging employees to take on differing responsibilities and therefore fostering an inclusive culture that has such values at its crux leads onto a consideration of a formal practice which facilitates this, the adoption of rotation of leaders within certain leadership roles. This study found that this set-up, although more commonplace in chartered and ancient universities, was present in all three category types of institutions in Scotland.

A number of the interviewees discussed their experiences of rotating leadership positions and had some interesting views, some were strong advocates of the practice, some against regardless all emphasised positives and negatives associated with rotating the positions. It is important to highlight that all institutions had a different way of enacting the practice of rotating positions (as alluded to by interviewees 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, 16, 18, 30, 32 and key informant 1). For some it was at formal head of department level for a tenure period of 3-6 years but at others it was more informal programme leader roles (for a fixed period of 3 years). However, there were similar issues and difficulties shared by all leaders who had experience of being in or working with rotating leadership positions, regardless all leaders believed it aided in adopting an inclusive approach to leadership development. Highlighting, in particular the ability to share responsibility ensured that a leader did not suffer from burnout as a result of their leadership position (see also section 5.5.2).

All interviewees who discussed rotating leadership positions agreed that a maximum tenure of 5 years ensured that the leaders had sufficient time to enact changes and get the most out of the position. Arguably, leaders should not see the leadership position as

a *"…career dead end"* which Interviewee 2 (SOL) suggests is vital for leaders taking on the role(s). Key Informant 1 and Interviewee 16 (SIL) also highlight it is vital leaders do not feel the need to give up their academic identity, unless this is a conscious decision by the leader. In particular, Interviewee 8 (SIL) has an interesting perspective on this problematic issue of balancing responsibilities in leadership positions and suggests using rotating positions can encourage development and sharing of responsibility, in order to achieve a sustainable workforce. However suggests regulating the exact time of the positions may not be the best option. This is to allow positions to be flexible and to allow individuals the time and space required to benefit from it personally and to garner effective guidance and mentorship whilst in the role they can then pass on and share with others. Additionally, Interviewees 4 (SOL) and 20 (SIL) highlight having a short tenure in a rotating leadership position can be beneficial as it can allow the leader to be a *"change agent"* (Interviewee 20 – SIL) within their team/department. For example, Interviewee 1 (L) highlights an informal leadership position of programme leadership was extremely beneficial in their development and having the ability to step away from the position after 3 years due to the rotating post was equally as beneficial for their career. This was because they could concentrate on other aspects of their academic role after having developed key leadership skills during their time in role. Therefore, there must be an acknowledgement of the demands faced by leaders to continue to develop and advance their career while simultaneously undertaking their current role (Interviewee 8 – SIL). Arguably, as interviewee 1 alluded that rotating positions can allow the leader to move on to focus on one of their other demands after their tenure. Regardless of how long the leaders held the tenure in a rotating position for, because of this difficulty in balancing demands particularly when leaders have a substantive post along with responsibility for leadership etc. (e.g. professorial position as substantive), therefore trying to balance their original day-to-day role with the leadership position can be challenging (Interviewees 18 – SOL and 30 – SIL). With Interviewee 16 (SIL) suggesting if this was not a temporary arrangement attempting to balance these demands can be *"almost impossible".* Consequently, a number of the leaders discussed being at a crossroads following the end of their tenure as to whether to go back to their substantive position or to stay in a managerial role.

However Interviewees 9 (SOL) and 30 (SIL) highlight if this involves 'stepping down' this can be problematic for leaders and so they may opt to continue in the position. Alternatively, some detail that the reward provided to them after the rotating position was worth staying in post for. In particular, three of the interviewees (7, 16 and 19) discussed how the reward of a sabbatical at the end of a longer stint was very appealing as it gave them a change to recharge their batteries and restart their research career. However often people can feel depleted after their stint as a leader and often use it as a way to recover from the stress of the position and only make some steps to kick-start their research once more. This demonstrates that actually the reality of the 'reward' of a sabbatical can often be very different from the intended purpose (i.e. to recover and put things in place rather than produce outputs).

Additionally, Interviewees 8 (SIL) and 30 (SIL) advocated for the opportunities rotations in leadership positions provides others is a notable advantage that allows sharing responsibility while also developing others and keeping individuals' options open. Interviewee 19 (SOL) discussed rotating leadership positions at length, agreeing with the benefits of sharing responsibilities and suggested that particularly as you become more senior ethically you have a responsibility to take on a leadership position, including informally mentoring or formal short tenure based positions. One aspect almost all the interviewees discussed in relation to rotating leadership positions was a difficulty in managing as a 'first amongst equals' (particularly Interviewees 19 – SOL and 30 – SIL). Particularly if they have to performance manage 'colleagues' (Interviewee 7 – SOL), which Interviewee 32 (SIL) suggests often leaders in such positions may avoid. Nevertheless, Interviewees 4 (SOL) and 22 (SOL) suggest taking on a rotational leadership position can be important for shared understanding and individual development associated with it. With Interviewee 4 (SOL), further arguing continuity of the HEI's culture is of the utmost importance and the leader taking on the position should take on the responsibility of continuity and agree to that long-term culture that is present and should supersede any one leader. However Interviewees 12 (SOL) and 14 (L) warn individuals must have sufficient development and support when embarking on these positions. Interviewee 32 (SIL) discusses this and although echoes views the positions are of benefit suggests that often if the rotation is between people at a certain

level (particularly professorial levels) this can be problematic depending on the number of people at that level. Interviewee 2 (SOL) also suggested this is a barrier to rotating positions within their department that it becomes a domino effect of moving everyone if someone wishes to move. Equally coming back to the idea of lack of training and knowledge, interviewee 32 insinuates it may be academics who have just joined the HEI need to take on the role if everyone else has done it or doesn't want to do it and therefore argues this where the rotations do not work.

Ultimately, regardless of the time a leader is in the position, the most important aspect is the effectiveness of an individual in a leadership position and particularly how they handle and manage staff they are responsible for was an important aspect in embedding inclusivity within HEIs which will now be explored.

5.3.3 Management

An important sub-theme of creating an inclusive environment and culture in organisations was how leaders manage and interact with their peers and their followers. 'Management' here is used in a flexible way but ultimately involves how leaders who are line managers interact and support staff they are responsible for. Additionally, when discussing leadership in HEIs, leaders voluntarily discussed the elements that will be discussed in this theme underlining the importance to the leaders in their roles. Interviewees at all levels (L, SOL, SIL) identified a fundamental aspect of being a leader for them was around understanding. Equally, an undertone of effective leadership in this regard was about sharing information, sharing responsibility and developing skills as and when appropriate.

5.3.3.1 Being an advocate

A number of the interviews discussed a key role of leaders is to become an advocate for those around them. Interviewee 1 (L) discusses that at times representing peers in sharing issues or concerns is important as although the leader may not have the direct power to change the issue they must raise this with a more senior leader. Ultimately however Interviewee 18 (SOL) highlights it is important to try and understand different frustrations whilst encouraging employees to work through these. Interviewee 19 (SOL)

agrees and suggest that in a senior operational role there are challenges and pressures from above and from below and the leader must manage these;

> *"…you almost act as a protected barrier in that you try and filter the worst of what comes from the top and try and make it palatable to colleagues"*
> *(Interviewee 19 – SOL)*

This idea of acting as a filter and advocating for staff is very important and a number of the leaders shared they felt that experience in leadership positions helped them manage this more easily (Interviewees 10 – SOL, 17 – SIL). Interviewee 10 (SIL) and 18 (SOL) however reflect that a balance between transparency and implication of sharing too much with staff can be problematic. In particular, Interviewee 18 (SOL) highlighted how a major personal challenge in terms of managing the expectations of staff, managing the exchange of information, managing what is happening and how as a leader this can be responded to. Arguably, to manage this the leader discusses the need to be authentic, be supportive, be a champion for employees, and ultimately be employees' voice (Interviewee 18 – SOL). Interviewee 17 (SIL) agreed by discussing these aspects whilst also suggesting that encouraging sharing and facilitation is a key aspect of effective leadership and arguably being their advocate and champion is imperative to this.

Interviewee 19 (SOL) suggested the environment created by leader is key and therefore providing advice, support and help can facilitate an enabling environment for employees, something also discussed by senior institutional leaders Interviewee's 24 and 28. This highlights that being an advocate for employees will enable the creation of a collegiate environment and team(s) which can help employees to build resilience but also inspire and motivate them to achieve the best they can.

5.3.3.2 Role model

Following discussions of being an advocate for employees, a number of the leaders discussed aspects of being a role model for them but also having learned from other leaders they would identify as role models was vitally importantly in enabling them to create an effective, collegiate environment.

Central to this and following on from being an advocate for staff was the importance of encouraging autonomy to learn from those around them whilst as a leader being

encouraging and supporting individuals whilst always 'having their back' (Interviewee 11 –SIL). Ultimately, Interviewee 9 (SOL) argues that as a leader ensuring that everyone has a shared goal that aligns individual, team and institutional objectives is vital. To achieve this the interviewee suggests that casting vision and sharing views on a two-way basis is central to achieving this. Therefore the importance of coaching others and seeing what as a leader they can do to help was emphasised (Interviewee 30 – SIL, 32 – SIL), Interviewee 31 (SOL) further emphasised the importance of having role models who extend throughout the HEIs and suggests that;

> *"…if the person at the top has got the right qualities […] setting a good example, and [being] decent, and honourable, willing to listen […] it's a good thing […] caring is a great skill […] If you care for them and show that they matter to you, they will go the extra inch when you need them to do so."*
> *(Interviewee 31 – SOL)*

This leader had witnessed such behaviour and positive repercussions by valuing staff and role modelling the behaviour they wanted to see from others. The idea of physically walking the floor and talking to people, having a personal connection and getting to know staff can have significant benefits according to Interviewees 4 (SOL) and 16 (SIL). However, it can be time consuming (Interviewee 4 – SOL) or hard to do *"because we get very busy"* (Interviewee 16 – SIL).

Interviewees 10, 13, 17, 18, 21 and 32 who are all at senior operational or institutional levels, advocated the idea of sharing responsibility and delegating to employees, which is most beneficial when it becomes an approach adopted throughout the entire organisation. Interviewee 22 (SOL) reflected that although they had attempted to be a role model and encourage that democratic style people were not always open to this, arguably because an individualistic nature often is the dominant culture in the day-to-day life of academics in HEIs, which as discussed can be detrimental (Interviewees 9 – SOL and 10 – SOL). Similarly, Interviewee 7 (SOL) emphasised delegation was a vital aspect for them as a leader however it is only possible if employees or direct reports are equipped and have the skills to allow delegation, but arguably Interviewee 2 (SOL) suggests only by sharing responsibility will you enable development. Something Interviewee 17 (SIL) also agreed with, additionally Interviewee 21 (SIL) suggested dialogue is key to achieving this and integrating a democratic way of working. Further,

Interviewees 24 (SIL) and 31 (SOL) suggests there should be a balance between giving complete autonomy and free reign versus the leader stepping in to do things themselves which should be done only if completely necessary, rather being there to support has had positive impacts in their experiences. Arguably, micromanaging leaders will often *"…stifle entrepreneurship and innovation"* (Interviewee 24 – SIL) and therefore allowing employees to trial different things and create their own path is essential but a difficult balance to achieve at times. Interviewee 10 (SOL) agreed and reflected that with experience they have learned not to interfere and jump in thinking they were rolling up their sleeves and helping which wasn't helping but rather they have learned to delegate. However, it can be important for leaders to be aware of operational issues and so being able to offer help can be important (Interviewee 9 – SOL). Interviewee 31 (SOL) also argues that in order to be able to fully support and to understand the pressures and challenges a leader faces, *"keeping their hand in"* is imperative for leaders to enable that understanding, an argument also posed by Interviewees 16 (SIL) and 9 (SOL).

Embedding a distributed and shared approach to responsibilities and to leadership can be extremely beneficial. A number of the senior operational and senior institutional leaders (Interviewees 2, 9, 10, 11, 18, 21, 27, 30 and 32) shared the view that having distributed line management responsibilities and having more than one leader on top (particularly in senior roles) helped to provide opportunities for others but also in sharing responsibilities. Additionally, the leaders discussed the idea that having a smaller team enabled and facilitated linkages between the leader(s) with their team and the time they can spend with them (Interviewee 27 especially talked about this at length). Additionally by sharing line management responsibilities in particular meant that others can act up to manage some operational aspects allowing leaders at the senior operational level to focus on being more strategic, again supporting the idea that distributed leadership can be achieved. An interesting observation is that each of these leaders (who discuss sharing line management responsibilities) are from new universities although they did have differing hierarchical structures the set-up of smaller teams implementation differed however the consistent argument from the research interviewees' centres around the positive impact a direct management with a small team. Ultimately the role of leaders and connection they had with their team and ability

to be an effective role model and leader was a fundamental skill and pivotal when encouraging inclusivity in HEIs.

5.3.3.3 Responding to demands and managing in a period of growing managerialism

One aspect that a number of the interviewees discussed is the impact that a growing culture of managerialism had on individuals within HEIs but also how this placed increasing strain on leaders who are managing staff and are attempting to develop an inclusive, effective culture. Interviewee 22 (SOL) also states *"it's managerialism, it's managing systems and managing the people"* and discusses how leadership has changed in recent decades but the processes and structures around the leader must be strong. Interviewee 26 (L) suggests that again reflecting on the differences between management and leadership plays a key role here, especially in regards to whether they tend to adopt a more manager role, or leadership focus, or if they have created a balance in their skills. Arguably because of the overarching focus on managerialism which can become the culture of the HEI and therefore it is up to the leader to navigate this (Interviewee 26 – L). This navigation was also discussed by Interviewee 28 (SIL), from a chartered university who acknowledged the perceived 'post '92 managerialism' of the sector had filtered into their institution due to a senior leader who has this management focus (and who's previous institution was a post '92) which as a result is growing within the institution. This particular focus will be applied in this section with other considerations of marketization and managerialism to be discussed in section 5.5.1. Interviewee 13 (SOL) clearly outlines the management of such struggles by stating;

> *"There are inherently problems with the managerial approach in sectors that provide a professional output […] it hasn't quite been resolved, in terms of how you enable efficient and effective management, but also acknowledge that the staff are not like someone working on a line who can just set targets. Partly it's to do with it being intellectual work, the knowledge work, but it's also emotional work, and where is it in anyone's workload that they should have time to think, time to talk, [which is] fundamental to the activities, and the more stressed people are the less effective their brains are at thinking. […] I don't think it's healthy or reasonable to expect people to be performing in so many different ways […] I think it's no longer a healthy sector, and that's a disgrace." (Interviewee 13 – SOL)*

This view was a stark reality shared by all leaders in the interviewees who discussed how

demands have been continually growing in recent years. Senior operational leaders in particular discussed the growing demands placed on leaders (Interviewee 23) and how workloads are now becoming too big and somewhat unmanageable (Interviewee 13) which require careful negotiation (Interviewee 15 – L). Further Interviewee 18 (SOL) suggests that when faced with stress employees struggle with the quantity of work rather than the work itself. Interviewee 22 (SOL) discussed how trying to do too much can be unsustainable. Therefore the role of the leader in helping navigate the tensions is crucial with Interviewee 22 suggesting leaders that create integrated structures between these challenges, whilst ensuring that the focus is clear for the followers could be the key to achieving a sustainable balance between them. As a result, the focus that should be placed not only on an individual's career but also on the needs for sustainability of the HEI (Interviewee 7 – SOL).

Moreover, the demands placed on leaders themselves should not be overlooked, something that Interviewee 31 (SOL) deliberated could often result in being worn out if the leaders are firefighting or constantly reacting to senior institutional leaders. As a result, Interviewee 32 (SIL) suggests that as a leader, acknowledging you cannot do everything is vital, therefore motivating others to achieve and to adopt responsibility is pivotal; which again emphasises the need to delegate and share responsibilities as previously discussed.

Overall, ensuring that leaders can help negotiate a balance and help manage demands is crucial, but to ensure this is achieved managing performance of employees can also be imperative.

5.3.3.4 Managing performance

Following a growing focus of managerialism and balancing demands, a key aspect of any management relationship centres around performance management with employees who can achieve their objectives. Interviewee 27 (SOL) suggests HE requires development in this area, especially in comparison to the private sector. Additionally, Interviewee 2 (SOL) suggests that more formal processes related to performance management, beginning to filter into HE, have encouraged employees to engage more in building comprehensive careers based on a longer term view. And although the leader

is not sure if such processes (performance management) belong in HE, does emphasise can have positive outcomes in terms of sharing ideas and discussing individual's sustainability as a line manager.

However, the interviewees posited that for a long time in HEIs performance management has been something that has been overlooked for both positive and/or negative behaviour depending on the individual (Interviewee 30 – SIL). Interviewee 31 (SOL) shared this was an explicit reason they had to leave a previous institution as they felt their positive behaviour was not directly rewarded with other leaders exhibiting negative behaviours and receiving the same rewards/opportunities. Interestingly, however it is important to state a tendency to ignore behaviours is not simply a singular institutional based issue, rather Key informant 2 also suggested issues associated with rewarding 'bad' behaviour within HE and other sectors.

When discussing how to overcome toxic behaviours, Interviewee 30 (SIL) remarked that ultimately it was up to the leader to make and encourage a change and demonstrate behaviours they want to see in others (i.e. by being a role model). Although as Interviewee 12 (SOL) suggests this can also come from peers and senior leaders to challenge such behaviours. In Interviewee 27's (SOL) experience rhetoric around performance management is sometimes indirect and not always discussed in clear, coherent terms. Therefore, Interviewee 29 (SOL) suggests asking people to engage in conversations with their peers, with other leaders and with their direct reports around objective setting, development plans and overarching performance management is very important. Furthermore, Interviewee 17 (SIL) as a result suggests a 'partnership' approach between line managers and direct reports should therefore be undertaken. Each of the OD specialists (Interviewees 25, 27 and 29) emphasised this and discussed how it is often not the system or process used that is the most important aspect but rather that communication is vital. Equally however the leaders must role model the right sort of behaviours continually will aid in changing toxic behaviours (Interviewee 32 – SIL). However as Interviewee 31 (SOL) suggests there are often people even in management positions who will fight their way to the top and be *"…corporate psychopaths".* Challenging behaviour is important at all levels in institutions however a tendency to ignore such behaviours extends throughout all levels and areas of the HE

sector with issues related to performance are ignored (Interviewee 14 – L). Therefore such toxic behaviours often become the overarching culture and accepted behaviours, which can be very difficult to overcome (Interviewee 27 – SOL), particularly if leaders are not transparent about why they are either accepted or if they are being challenged privately (Interviewee 30 – SIL). There are a variety of reasons for this ignorance however as Interviewee 12 (SOL) stressed *"…it can't just be left with poor performance happening"*.

As discussed in section 5.3.2 however in a rotating leadership position often personal relationships can cause such behaviours to be ignored. Therefore although being a peer in a rotating position can give added empathy and understanding, it may also cause problems in attempting to balance existing relationships with new responsibilities (Interviewee 10 – SOL). Interviewee 19 (SOL) had also experienced this and suggested although challenging, it was their belief that creating the circumstance(s) and environment to get the most out of the employees is pivotal for success. Therefore the interviewee highlights there is no need to micro-manage but rather focus on employees strengths, give them autonomy and occasionally smooth over any difficult situations. Interviewee 22 (SOL) however suggested that often leaders will often follow this mentality and maintain the status quo by not opening the 'can of worms' that often results from attempting to navigate tensions involved in being a leader and managing demands. Interviewee 4 (SOL) suggests as a leader one of the most influential ways of encouraging positive behaviour is to share successes, reviewing what has gone well, recognising the success of the team and providing encouragement to continue with it.

Interviewee 6 (L) suggests that no HEI or organisation will *"ever get the ideal, perfect employee performance system"* and it is up to both the leader and the employee to discuss and articulate what they each want to ensure a balance in demands and successful relationship can be fostered. However, interviewee 23 (SOL) suggests there are often clear inconsistencies between the actions and support provided by leaders. As a result, the leader suggests ensuring all line managers have good levels of emotional intelligence and building a cohesive, supportive culture by all leaders and particularly at senior operational and institutional leader levels is imperative. Further, they share the

view that if workloads, and in particular competing demands, are not treated consistently by line managers then resentment builds which must be avoided.

5.3.3.5 Motivating and inspiring involvement

A number of the interviewees highlighted within academia individual's levels of motivation were generally high and that there is a lot of good practice already happening, as people are not short of vision in the sector (Interviewees 21 – SIL, 32 – SIL). Interviewee 28 (SIL) however outlines a major challenge in motivating employees whilst building an inclusive environment and culture is *"…resources not only being people, but time, really, motivation is a huge one, staff morale is a huge one."* Further the leader shares that although people are dedicated in academia they may only want to do certain things. As a result, part of this is about managing expectations of the individuals (Interviewee 7 – SOL), which Key Informant 2 advocates should be done at any opportunity to secure significant impacts such as people taking initiative, being self-motivated towards the goals of the organisation, which are underpinned by collegiate, transparent communication.

Interviewee 4 (SOL) accentuates the environment created by the leader and participation of employees can allow the leader to be a facilitator of those who are on board with the strategic direction of the leader and HEI. Interviewee 8's (SIL) experience harmonises this and suggests the leader needs to foster and build such an environment. Nevertheless, Interviewee 22 (SOL) warns having the ability to respond to individual needs is crucial, as the leader believes everyone wants to be enthusiastic but they must have the opportunity to innovate and be creative. However, Interviewee 6 (L) although agrees with this sentiment in their experience not every employee will want to take advantage of such opportunities as not everyone wants to *"learn"* no matter how much they, and others, wish to share knowledge and information. This idea of sharing information and knowledge management in staff is a vital aspect of any leader's role and a key aspect of ensuring sustainability. However it highlights that it not just about an individual leader and their own plans, this philosophy and approach must extend beyond, consequently motivating and encouraging involvement from others is of paramount importance. Interviewee 7 (SOL) however suggests that such influence must also come from the senior leaders in the HEI, along with the vision and commitment to

the overarching goals of the institution but also to the individuals discipline (see also 5.5.3.1). Further Interviewee 10 (SOL) discusses it is often a jigsaw ensuring that everyone is on the same page, understanding where they fit and encourage them to get involved and build an effective culture enabling the achievement of the objectives. This however must then be an approach which is echoed throughout the institution.

5.3.4 Support Networks

Expanding on how such an inclusive culture can be fostered, a clear recurring, emerging theme of this inclusive and collegiate institution theme is the importance of relationships and in particular the relationship between the leader and those around them. A number of the leaders suggested support mechanisms they had personal experience of, the support around them, the support they were able to provide and ultimately support provided by the HEI is essential to achieving a sustainable approach. These aspects will now be explored as leaders advocate they are essential for them to both cope with their role and to encourage sustainability in their employees. Interviewee 23 (SOL) conveys the importance of such support by suggesting;

> *"…the multiple pressures that we have [in HE] […] can actually be a recipe for disaster, and I've seen colleagues go off sick and have real mental health struggles. Many challenges because of a lack of supportive environment."*
> *(Interviewee 23 – SOL)*

This highlights a supportive environment is a crucial aid for individuals attempting to balance and manage increasing demands in the HE sector. However, it is important that such support is individualised (Interviewee 1 – L), and should not be lip service but rather is authentic (Interviewee 31 – SOL). Interviewee 22 (SOL) suggests a holistic, cross-functional approach to leadership can help build a network that involves different areas and builds a sustainable institution and sector (if the support network includes those external to the HEI). Interviewee 29 (SOL) also discusses the value and importance of peer learning, shared learning and ultimately in creating conversations that can help overcome challenges and facilitate the development of a sustainable environment and HEI.

5.3.4.1 Supporting staff

Leaders who offer high levels of support to direct reports is seen to be very important. When discussing how employees will be managed, leaders 'having their back' was a key element of this (see also 5.3.3.1), further Interviewees 8 (SIL), 10 (SOL) and 13 (SOL) also suggest there is a fine balance between empowering and trusting staff, giving them the freedom to do things whilst still being visible and ensuring that staff feel supported. Ultimately encouraging and supporting staff to take on responsibility is pivotal to this. Interviewee 16 (SIL) further emphasised building interpersonal relationships via communication and connection with others is vital and could be the best way to ensure employees are receiving the support they need (Interviewee 17 – SIL). This communication process can also provide feedback, which validates the employees' actions to help the employee develop and increase self-confidence (Interviewee 3 – L). Being a supportive leader, providing advice and managing morale is important in managing and aiding employees to overcome daily challenges (Interviewee 18 – SOL).

Interviewee 19 (SOL) notably emphasises that being honest whilst giving the right advice, instilling coping mechanisms and support to allow employees to navigate their way is key. However as Interviewee 9 (SOL) suggests sometimes leaders in promoted positions may not have the skills to ensure they are casting vision, motiving employees, creating inter-personal relationships. This may be the case, particularly if leaders adopt the individualistic mind-set discussed earlier and do not fully support others, they may act in this way if it is the prominent approach within the institution or alternatively if it was the approach role modelled by their own leaders. Often when discussing support they provide as a leader the interviewees reflected on the support they had received and had found beneficial, equally they also reflected on limited support they had received. What came through strongly was that all these experiences had influenced the leaders' approaches and so it is important to consider the support the leader has or does receive.

5.3.4.2 Support as a leader

When discussing how they have developed their skills, approaches and relationships with their direct reports, a number of the leaders reflected on support they had received as a leader. Although a couple of the leaders, Interviewee 30 (SIL) in particular, felt

support from their senior leader had been extremely beneficial for them, a number of the leaders, regardless of type of institution, discussed the fact that in reality little support often exists for academics (Interviewee 21 – SIL). Interviewee 13 (SOL) shared a personal experience of bullying behaviour directed towards them from other leaders in their school and reflected that when approaching senior leader *"It was made quite clear it was my problem […] but [they] would back me up with whatever I did. And I believed that and felt confident with that."* This is an interesting example in that the indirect support this interviewee felt was sufficient for them however does highlight a lack of direct action taken by a leader, which can be detrimental. Other senior operational leaders, Interviewees 18 and 19 also experienced this lack of action on behalf of their more senior leaders plus central services and shared some strong feelings around the negative impact the lack of support has had on them. Interviewee 19 (SOL) in particular was honest about the lack of support and negative feelings this prompted with the leader sharing support does not need to be a substantial undertaking, it can be a small gesture, the absence of which can have very negative implications. Interviewee 18 (SOL) at a different institution shared a similar view however did highlight that peer support has been valuable, particularly in the absence of formal support. Therefore, reinforcing the perception of support in any form can be extremely beneficial.

This idea of peer support is important and something that interviewee 18 talks about at length due to the benefits and impact it has had on them. Importantly these peers can come from within and outwith the leaders own HEI. In order to aid the sense of a growing community, Interviewee 29 (SOL) shared an example of a network set up internally in their HEI to foster such relations and promote such conversations between leaders and their direct reports, between leaders as peers and also between leaders and central services (such as HR as one example). Additionally, Interviewees 19 (SOL) and 30 (SIL) in particular highlighted that going on a leadership development course externally helped to build their network and found it was good to speak to people from both within HE along with other sectors. Interviewee 8 (SIL) corresponds with this and highlights external relationships within HE can be crucial in recognising what is going on within the sector whilst giving the leaders an opportunity to look afresh at a situation, recognising different perspectives and building an effective network. This sharing of information

within the sector emphasises the importance of recognising others may experience similar issues but also suggests and alludes to the importance of collaborating with other leaders across the section, which can aid in creating sustainable practices that transcend individual institutions (see also section 5.5.1.4). Knowing who to rely on and ask for advice via fostering trusting relationships Interviewee 31 (SOL) claims has been an important aspect of their development as a leader as often going 'up the hierarchy' to more senior leaders is not the reasonable thing to do and therefore relying on peers provides key support, advice and guidance.

Being able to rely on specific individuals was something a number of the leaders stressed, and to facilitate this some had appointed someone, as an informal leader, as deputy or assistant to their role in order to help them (or had perhaps taken on this role themselves); an aspect also discussed earlier in this section (5.3.1). It was evident this can be extremely beneficial as they can provide additional support, back up and guidance for the leaders in the formal positions (Interviewee 9 – SOL). Interviewee 18 (SOL) discusses how it's a quid pro quo scenario with these individuals who they can turn to in order to offload, can share concerns with and work through challenges with. This community of practice the leader suggests is useful to help manage situations when staff *"start to have a go"* (Interviewee 18 – SOL). Interviewee 9 (SOL) emphasised it can also help to maintain a continuous approach as having a succession plan and communicating the vision and gaining insight from as many people as possible is extremely beneficial.

5.3.5 Communication

Within this theme, we have discussed a number of approaches and practices that can be hugely influential in encouraging an inclusive and collegiate approach and we have highlighted the undertone of the relationship between leaders and their stakeholders as fundamental to this. Following on from such considerations a number of the leaders discussed an emerging theme regarding communication, with strategies and approaches that had aided them in enabling such approaches. Ultimately, Interviewee 11 (SIL) states, *"…it's about being genuine and about being seen to be genuine I think is really important"*

A number of the leaders emphasised the importance of communicating to aid understanding around objectives and actions to be taken which fosters 'buy-in' (Interviewees 6 – L, 10 – SOL, 11 – SIL, 16 – SIL, 25 – SOL, 27 – SOL, 29 – SOL, 30 – SIL and 31 – SIL). A sentiment also underscored by Interviewee 2 who stressed as a senior operational leader they needed to be *"…really open and honest with people in the school"* in order to build a sense of ownership and involvement to garner a *"huge amount of buy-in".* Collective understanding and transparent communication, Interviewee 21 (SIL) suggests, can help with this. The leader proposes that a common set of values can be key to ensuring everyone has a shared understanding of the situation, of expected behaviours related to these and as a result know how to deal with situations. As a result this emphasises the role of leaders in creating an open culture and being able to cast vision whilst inspiring them to have ownership and get involved is key (Interviewee 20 – SIL). This can involve providing clear justification as to why certain actions are taken (Interviewee 30 – SIL) and when suggesting changes it is vital to detail why something does need to change, the rationale behind the process alongside the benefits (Interviewee 31 – SOL). Interviewee 16 (SIL) highlights if people are unaware of the rationale and benefit of something then they are less likely to get on board, therefore as a leader communicating such aspects is crucial. Importantly Interviewee 4 (SOL) suggests often talking to and focusing on the people who are accepting of what you are trying to do can be an effective strategy rather than *"…trying to impose something".* Further Interviewee 10 (SOL) suggests if people understand where they fit in the achievement of the HEI's objectives, along with the impact of what they are doing this can be hugely beneficial for both the individual and the HEI, particularly for senior institutional leaders (Interviewees 11 – SIL and 12 – SOL). Interviewee 32 (SIL) also stresses that reflecting on the HEI's values can be a key ingredient for any communication strategy, ensuring there is a golden thread and employees know why they are doing things. Interviewee 29 (SOL) suggests reinforcing messages and encouraging people to see and understand their role is vital and suggests a *"multi-pronged approach"* can achieve this.

Consequently, the leader underlines and stresses the importance of a two-way relationship and believes as a senior institutional leader conveying messages bottom up,

as well as top down, is vital. This is a priority Interviewee 8 (SIL) also discussed, and further suggested, *"…enthusing people, motivating people, engaging […] and convincing people that this is the way we want to go"* is important. Interviewee 24 (SIL) also recognises the importance of a two way approach and reflects that within their institution there have been a number of changes in order to encourage this and facilitate inclusivity throughout the institution which has resulted in a changing culture of the HEI which has been extremely beneficial, the leader posits;

> *"… [it's] a cultural change, it's probably a change in behaviour really, in the past we were quite hierarchical. So, the principal said something, and it went to managers, actually there's much more openness that everybody can have their say, everybody can influence, regardless of grade or level or post. There's an acknowledgement that all the good ideas does not come from the senior staff." (Interviewee 24 – SIL)*

Additionally communicating the reality of the situation (either exceeding or perhaps not meeting objectives) is important to ensure that efforts are recognised, mistakes can be solved and working towards making something better (Interviewee 11 – SIL). Arguably, therefore thinking about the arguments you are going to utilise to ensure you are outlining the logic and benefit, Interviewee 6 (L) suggests is imperative. Interviewees 17 (SIL) and 30 (SIL) agree with both whilst contemplating the importance of language leaders use due to perceptions around messages received whilst Interviewee 14 (L) also stresses the importance of enabling employees to share feedback. Key informant 2 also accentuates the importance of recognising that people may look at things differently, and that is okay but it is important as a leader to be able to respond to this. A number of the leaders emphasised that if messages are not fed throughout the institution then there can be a disjointed organisational culture with no clear line of sight to what the overarching objectives of the institution (Interviewee 12 – SOL). Therefore, this reiterates the importance of this emerging underpinning theme in enabling and developing a sustainable leadership approach within HEIs.

With that said, Interviewee 5 (SIL) suggested that people in senior operational leadership positions, who are 'middle' managers, may be caught between priorities (of senior leaders in the HEI and operational challenges), therefore they may struggle to facilitate an effective balance, particularly if they have limited competence in this.

Equally, Interviewee 27 (SOL) also emphasises there can be a number of challenges in attempting to communicate effectively throughout the institution, however does stress;

> *"I think culture is bred fundamentally by a sure belief and great communication about helping people get on board, and communication is about all those different methods, all those different channels to reach all those different personality styles […] that's why you need all the leaders at different levels because you need them to interpret that information and be able to transition it to land really well with all their team" (Interviewee 27 – SOL)*

Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggests in an attempt to communicate between levels and from an institution to local level, leaders need to try formal and informal activities to encourage contributions, to translate the objectives and most importantly to ensure that staff feel confident to express their views. The interviewees discussed a number of different approaches to facilitate communication with five activities in particular given as examples by senior operational leaders due to their effectiveness. Table 18 provides these examples and details the communication method, the benefits espoused by the leader and details of the practical set-up.

Table 18: Example communication methods provided by interviewees

COMMUNICATION METHOD	BENEFITS MENTIONED BY THE LEADER	DETAILS	LEADER WHO GAVE EXAMPLE
REGULAR UPDATE COMMUNICATIONS (TYPICALLY VIA EMAIL)	✓ Keeps employees up-to-date with any activities ✓ Can allow the leader to be transparent about what they are doing	• Formally sent monthly by senior institutional leader • Followed up with senior operational leader fortnightly	Interviewee 10 (SOL)
ONE-TO-ONE FACE TO FACE MEETINGS	✓ Allow dialogue ✓ Can share ideas directly ✓ Important for fostering relationships	• Often increase in frequency • Can be once a month for an hour or every week for half an hour	Interviewee 27 (SOL)
INFORMAL SOCIAL 'COFFEE CATCH UPS'	✓ Facilitates social relationships within team ✓ Dedicated time when direct reports know the leader is free and accessible	• Informal and voluntary • Once a week, change the day/time to allow a variety of people to attend	Interviewee 9 (SOL)

		• Scheduled for half an hour	
LEADERSHIP FORUMS	✓ Allow people to come together to share ideas and discuss common issues ✓ Facilitates a support network which leaders can use to learn from others ✓ Can be themed to respond to specific contextual issues	• Can be done with one specific level of leadership (e.g. programme leaders or senior operational leaders) • Can be used at different times to focus on different issues	Interviewees 11 and 12 (SOL)
INFORMATION EVENTS	✓ Can garner interest in a new project ✓ Can allow people to see how something works and gain more information	• Used specifically for project launches • Targeted attendance	Interviewee 29 (SOL)

At the core of each of these activities are leaders fostering relationships, on either a one-to-one, peer, team or organisational level. Consequently, this recognition of the impact messages will have and associated considerations (from both a business and individual perspective) are crucial for leaders. Therefore, this accentuates and underlines the approach and competence of leaders must be a key consideration and area of development for leaders, which although can be challenging is a key element of leadership (Interviewee 8 – SIL). The fact that the senior operational leaders across all types of institutions felt strongly enough to share examples of activities they have embedded to encourage communication and build a culture which is collegiate and inclusive shows the appetite for this across Scottish HE. Regardless of this appetite, unfortunately a number of the leaders did highlight some challenges. Interviewee 11 (SIL) suggests that flexibility is important and stresses *"…we try different things at different times, different frequencies, different memberships and all sorts of things"* which can bring a number of benefits. Interviewee 27 (SOL) also emphasises flexibility, particularly around timings of communications which should respond to requirements. Each of these activities aided towards the development and fostering of a collegiate, inclusive culture.

5.3.6 Inclusive and collegiate institution summary

Throughout this theme, we have explored a number of approaches and practices that have centred on the facilitation of effective relationships the leader builds which are essential in fostering and building towards achieving an inclusive culture within HEIs.

We have explored how approaches adopted throughout institutions can act as enablers or barriers to adopting a sustainable and inclusive approach. In summary, informal leadership positions can play a pivotal role in an individual's development as they are key stepping-stones in developing core skills, additionally they can ensure leaders have opportunities to be included and influence the achievement of the HEIs objectives. However, leaders are key to motivating and inspiring involvement as they must cast vision and interact positively with their direct reports, to do this a leader must be an effective role model and advocate for the employee whilst utilising a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure transparency and support employees. Throughout the research a number of the leaders mentioned how each of the elements discussed here can have significant benefits however, this hinges on how exactly they are enacted. If the leaders do not have the capability or the competence to embody the actions then they may be detrimental. Therefore arguments highlighted when considering the management of staff centred around leaders being authentic, having empathy and fostering trust. Ultimately, this stresses the approach adopted by individual leaders is pivotal to whether an inclusive culture is fostered, if leaders do not adopt an open mind-set then they will not embody this and will continue with the business as usual approach where some employees may be overlooked or perceive they have no direct involvement.

However there are a number of challenges any leader will face if they are to adopt an inclusive approach. The prominent challenge being the demands of the sector and tensions the leader faces in attempting to balance them, arguably growing managerialism has only accentuated the pressure to balance and achieve the demands. Equally ensuring that leaders are challenging toxic behaviours and espousing shared values via their actions and communications is vital. A number of the leaders recognised this and discussed how changes were being made and had been fundamental in shifting

the organisational culture towards a more inclusive approach. The fact that so many highlighted that relationships were at the centre of this, particularly related to the support networks fostered and how communication activities can aid in enhancing these demonstrates the appetite for such an inclusive approach throughout Scottish HEIs. The discussions of this theme and underpinning arguments align with the overarching aim and role of leaders, to transparently cast a vision, motivate those around them, foster strong engagement on a number of levels, whilst ensuring employees feel happy, confident enough to constructively challenge and work together inclusively to achieve the aims of the HEI.

5.4 Sustainable Leadership Development

The importance of a leaders competence, ability and skill have been alluded to a number of times throughout this study as without strong levels of each a leader is arguably ineffective and can be detrimental to an organisation. With this in mind, it is vital to consider how leaders are developed within HEIs and importantly if they can be developed sustainably. When discussing their development the interviewees revealed a variety of opinions and experiences, some fostered solely by the individual and some encouraged by their institution(s). Regardless of the motivating factor in promoting development, a range of aspects and influencers came forward as beneficial (Interviewee 24 – SIL). A number of the leaders corresponded with this by highlighting leadership development is not solely reliant on formal leadership programmes. It also includes activities such as learning from others (Interviewees 9 – SOL and 14 – L), learning on the job via experience and reflection (Interviewees 1 – L, 10 – SOL, 15 – L and 28 – SIL) and via mentors – both formally and informally appointed (Interviewees 17 – SIL and 32 - SIL). Arguably, interviewee 15 (L) suggests often leaders have "…*some sort of aptitude for it*" and as Interviewee 1 (L) states *"I think that you [develop leadership skills] with experience – so learning by doing"*. Interviewee 8 (SIL) corresponds and suggests continuous learning and embracing new challenges has enabled their development. Interviewee 32 (SIL) echoes this by also discussing how they believe changes in their role and enjoying new challenges have aided their sustainability in H.E. which has transcended a number of decades in different institutions. Ultimately, when

reflecting on their development Interviewee 17 (SIL) suggests it occurs both consciously and unconsciously while Interviewee 11 (SIL) evokes developing sustainably as a leader for them has and continues to be a deliberate pursuit. Where other leaders reflected on a more incremental and natural progression (Interviewee 15 – L) with Interviewee 2 (SOL) suggesting coming through the ranks has aided in the culture they have developed with their peers as well as allowing them to reflect on actions taken in the role and how they may be perceived. These reflections and arguments from the interviewees therefore highlights leaders develop in a number of ways and ensuring that this is not underestimated is vital.

With that said, it is not just about individual leaders and their development, but also about how they foster development in others. Interviewee 12 (SOL) advocates this can be supported by the management structures within HEIs. Interviewee 20 (SIL) suggests often leaders do not devolve responsibility which can hinder development of those below them whilst also potentially leading to individual burnout. Further, Interviewee 2 (SOL) discusses practices they have undertaken and fostered within their school to encourage development, such practices involve setting up forums to share experiences and discuss concerns, encouraging reflections on actions undertaken whilst involving other leaders in shaping directions. The leader also shares they see their role in development as "…*sewing seeds, and building careers*" (Interviewee 2 – SOL). This is where the open culture and values based approach to ensure everyone recognises their role as a leader is pivotal, equally making commitments to others (for example within different teams) related to expected behaviours is required (Interviewee 32 – SIL). However, such approaches can be complex to navigate in reality particularly as Interviewee 9 (SOL) reflects some appointed or promoted leaders may not have sufficient training. A view also shared by Key Informant 1 and who goes onto suggest there must be consistency in training provided to all leaders. However this may not become reality as leadership can be *"…a bit managerial"* with an operational focus on short-term achievements, when it should take a longer-term view, particularly around development (Interviewee 2 – SOL). Interviewee 32 (SIL) also reflects on this and suggests *"…there are skills around managing and also leading people which I don't think we invest a lot of time…"* further explaining that often development is based on

discipline rather than leadership skills. This demonstrates that leaders need to advocate for such programmes and encourage investment in such training, Interviewee 5 (SIL) additionally highlights that appropriate training along with support for people, particularly those in leadership positions, is a necessity. However a lot of leaders remarked that they hadn't experienced such development or at least don't remember (Interviewee 9 – SOL was just one example). Key informant 1 states;

> *"I think it's possibly because you can get on quite a long way in an academic career without really having any serious leadership development." (Key informant 1)*

This highlights that currently there are differing perceptions and experiences of leaders in relation to their leadership development. The leaders discussed a number of elements related to leadership development when reflecting on their personal development and the offerings of their current and previous HEIs. These will be explored in this theme to assess the impact on developing leaders sustainably within higher education.

5.4.1 Leadership development activities

It is imperative to highlight the leaders stressed there have been a variety of influencing elements in developing their own leadership skills and competencies, which will be explored before considering how leaders encourage and facilitate development in others. Ultimately, the leaders stressed the importance of being receptive and open minded to development while suggesting skills and abilities develop over time via a variety of sources, events and programmes. This requires an inclusive culture and having opportunities provided to leaders via informal leadership roles for example and being able to shadow and be coached and/or mentored by senior leaders and peers but also via more formal routes of leadership development programmes leaders have attended. Most importantly, however, leadership skills must be developed authentically, as Interviewee 29 (SOL) stresses;

> *"…you can put on a leadership act, but that's not sustainable. […] it is a people centred approach […] to be sustainable amongst all of that you've got to be genuine, genuine to…not just the people…well yes the people, but it starts with genuine to yourself." (Interviewee 29 – SOL)*

As a result if leaders are not developing or being authentic to themselves, practices may not be effective and things will not change or progress. Interviewee 14 (L) alluded that this may be the case as often leaders are not trained but will continue to be leaders and so will continue with the status quo rather than making changes. In fact, Interviewee 15 (L) implies often natural leaders will come to the forefront and be encouraged to take on leadership positions. However there must be a recognition not everyone will want to be a leader (Interviewee 31 – SOL) particularly if it will detract from their academic responsibilities (such as their research) (Interviewee 18 – SOL) so individuals must be given a choice. Ultimately, interviewee 8 (SIL) stresses it must be about *"creating space for other people to develop"* with Interviewee 21 (SIL) proposing senior institutional leaders must facilitate a system which *"…brings as many people along as possible, that's really important"* and suggests empowering and enabling opportunities is critical.

5.4.1.1 Formal leadership development programmes

A number of the interviewees shared a variety of perceptions around formal or organised leadership development programmes they had experienced and their effectiveness. Some of the leaders discussed how they found both internal and external training events they had attended useful not solely for their content but also for the peer support and comparing of notes with leaders that came with attending the training (Interviewees 2 – SOL, 5 – SIL and 18 – SOL). Regardless of the variety of views around attending leadership development programmes, ultimately it wasn't necessarily one aspect or single training event which had the biggest impact on the leaders. Interviewee 13 (SOL) suggested the numerous training events they had attended had been useful in developing an *"…armoury of techniques"* or as Interviewee 2 (SOL) puts it *"…small nuggets of insights".*

Some of the interviewees had been managers/leaders in their previous role(s) before entering HE and had experienced development previously, which they shared was useful for their current roles (Interviewees 2 – SOL, 9 – SOL and 26 – L). Of this group, some had attended further training in their HEI, where others had not been offered or felt they did not need to attend other events. Other leaders suggested they would go on as many development programmes as possible (Interviewee 20 – SIL) commenting that developing their skills and working on feedback received were important for them

(Interviewee's 20 – SIL and 24 – SIL). Encouragement or motivation to attend training stemmed from a range of influences including these and others. Such as from line managers, which can be hugely motivating if the line manager is acting as a role model (Interviewee 30 – SIL). Alternatively, it can be from self-advocating from the leader themselves asking or bidding to attend training (Interviewees 5 – SIL and 20 – SIL). Nevertheless all leaders agreed and stressed that personal development was fundamental and should be advocated for to a greater extent, as Interviewee 5 (SIL) directly states *"…I don't think you can do enough leadership training"*.

Within HE there are a number of leadership development programmes offered across the sector e.g. via the leadership foundation and the chartered association of business schools, which a number of the leaders had attended. Interviewees 2 (SOL) and 6 (L) emphasised there are a variety of actors who influence leadership development training in the sector and highlights it will be interesting to see how they adapt and changes to the demands of the sector in the future and how HEIs will equally respond to this and develop their own programmes.

Interviewees 25 (SOL) and 29 (SOL) who are OD specialists discussed changes they have made internally to their HEI's leadership development programmes, both stressed the importance in leaders identifying their role and their impact so had included reflective discussions and exercises throughout their programmes. Interviewee 27 (SOL), the third OD specialist, details that before joining their institution they *"…found 7 to 10 different methods of leadership development and suppliers currently happening within the university over the last 5 to 10 years".* In contrast before joining the institution Interviewee 25 (SOL) suggested there had been no provision internally with leaders attending external programmes which was *"…very, very, very patchy".* This contrasting experience illustrates the lack of consistency both within HEIs and across the sector.

One external training programme a number of the leaders discussed was a target driven leadership development offered by the leadership foundation, the 'Aurora' programme. The leaders highlighted they had experienced colleagues who had attended the programme, had approved requests to attend or perhaps attended themselves and reflected on the benefits of this programme, particularly related to developing a support

network within the sector. Interviewees 6 (L) and 20 (SIL) both suggested it is important to also encourage leaders to think outside the box and just because the Aurora programme is designed for women this is not the only training they could or should attend. Interviewee 6 (L) further warns that it is vital leadership development programmes (not just Aurora but any leadership programme) should not simply develop one approach or for individuals to act as clones as;

> *"…leadership shouldn't be prescribed, it shouldn't be a set of skills that you do X, Y, Z, because different things require different reactions." (Interviewee 6 – L)*

Interviewee 17 (SIL) also suggests that we should not simply be replicating the same thing over and over again but argues that rather as a sector we need to question and look at new areas to develop, which is where external programmes from organisations such as the leadership foundation must play a pivotal role. However arguably formal training events/programmes are not the only development tool leaders can or should use to develop their skills.

5.4.1.2 Learning from others

Following on from previous discussions around support networks (see 5.3.4) and learning from experience available via informal positions (see 5.3.1) these can help to incrementally develop leaders skills. As the interviewees reflected on their leadership development some talked specifically about learning from other leaders who have influenced them in a variety of ways and from a variety of avenues (Interviewee 9 – SOL). These could be leaders who also attended the training and were part of an action learning group (Interviewee 5 – SIL); leaders they perceived to be role models (Interviewees 1 – L and 17 – SIL); or mentors (Interviewee 32 – SIL). In particular, Interviewee 4 (SOL) advocates;

> *"You never go into a leadership situation entirely naked as it were, you've had experience of good and bad leaders yourself and so you've learnt […] You talk to colleagues, you gain your knowledge in all sorts of formal and informal ways. […] So, in many ways one is continually in a process of becoming a leader. You can have a formal position as a leader […] But in that role one is continually learning […] adjusting, adapting, developing your approach to this thing called leadership […] I think that leaders that stop learning stop being good leaders…" (Interviewee 4 – SOL)*

This appreciation for continual development, on a variety of levels, was also supported by Interviewee 32 (SIL) who suggested working with those around them, taking on opportunities (both informally and formally) and seeking advice, listening to and learning from a diverse range of stakeholders continuously has been pivotal for them. Interviewee 13 (SOL) also accentuates that reflecting on and considering different perspectives while putting yourself in others shoes was a key skill learned at a training event. However, they evoked that they could only practice the skills whilst doing the job. This emphasises that learning is not just a singular pursuit or activity that once undertaken can be forgotten, interviewee 24 (SIL) also reiterates a range of influencers on development.

A number of the leaders also reported how approaching their own line managers for advice and relying on others to discuss approaches can help the leader learn alternative approaches (Interviewee 10 – SOL and 20 – SIL) and is something that can be passed on to their teams (Interviewee 10 – SOL) if they are receptive to it (Interviewee 6 – L). Interviewees 16 (SIL) and 17 (SIL) share by observing others and their approaches they have learned and developed their own approach. However Interviewee 10 (SOL) stresses individuals must be open to alternative practices as they develop, further seeing how others tackle a situation is extremely beneficial in allowing the leader to see approaches that have worked or not. Such snippets, conversations and relationships with others, interviewees 14 (L) and 20 (SIL) suggest have influenced their decisions and developments as a leader. However, there is concern the social aspect of learning from others is becoming rare for others to be there to share, support and guide newer members of staff, particularly as this may not be encouraged due to the organisational culture and demands leaders and institutions face (Interviewee 14). Nevertheless, Interviewee 16 (SIL) stresses that leaders must lead by example, while equally stating that they should learn from others (who may be peers, colleagues or employees) internally or externally to the leader's HEI. This is also advocated by Interviewee 11 (SIL) argues everyone learns from those around them and believes as a leader the same is true. Therefore, setting up collaborations with others is of the utmost importance and can not only develop individuals but also encourage them to stay with their current HEI,

and not necessarily feel they have to move institution to move and develop (Interviewee 2 – SOL).

5.4.1.3 Coaching and Mentoring

Following on from considerations of how leaders have learned from others and how others have influenced them a number went onto discuss how coaching and mentoring have played significant roles in their leadership approaches (Interviewees 1 – L, 11 – SIL, 23 – SOL). Interviewee 32 (SIL) especially spoke strongly about the personal value they had of mentors they have used throughout their career by stating;

> *"I've used mentors for the last 20 years. And I have found them invaluable. […] invaluable for challenging me […] they've inspired me in the things they have done. […] actually I mostly reflect with my mentors […] You can reflect in a really truthful way, which sometimes can be hard. If you're going through a difficult time with the staff in your senior team… They don't need to hear … 'Oooh, it's really hard'. They need to be motivated. […] So, that's where I find mentors have been hugely valuable to me." (Interviewee 32 – SIL)*

Additionally, the leaders shared reflections of how mentors had helped in shaping their thinking (Interviewee 11 – SIL); honing their approach (Interviewee 20 – SIL); being a confidant (Interviewee 16 – SIL) and/or; when considering their next step in their career (Interviewee 1 – L and Interviewee 30 – SIL). Interviewee 11 (SIL) in particular shared using mentors had helped them to develop a *"tool kit"* by reflecting and focusing on learning about oneself rather than being task focused. Therefore the leader ensured they could be sustainable for the future. However, not all prioritised this, as Interviewee 18 (SOL) shares they have not had a formal mentor stating they are *"too busy […] [and] quite bad at thinking about that"*. A number of the leaders did highlight that often when something like mentoring is not enforced then it may not happen regardless of the benefits associated with it (Interviewees 1 – L and 23 – SOL).

Nevertheless, coaching and mentoring is used by a number of the leaders and can be both formal and informal, internal and/or external (Interviewees 1 – L and 16 – SIL). In particular, internal mentors can work alongside peer relationships that foster support networks such as leadership forums in order to embed a sustainable approach by all leaders (Interviewee 12 – SOL). Similarly a number of the leaders at senior levels stressed they believed part of their role is to mentor 'in association' by fostering relationships

with staff they believe are at key stages in their career and encourage development (Interviewees 16 – SIL, 23 – SOL and 32 – SIL). However, Interviewee 23 (SOL) suggests you have to offer yourself up for these types of interactions and to allow employees to approach you. The leader shares that within their institution mentorship is based on informality and argues this is probably the best way to ensure the process does not become 'over-institutionalised'. Interviewee 16 (SIL) concurs with this and suggests having a *"culture of supporting and helping each other"* is most effective.

Therefore, this approach can be embedded in the approach a leader adopts. To foster the development of their staff, Interviewees 2 (SIL), 11 (SIL) and 29 (SOL) argue adopting a coaching style in their leadership roles can be extremely beneficial in ensuring staff share their views, are free to challenge, feel ownership and via discussions with their leader can go onto implement actions which is invaluable for both parties. Interviewee 19 (SOL) suggests personally they do not aspire to another formal management role but would like to do *"…much more of a mentoring role"* which is because they have done a lot of the things they wanted to do in their career and helping, mentoring early career colleagues are *"…the things I enjoy most doing now".* Interviewee 30 (SIL) also reflects this is a part of their role they also find most interesting. Interviewee 2 (SOL) was another leader who suggested they had adopted these types of activities in the last 5 years in their role and suggested encouraging staff to build capabilities and networks was important to them whilst also mentoring their direct reports who are leaders. Other leaders stated that they encouraged their direct reports to get mentors and to attend any sort of training event that does encourage and facilitate reflection as they advocate those types of activities are most beneficial in developing (Interviewee 20 – SIL and 28 – SIL). Therefore, ensuring that leaders have an opportunity to develop in a variety of ways and engage in a mentoring or coaching relationship can be extremely advantageous.

5.4.2 Developing leadership competency

Once more when considering how leaders develop and progress in their careers and demonstrate their leadership skills and competence for their positions a number of the leaders discussed and questioned how academic leaders in particular could be

appointed to positions with having very little formal leadership development (Interviewees 9 – SOL, 14 – L, 24 – SIL and 29 – SOL). As Interviewee 17 (SIL) reflects when they began their career they were appointed in a 'management' position and built *"…a leadership capacity without knowing what you were doing".* Equally, Interviewees 2 and 19, both in senior operational leadership roles now, also indicate they also developed whilst in their roles. These leaders, Interviewees 2, 17 and 19, along with others, in particular Interviewee 14 (L) commented on changing expectations in HEIs have drastically changed, sharing they believe they would not be appointed to their position but also commented *"the challenges and the pressures on staff have changed"* with Interviewee 9 (SOL) also sharing *"…requirements for leadership have changed".*

In an attempt to illustrate such changes in institutions detailed promotion criteria frameworks have been produced which some of the leaders commented can allow clarity for people to know the requirements and meet them (Interviewees 8 – SIL, 9 – SIL, 20 – SIL and 31 – SOL). Interviewees 8 (SIL) and 32 (SIL) both discuss newly embedded promotion frameworks (introduced in 2014) in their institution and acknowledge it has taken a while to evidence, but they believe the *"culture's shifting a bit" (Interviewee 32 – SIL).* Which is aided by the successful achievement of promotion by staff, which they hope will encourage others to also aim and apply for promotion. These views emphasise that regardless of clarity they provide, new promotion criteria frameworks are not always openly accepted by staff. Predominantly this is due to perceived issues with meeting the criteria, which a number of the leaders reflected and shared views on. These difficulties can include the fact that people are not given time to develop in their current positions (Interviewee 19 – SOL) and may simply tick the appropriate 'boxes' to gain promotion (Interviewee 31 – SOL), as it is *"…all about your CV, your record"* and not necessarily softer skills such as emotional intelligence (Interviewee 23 – SOL). Interviewee 31 (SOL) shares some strong feelings regarding their perceived failings of using promotion criteria in HEIs by suggesting some who may be *"the most inspirational lecturers"* may not receive promotion due to limited opportunities. This belief that you may not get your best 'leaders' appointed to leadership positions was also stressed by Interviewee 9 (SOL) who went onto suggest individuals;

"…have maybe been promoted with weaknesses in leadership or efficiencies

or gaps, sometimes significant, sometimes not, and now they are being trained into being leaders. […] you would expect that a fair proportion of your leaders would be natural leaders rather than those who are in leadership positions because they've got along with their academic career and maybe have very little or no interest in line management, no interest in kind of being around to support people, or to respond to problems or any kind of interactions that you have to have with finance and HR and all sorts of things when things needs to be sorted out – [rather] 'that's just seen as 'admin' and I want nothing to do with that'." (Interviewee 9 – SOL)

Other leaders shared similarities with these sentiments, for example Interviewee 29 (SOL) suggests often people are promoted due to their specialist academic area as they are an expert but often *"…the route has not got anything about leadership in it".* Interviewee 24 (SIL) also agrees with this and suggests often it is obvious that the individual will not be a good manager or leader but are promoted regardless. Further stresses that although promoted leaders should not be expected to be sufficient in every aspect of their roles immediately, especially without training, they must develop in their leadership skills to be effective in their role. Interviewee 7 (SOL) similarly suggests if leaders are struggling they should feel they can step down from the position rather than burning out trying to meet the requirements. However the leader suggests this is not often dealt with or welcomed in institutions particularly as people's pride at being identified as an expert and therefore becoming a leader will often prevent the leader from coming forward. Interviewee 27 (SOL) agrees and suggests historically the view would have been to 'manage them out' however stresses this leaves both parties with negative impacts, therefore proposes HEIs and individuals need to be brave, acknowledge that was not the right role and find a new opportunity. Further the leader discussed changes made in their institution that were aimed at driving *"…a more supportive culture for people"* and advocates this starts with conversations with senior institutional leaders, then senior operational leaders plus leaders at local team level (Interviewee 27 – SOL). Such conversations need to include an assessment of individuals within the institution however some of the leaders, such as Interviewees 3 (L) and 26 (L) both propose often they are undertaking leadership tasks/activities but may not allocate *"jargon labels to them"* (Interviewee 3). Further Interviewee 2 (SOL) suggested having conversations with staff about the requirements, identifying their skills and encouraging them. Arguably therefore it is important that leadership activities and tasks are

identified and openly discussed to ensure leaders can pinpoint such skills but also to raise awareness of skills individuals may need to develop (Interviewees 3 – L, 6 – L, 7 – SOL, 26 – L and 29 – SOL).

Therefore, in order to ensure such skills are assessed as part of a promotion framework, Interviewee 23 (SOL) proposes building in 360-degree appraisals which they believe could help panels to comprehensively assess leaders' capabilities, particularly their emotional intelligence. Key informant 1 also agrees and suggests appointment panels and governing bodies must be *"more intelligent about understanding the capacities of a leader they are looking for".* Interviewee 9 (SOL) accentuates this and cautions *"…it's quite blurry what academic leadership means"* which can result in significant challenges around leaders in appointed positions and consistency in their skills and abilities. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that although training may be offered, but leaders may not engage with this and so Interviewee 7 (SOL) suggests *"…there's still a lot of pockets for people who are still doing the same thing as always."* Therefore ensuring leaders sought after competence and skills are clear and transparent within the HEI can ensure that leaders' expectations are clearly met and their development can facilitate such knowledge and skills to enable promotion and effective leadership to be a continuous achievement.

5.4.3 Succession planning

A key aspect of leadership development is about adopting a long-term perspective and therefore exploring the realities of succession planning within Scottish HEIs is an important consideration and advocated as crucial by individual leaders (Interviewees 9 – SOL, 22 – SOL and 31 - SOL). Interviewee 20 (SIL) suggests people will always be recruited and replaced regardless of whether it is discussed. However Interviewee 27 (SOL) emphasises the importance of having a transparent, honest approach when succession planning is very important. Interviewee 19 (SOL) suggests although discussions are starting approaches are *"fairly haphazard".* With Interviewee 7 (SOL) submitting in reality it may be happening in different ways at different levels of the institution. Further, the leader stresses that at an institutional level there must be a

process in place however at a local level a more informal process and approach may be undertaken. Therefore, Interviewee 31 (SOL) stresses there may be;

> *"…opportunities for succession planning, it's easy to say, but you can only do it if you've got the right sort of people there" (Interviewee 31 – SOL)*

Interviewee 14 (L) and 21 (SIL) agree with this and suggest a lack of systematic succession planning can hinder development of individuals, but posit this may be due to other competing immediate demands which mean long-term development is overlooked. Therefore, although HEIs can often find this challenging, it is important to at least attempt to foster such approaches (Interviewee 31 – SOL), as institutions will always need leadership and so need to think about and plan how to develop talent (Interviewees 5 – SIL and 19 – SOL). This is where identifying individual strengths and mapping out a succession plan can play a huge role as it can encourage people to take on responsibility and gain an added level of academic credibility if they do need to take over (Interviewee 9 – SOL).

In order to facilitate this and develop employees, Interviewee 12 (SOL) suggests it is important to share information, responsibilities and support staff to ensure others are developing and can become leaders in the future. Interviewee 9 (SOL) suggests it is important to identify people's strengths and work with your team to develop these and achieve the objectives. Similarly, Interviewee 31 (SOL) also recognises having a deputy (or number 2) is ideal to ensure someone is able to step in and take over if required, ensuring continuity, whilst simultaneously developing staff and encouraging them to take on opportunities. Echoing this, Interviewee 18 (SOL) advised that sharing responsibilities can not only aid operational activities, it can also aid a pipeline and succession of leaders. When implementing this, Interviewee 9 (SOL) stresses *"…you've got to be flexible. And got to have a not just a plan A but you got to have a plan B and C around a lot of these things".* Interviewee 20 (SIL) corresponds by suggesting having more than one person lined up can ensure "*an heir and a spare"* as people do move and stresses *"…nowadays the more successful people are often moving".* However both Interviewees 9 (SOL) and 31 (SOL) submit it is important not to offend anyone by prioritising development on one employee who has been identified as a 'deputy', this may go against an inclusive approach if it is not handled effectively. Interviewee 16 (SIL)

also alludes that leaders with natural skills and competence will become evident to senior leaders, however posits it is important that leaders do not 'identify' leaders in their own guise and consequently adopt an exclusive approach to leadership development. Something Interviewee 31 (SOL) also intimates may happen as leaders look for others with a similar approach to them. Interviewee 8 (SIL) cautions building teams in their own image can make the leader less successful and so should be avoided, further the leader suggests a leader who is self-aware will develop those around them to build a complimentary team.

Interviewee 2 (SOL) provides an example of how they have embedded this approach and mind-set within their own team. In order to embrace an inclusive approach, they invite everyone in promoted roles to leadership meetings so that when someone wants to move on, another leader *"…needs to be able to pick it up quite quickly, so they need to know what's going on, and what we're discussing"* (Interviewee 2 – SOL)*.* This was initially a reactive decision as current leaders would not meet the institutions new promotion criteria, but they did acknowledge the benefits for leaders and the team. Interestingly, Interviewees 4 (SOL) and 20 (SIL) share their experiences of leaders who have progressed through the ranks particularly in academics roles are often more respected, trustworthy and engage with people around them, consequently facilitating development within a team can foster this. Interviewee 4 (SOL) indicates that often *"…reputational capital, to sustain them in that position"* with Interviewee 20 (SIL) suggesting with greater experience comes greater leadership responsibility.

A few of the leaders emphasise it is important to recognise that development of people means they may not always stay within the original HEI and actually may move into a more senior role at a different institution or organisation. Interviewee 13 (SOL) suggests there is *"…something quite healthy about bringing people in from other institutions…"* and arguably movement between institutions only helps to build a sustainable contribution for the sector with Interviewee 20 (SIL) suggesting sharing knowledge and experience is a key aspect of this. As Interviewee 12 (SOL) states;

> *"…if somebody in my team got promoted either within their organisation or into a different one, then that was a success for me as a leader." (Interviewee 12 – SOL)*

Nevertheless, the same leader does emphasise that they believe an important element of sustainable leadership centres on looking for opportunities for the best talent in order to retain them. However, as discussed previously, succession planning is determined by the people available. Interviewee 6 (L) shares experience of training staff to take on their position as they engage in planned retirement however evokes that although opportunities and successions have been put in place staff *"…don't respond consistently".* Therefore, when it is too challenging and perhaps not possible to internally develop staff, recruiting externally may be the only option. Interviewee 12 (SOL) reflected in their experience when approaching the Research Excellent Framework (REF) assessment deadline, HEIs typically start to evaluate their researchers and their associated outputs to assess their quality and explore how this will reflect on the institution and consequently will attempt to recruit the best people to their institution which results in a…

> *"…kind of horse trading ground across institutions, of people trying to get the best talent. That's not taking a long term systemic approach to succession planning, by any manner of means." (Interviewee 12 – SOL)*

This is a specific example with leaders stressing fostering and retaining talent was the ultimate aim, many warned the reality that this may not be the case. This may be again due to a recognition that not everyone will want to develop, particularly into formal leadership positions for a variety of reasons or if they do leaders may ask *"what's actually in it for me?" (Interviewee 30 – SIL).* Interviewee 19 (SOL) stresses growing demands around leaders in HEIs can be a prominent reason for this as there may be *"..some extra remuneration but not, frankly not enough to make that a deal maker or breaker".*

Ultimately, the leaders recognised the important role succession planning has in building sustainability of the institution via their workforce and ultimately their leaders however, this may be difficult to achieve in reality. Ultimately, providing opportunities is key to developing leaders competency and approaches and a key facet of this is a leaders' own sustainability and reflection on which they can foster individually.

5.4.4 Individual Reflexivity

As we have previously discussed there are a number of different considerations made in developing leaders and promoting individuals to leadership positions. So far we have talked primarily about institutional processes that have facilitated a leader's development, but it is equally important to consider the individuals reflections on their experiences and how they have approached their leadership role(s) and associated development. Some leaders discussed making very conscious (Interviewee 11 – SIL) and individually motivated (Interviewees 1 – L and 22 – SOL) decisions around their development. This includes decisions to develop certain skills, undertake qualifications (e.g. an MSc and/or PhD) (Interviewees 9 – SOL and 10 – SOL), or explore opportunities which facilitate their skills (Interviewees 6 – L, 11 – SOL and 32 – SIL) in order to not only be successful in their current role but also to develop as a leader for the future.

Regardless of planned decisions around their development, a major issue a number of the interviewees highlighted and discussed was burnout of leaders and colleagues throughout HEIs.

> *"I think we do burn people out. Some people get burned out, whether they do that to themselves or whether we do it to them, I think it's unclear."*
> *(Interviewee 20 – SIL)*

Interestingly, the experience of Interviewee 1 (L) corresponds with this idea of 'allowing' oneself to be burnt out as they suggest leaders often take on leadership responsibilities due to pressure from others and so subsequently 'overdo it'. Therefore when reflecting on their personal experience, advocates it is *"…important to understand when is the right time to take on a specific leadership position for sustainability"* with Interviewee 9 (SOL) suggesting knowing their own skills had played a major role in their leadership approach and development. Consequently, Interviewees 13 (SOL) and 31 (SOL) suggest good leaders have the ability to stand back and reflect on the impact and dynamics they may have then as a result subsequently deciding on appropriate reactions; which may include negotiating with leaders about responsibilities and ultimately delegating or may involve the leader moving onto new opportunities. However this may be easier in theory as if the leader does feel under significant pressure they may struggle to make the best decision for them, a struggle Interviewee 18 (SOL) stressed they had experienced.

Interviewees 1 (L) and 19 (SOL) posit there is a point in your leadership career where you consider future roles and either decide another managerial role is the right more or alternatively decide *"I've had my fill"*. Interviewee 19 (SOL) decided they were the latter with Interviewee 5 (SIL) emphasising the former by realising the 'leadership' side of their roles was the part they enjoyed the most and therefore reflecting on this for their future was important to them. Additionally Interviewee 11 (SIL) suggested focusing on their self and their approach was more beneficial than being too task orientated, an approach also adopted by Interviewee 1 (L).

Therefore, although leader's emphasised taking advantage of opportunities was important, interviewee 5 (SIL) posited *"…sometimes it's planned and sometimes it's a bit fortuitous"*. Interviewee 8 (SIL) agrees with this and stresses taking advantage of opportunities to develop and change their role. Additionally, Interviewee 6 (L) suggests although people recommended planning their career this was not something they personally done, rather they took advantage of opportunities and development opportunities available to them. Interviewee 10 (SOL) advocates throughout their career seeking out opportunities was important for their development, as they reflected they felt *"…quite vulnerable"* during a restructure which affect staff around them. Interviewee 20 (SIL) also shared how they had discussed their future and potential opportunities with their leaders.

Consequently, a number of the leaders discussed that directly reflecting on their experience(s) had been extremely beneficial for them. This reflection may be formally facilitated via development programmes (Interviewee 28 – SIL) or be informal reflections such as during a commute to work (Interviewee 17 – SIL) or specific diarised times (Interviewee 23 – SOL). Interviewee 28 (SIL) agrees with the importance of engaging in reflection however shares that in their experience people that have been in post for a long time may become 'arrogant' and only reflect on their own agenda rather than their personal approach and the associated impacts. However, Interviewee 23 (SOL) suggests that in practice it can be difficult to adopt a reflective mind-set…

> *"…the ultimate barrier, I think, really in practice, on a day to day level, is actually the resources, time to reflect on the extent to which you're being sustainable because we talk about it, but people are working in process mode*

all the time, not in reflective mode because it's so busy." (Interviewee 23 – SOL)

Further, some leaders directly highlighted personally thinking about and managing their own mental health was not something that they had directly engaged with (Interviewee 8 – SIL) as Interviewee 18 (SOL) stated, *"I'm not very good at thinking about myself and what I want to do".*

Therefore, in order to facilitate leaders learning from experiences, facilitating and encouraging reflection, Interviewee 25 (SOL) details how using forums to ask leaders to share and reflect on their practices facilitates peer reflection and builds a network, an approach also adopted by Interviewee 29 (SOL) during their leadership development programmes. Further, they stressed building reflective skills are a major area of development and changing the leaders mind-set from ignoring reflection and being task focused to facilitating a norm of reflection about their leadership approach was key, also an argument posed by Interviewees 11 (SIL) and 23 (SOL). Interviewee 20 (SIL) shared how in order to reflect they will write a reflective diary which helps them but also allows them to be transparent on what they are working on and interested in which their followers could access. Therefore leaders are turning to methods that work for them in facilitating their own reflection, which is hopeful to see but does stress there is no approach adopted throughout an institution.

However, in order to truly be reflect and to avoid burnout there needs to be resilience in a leader however creating this can be a *"…a big challenge"* (Interviewee 32 – SIL) and problematic (Interviewee 19 – SOL). Arguably, you need time, space and support to build resilience, as Interviewee 24 (SIL) suggests experience provides a leader with *"…additional resilience".* Nevertheless as our discussions highlight fostering reflection and making time are crucial as they can help to build this, therefore leaders need to think of the long-term in order to be sustainable (Interviewee 19 – SOL) but their institutions must facilitate this. Interviewee 1 (L) is an example of a leader who has fostered this approach on a personal level with Interviewee 2 (SOL) sharing their enjoyment in their current role developing their staff brings huge satisfaction but does highlight they *"haven't actually thought about whether there's anything beyond that".* Neither leader alluded to any help or support provided by their institution.

When considering building resilience Interviewee 10 (SOL) stresses it is important to understand how others perceive them in order to develop and believes in *"…a critical self-reflection"* can illuminate the impact you have as a leader. Interviewees 2 (SOL), 23 (SOL) and 32 (SIL) also agree with this and discuss how a 360-degree reflection allowed them to stop and reflect on what they are doing. Although Interviewee 20 (SIL) shared a negative experience of 360-degree feedback that underlines that as a tool it is not always of benefit. Contrastingly, Interviewee 15 (L) suggests they try not to *"…worry too much about what people are thinking […] [and] develop a hard skin".* Nevertheless does stress reflecting on experience to learn from any mistakes made. Interviewee 24 (SIL) agrees that reflecting on and learning from mistakes can be a key development tool. However Interviewee 28 (SIL) questions how critical a reflection senior leaders will undertake and suggests even if they do they are typically unlikely to make any changes due to their pride.

As a result fostering and encouraging development via a reflection on action is vital for individuals. Leaders should be able to identify their skills and reflect on how they manage demands and growing pressures in order to allow them to develop as a sustainable leader.

5.4.5 Sustainable leadership development summary

In order to ensure that leaders can be effective and adopt a sustainable leadership approach they must develop their skills, approaches and adopt a mind-set, which will foster sustainability. It is imperative to recognise that sustainable leadership development must take place on a number of levels via a number of techniques in order to develop individual competency and develop resilience in leadership within HEIs but also for the sector (Interviewee 17 – SIL). Therefore, although having a number of opportunities for individuals to develop and learn in leadership positions is imperative the outcome should not be focused on one individual, but rather the impact this has on the overarching institution and then to the sector. However, the leaders within this research stressed there are a number of inconsistencies happening on individual, institution and sector levels with a range of attitudes and views related to the importance of such activities currently adopted. Nevertheless they all stressed how

developing their own approaches within their roles is pivotal and suggested often social aspects such as learning from others, engaging in coaching and mentoring relationships or relying on peers helps to facilitate this on an individual level.

However, what became clear is that an institution plays a fundamental role in facilitating this and they must recognise demands placed on leaders can be detrimental to the individual and the strain placed upon them or that place on them self can lead to burnout. Therefore adopting a long-term approach is arguably vital to ensure that future leaders have opportunities to develop but also that leaders have space and opportunities to reflect on their own resilience and how they are able to respond to demands they face. Therefore reflection on action and experience is pivotal for leaders to develop but this culture and approach must be embraced throughout the HEI as ultimately the aim should be developing leaders who are sustainable and have strong levels of resilience to enable them to lead effectively and manage demands is imperative.

5.5 Contextual influences affecting sustainable leadership

Throughout this chapter we have explored leadership and alluded to a number of contextual pressures leaders face that will influence their approaches in HE. Within this section we explore these more directly and share the interviewees perceptions of how they can and will influence the adoption of sustainable leadership within HEIs. As Interviewee 23 (SOL) believes

> *"…sustainable leadership is not just about the institution itself. It's got to be about how the sector's managed, but also how government, what government thinks about sustainable leadership in higher education."*
> *(Interviewee 23 – SOL)*

Interviewee 6 (L) also underlines responsibility at sectoral and government level to consider sustainability and advocates organisations such as Universities Scotland should consider what this means in practice to achieve it so that institutions know where their focus should be placed. Arguably this is because sectoral leaders and civil servants are best placed to see what is happening across institutions and therefore can facilitate such considerations and ensure that the sector can collegiately to achieve this (Interviewees

6 – L and 17 – SIL). Key informant 1 agrees and emphasises leaders throughout the sector, need to take account of changes and demands placed on the sector and on institutions, therefore differentiates between 'sector leadership' which aims to demonstrate the greater good of Scottish higher education and 'institutional leadership' in the more traditional view of ensuring their own institution's success. Correspondingly, Interviewee 21 (SIL) suggests that sectoral committees should challenge current practices rather than *"reinforcing and re-replicating things that exist and needs challenged"* and *"sustainability of the sector"* must be embraced (Interviewee 17 – SIL). Interviewee 6 (L) however stresses fostering a sector wide approach considering sustainability is *"…desirable but not necessarily easy to achieve"* particularly as competing demands exist throughout the sector. However arguably ensuring institutional leaders are engaging with those throughout the sector and in particular sectoral leaders is important.

Every interviewee discussed the marketization and implications of this in one way or another, each alluded to pressures and demands faced within HEIs and throughout the sector. Arguably therefore the nature of leadership has changed to respond to these pressures (Interviewees 8 – SIL, 9 – SOL, 11 – SIL and 26 – L) with leaders discussing accountability to both students and university court (Interviewee 16 – SIL) along with an increase in levels of reporting (Interviewees 14 – L and 31 – SOL) as major challenges. Interviewee 26 (L) proposes marketization results in more acute foci on the spending within HEIs and increased competition within the sector which the leader argues has been *"manufactured"* by government. Contrastingly Key informant 3 however stresses that as there is no charging for fees in Scotland although there may be competition the government does not encourage a very competitive system based on market force. Rather Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggests, *"…Government have a really strong interest in HE, and they manage and influence HE".* However as we will explore this is ultimately to achieve 'public good' (Interviewees 14 – L, 21 – SIL, 28 – SIL and Key informant 1). Regardless Key informant 1 posits it is important for institutions to have metrics and objectives as *"…If you're in receipt of public money you have to demonstrate the delivery of value for public investment."* Interviewee 31 (SOL) shares this 'demonstration of value' and reporting extends throughout institutions via the quality processes of HEIs

with reflective report writing by leaders from programme leader level, through SOLs, up to SIL levels. Interviewee 26 (L) concurs and stresses that although beneficial, identifying and being clear on 'good value for money' should not result in a measurement applied to each and every aspect of HEIs, which marketization may lead to. Interviewee 14 (L) stress if it is and if the demand to *"…do more and more with less and less"* continues this will intensify confusing tensions within institutions to balance long-term thinking and development with a visible, measurable output. Nevertheless, Key informant 2 also discussed this idea of demonstrating value for public expenditure and ensuring an institution is doing the right thing for the right reasons, which may mean questioning focus and response to demands in order to concentrate on specific elements. However there must be a balance between the autonomy of institutions and intervention on what and how a Government objective is achieved but also freedom to do so in a way that guarantees quality and ultimately sustainability of HEIs (Interviewees 8 – SIL, 26 – L and Key informant 1).

A number of the leaders considered these competing demands on an institutional level, Interviewee 13 (SOL) powerfully discusses funding as a major aspect of the higher education sector, and emphasises the role institutional differences and pressures institutions are placed under in relation to targets can be extremely difficult to manage and maintain especially in comparison to one another. Key informant 1 suggests that Government and the funding council should recognise institutional differences especially in relation to expectations by suggesting;

> *"…trying to apply uniform expectations to diverse institutions isn't really going to work." (Key informant 1)*

However the experience of Interviewee 13 (SOL) suggests expectations of staff in the differing institutions does not mirror this as everyone feels the same pressure and stress to meet increasingly demanding expectations. Therefore this insinuates demands in the sector have caused institutions to move away from specialising in certain aspects (such as post '92's in teaching etc.) and suggests that in trying to be everything often institutions will be negatively impacted. Further it emphasises the detrimental impact of targets and objectives and how if managed ineffectively by senior leaders institutions will lose their way. Additionally, Interviewees 8 (SIL) and 9 (SOL) both comment on how

metrics have become more prominent and with that comes expectations. However Interviewee 26 (L) stresses quantitative measures and metrics cannot and should not be taken in isolation. Interviewee 24 (SIL) advances that actually the learning environment of the institution should be the predominant factor. Similarly, Interviewee 21 (SIL) proposes an interesting consideration that these metrics can help advance approaches and inspire different ways of doing things but often HEIs can become reactive to them which must be avoided. Equally Interviewee 24 (SIL) emphasises that although aspects such as league tables are important, they should not detract from differences throughout the sector and so agrees with the views of other leaders who argue ultimately the paramount concern should be the overarching sector.

5.5.1 Higher Education Sector

Therefore, there are a number of contextual influences affecting HEIs and concerns for management within the institutions to make some difficult decisions around areas of focus and balancing demands whilst managing staff morale, particularly at SOL level (Interviewee 18 – SOL). Interviewee 19 (SOL) agrees and suggests "…*sensible discussion around some of these issues…"* is vital. Interviewee 32 (SIL) stresses pressures within HE have been ever thus but proposes they currently feel more 'acute' and all institutions will feel pressure in some regard which has added to the perceptions of a *"very fast moving environment".* However Interviewee 21 (SIL) proposes that as demands are changing in the sector it is important that leaders facilitate a sustainable approach rather than allowing gravitation to a model of managing HEIs as purely profit and loss businesses. Interviewee 22 (SOL) and 24 (SIL) comment this is compounded by the societal issues that impact the HE sector. Therefore, there must be a balance between strategic and operational objectives (Interviewee 20 – SIL). Consequently, utilising NPG principles alongside leadership however, this must be contextualised for universities (Interviewee 21 – SIL). Therefore, exploring such changes and the impacts of these pressures are crucial to explore how leadership within HEI can respond to such challenges.

5.5.1.1 Changes in HE sector

A number of the leaders discussed the rate and impacts of numerous changes within HE (interviewees 17 – SIL, 21 – SIL and 26 – L), some with huge, unexpected impacts (Interviewee 27 – SOL). However Interviewee 11 (SIL) posits changes have been happening in HE for the last few decades so should be expected with Interviewees 1 (L) and 8 (SIL) highlighting these changes are not always unique to HE but also a challenge to other sectors and businesses. Nevertheless, it is important to consider how these changes will influence the sector and how HEIs are managed, the major changes mentioned by a number of the leaders involve aspects such as the sector funding model, increases in technology and globalisation along with mass participation in HE and challenges around resources and implications of the lack of resources.

Overall Interviewee 18 (SOL) reflects the sector has become "…*much more externally focused, and much more commercially focused".* Therefore, as Interviewee 11 (SIL) suggests leaders should have a flexibility in their thinking so they can expect changes, even if they are not *"response ready"*. Interviewee 12 (SOL) posits that these changes will affect what a leader does but does not need to impact on their approach and leaders should avoid being too reactive. Interviewee 5 (SIL) corresponds with this and suggests although leaders must respond to changes, fundamental approaches to leadership do not need to change as keeping an eye on developments in the horizon and trying to keep ahead of that is still as important. Key informant 3 discusses having a *"flex in the system"* to cope with this. However Interviewee 21 (SIL) stresses that often people are extremely busy due to the limited resources and demands they face. Therefore individuals and leaders do not have sufficient time or space to tackle how to create efficiencies and prepare for the longer-term (Interviewee 5 – SIL). Interviewee 17 (SIL) discusses similar aspects and suggests that often *"quick fixes"* are required but ultimately suggests *"…operationally fix something just now, but actually you have to then take that to a strategic level".* Interviewee 24 (SIL) corresponds with this and reflects on how they have often seen senior leaders who have focused on "*quick fix solutions"* but posit cultural changes must also accompany this to ensure successful and sustainable changes. However a number of the leaders highlighted this is where tensions lie (Interviewee 11 – SIL), Interviewee 4 (SOL) agrees and indicates this is where 'good' leadership is

required to manage the demands and ensure that short and long-term objectives compliment one another ensuring that they *"build towards the longer term, not just quick fixes"*.

The funding model and impact of tight resources have posed a major challenge within HEIs, the leaders identified (Interviewee 24 – SIL, 30 – SIL). Learning how to manage/balance the demands will be key (Interviewee 1 – L) and therefore leaders must adapt to the changing context (Interviewee 11 – SIL). Key Informants 2 and 3 highlight outcome agreements within Scotland are designed to help strategically guide HEIs. Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggests the financial stability of institutions are probably much more challenging now due to the diversification of funding streams and multiple stakeholder expectations with Interviewee 24 (SIL) agreeing and suggesting tight resources and efficiency demands are felt by colleagues throughout HEIs. This illustrates the view of a number of the leaders related to resources and trying to manage the demands (Interviewees 4 – SOL, 7 – SOL, 11 – SIL, 30 – SIL and 31 – SOL). Interviewee 28 (SIL) reinforces this idea that the biggest challenge in coping with these demands is maintaining motivation and staff morale, as Interviewee 4 (SOL) summarises;

> *"…it is quite a difficult juggling act they've got, with limited resources, to make sure they get the most of them by giving them to the areas that need them in their particular institution." (Interviewee 4 – SOL)*

Interviewee 7 (SOL) agreed and stressed motivating *"…staff to get the most out of them, because at the university that really is your main resource"* is a vital role leaders play. Interviewee 30 (SIL) however argues balancing staffing levels between teaching and researching is important but not always easy as it can result in difficult conversations and often giving a rationale for 'why' can be difficult. Interviewee 31 (SOL) suggests often this balance is not achieved and people can become overwhelmed by having too many demands placed upon them, for example if they are given too much teaching they will have no time to research. Ultimately however, Key Informants 2 and 3 reinforce the tricky balance can be navigated by working with stakeholders, having clarity and transparency in goals and demonstrating effective leadership around immediate priorities and longer term goals.

A source of this demand and an opposing challenge to achieving a balance discussed by the leaders' results from mass participation in HE which has lead to major changes in delivery plus pressure within HEIs. Interviewees 8 (SIL) and 15 (L) both commented previously only an elite 10% of the population participated in HE versus 48-50% of the population that now engages with HE. Interviewee 22 (SOL) reflects on how this massification of education 'creeped in' where each year more students would join and with that meant there was additional work but the pressure around this was *"normalised"*, an idea Interviewee 4 (SOL) agrees with by also suggesting leaders must recognise the demands placed on and the needs of employees are crucial. Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggests massification has significant challenges in terms of delivery but also comments on the investment that has been placed in HE. Interviewee 15 highlights perceived effectiveness of HE in light of challenges can be problematic especially related to quality of delivery and can cause significant tensions (Interviewee 4 – SOL). Therefore these somewhat unquestioned rising expectations and acceptance of the pressure has caused concern within HEIs.

Further Globalisation has prompted a number of pressures, demands and changes in HE and Interviewee 32 (SIL) highlights how political views and policies can negatively impact HEIs, in particular due to the changing rules, regulations and legislation around international students. Interviewee 18 (SOL) has also noticed this trend and suggests *"…we used to have far more international students"*. This demonstrates changing demographics in the student population have played a pivotal role in advancing changes in the HE sector as in order to respond to numerous demands there must be a range of different offerings in HE. Additionally a prominent societal change that has also influenced HE is technology and computerisation. However Interviewee 31 (SOL) stresses this has not necessarily meant automatic benefits and suggests "…*computers don't solve every problem*". Yet they are used on a daily basis and becoming more and more the primary mode of delivery in HEIs; even in on campus delivery teaching modes (via VLEs, podcasts, videos) with Interviewee 28 (SIL) emphasising *"everything's virtual".* Although Interviewees 17 (SIL), 20 (SIL) and 21 (SIL) indicate investments being made to respond to this and ensure enhancements in teaching and learning are being made across HEIs. Interviewee 28 (SIL) presented an interesting discussion of the impact of the

move to online provision and increase in technology by suggesting the sector may be following trends of the high street with less physical space to potentially moving to a fully online presence. However stresses the need to ensure HEIs are not *"…giving out degrees like sweeties, which will devalue degrees"*. Furthermore, Interviewee 15 (L) highlights changes are inevitable and although movement to a fully online provision has been discussed this leader believes that people seem to be going away from this, especially as HEIs use technology to complement rather than replace traditional delivery (Interviewee 21 – SIL). Therefore, a number of the leaders discussed new initiatives to encourage participation in HE which means adapting and challenging institutions to think about creative solutions, although Interviewee 21 (SIL) suggests HE is often slow to respond. Key informant 3 also reflects on how traditional modes, methods and approaches in HEIs can be challenged in order to ensure there is added value which compliments the *"fantastic university system in Scotland"* we currently have. Therefore, programmes such as graduate apprentices, which are a government initiative, are one example of positive change and move towards more creative and collaborative ways of working between HEIs and stakeholders as ensuring graduates have the skills for the future will positively benefit Scotland's businesses (Key informant 3).

Regardless of the numerous changes and challenges the HE sector face, Interviewee 11 (SIL) suggests a key role of leaders so to help people see the future is bright and see their role and contribution to making it better. Interviewee 26 (L) also comments on their hope that challenges HE face will lead to a *"rediscovery"* of good leadership which although may face a number of challenges, instinctively people recognise leadership is important and can make an importance difference in HEIs.

5.5.1.2 Managing HEIs as businesses

Following from these changes a number of the leaders emphasised the role of institutional leaders in deciding upon, clarifying and communicating the foci of institutions. This includes achieving a balance between short-term demands and long-term strategic plans (Interviewee 7 – SOL). Ultimately Interviewee 4 (SOL) suggests that learning is key, learning what factors to focus on, learning what resources are required and learning about the skills of your employees and how they will be able to achieve what you have set out is key. However, as a leader providing the support, resources and

collegiate environment that will enable this to happen is pivotal and arguably if not done and if there is confusion and conflicting views can play a detrimental role in HEIs (Interviewee 4 – SOL). However Interviewee 16 (SIL) suggests that it can be challenging to strike a balance between the *"finance and business side and the freedom that academics would love to have" (Interviewee 16 – SIL).* Ultimately therefore it is about ensuring that the institution is sustainable and viable by balancing the books (Interviewees 16 – SIL and 25 – SOL), which means managing not depleting resources (Interviewee 20 – SIL) and *"making enough money to do the things we want to do"* (Interviewee 25 – SOL). However as Interviewee 6 (L) contends although there is a need to balance the books, stresses, *"it can't or shouldn't all be about the money".* Additionally we need to be aware that students are not just 'buying degrees' or treating the university as a shop with the same expectations as a 'customer' (Interviewee 28 – SIL).

> *"…we're not a business. We should be business-like but we're not a business."*
> *(Interviewee 14 – L)*

As Interviewee 21 (SIL) reminds us *"universities were never meant to be businesses".* Interviewee 28 (SIL) also discusses this and suggests from their perspective some institutional leaders perhaps only believe they are managing a business in terms of profit and loss, targets, KPIs etc. and so can be more 'manager' than 'leader' like. On the other hand, professors who are appointed to such positions may find it difficult to manage multi-million pound businesses; therefore, it is about a balance between the growing demands of running a business versus the academic good and rigour of HEIs. Consequently, clarifying expectations is imperative because if not then the leader argues this is where students can expect to be 'customers' (Interviewee 14 – L) which has been increasing in the last decade (Interviewee 3 – L). Arguably these expectations have resulted in students adopting a different mentality (Interviewees 17 – SIL and 28 – SIL).

As a result of these shifts and increasing number of the leaders discussed the 'students as customers' debate, some had very strong views on the subject, some commenting they did not see an issue but ultimately interviewee 3 (L) posits the terminology is bound within the increases in marketization within the sector. Regardless of the views on the word, a recurring theme was the delivery of an 'effective' service. Which interviewee 28

(SIL) proposed may be due to the unquestionable importance of student satisfaction. For this reason and because of the different mentality of students in today's HEIs, Interviewee 15 (L) recommends managing expectations is key and suggests working with feedback from a number of stakeholders (including students, external bodies etc.) to guarantee what is being delivered is 'fit for purpose'. Therefore Interviewee 16 (SIL) suggests a creation of a *"learning community"* can foster relationships between academics and students. Interviewee 32 (SIL) agrees with this sentiment and suggests the word 'colleagues' rather than students but ultimately comes back to a *"community of scholars"*. Yet this is contingent upon clear expectations and the fulfilment of these expectations by both parties (Interviewees 16 – SIL, 17 – SIL and 32 – SIL). However Interviewee 28 (SIL) stresses the expectations between 'students' versus 'customers' are significantly different kinds of relationships, mainly *"…they get a service not the output"*, a proposition also advocated by Key Informants 1 and 2). Interviewee 4 (SOL) further emphasises it is the process and facilitation being offered by HEIs and stresses 'students' expectations should echo this. Interestingly Interviewee 11 (SIL) shares a similar sentiment on the idea of providing a service but agrees with the use of the word customer. Interviewee 17 (SIL) corresponds and although underlines the importance of a differing relationship from private sector 'customers' due to the focus of higher education in terms of facilitating learning and providing high quality student experience. Suggests that having a developed, motivated and engaged workforce to deliver for students is *"no different from Marks and Spencer"* therefore the leadership and management of staff within the HEI should be similar to private sector even though the customer relationship is different. An argument Interviewee 12 (SOL) agrees with who reinforces that everyone needs to do the best job possible.

Interviewee 20 (SIL) supplements this and suggests the 'business' debate is the biggest differentiator between academics and professional services where although academics may not think what they are doing is a business, the leader argues what professional services staff are doing typically is, a sentiment also agreed by Interviewees 10 (SOL) and 11 (SIL). Moreover Interviewee 20 (SIL) stresses that the language used may be different but actually in competing within the marketplace there must be a recognition that *"we are in the business of making universities"*. Interviewee 27 (SOL) agrees and comments

that the external political factors have increased the need to become more commercially driven. Nevertheless as we have explored there is growing pressure, competition and marketization that is unquestionable now in HEIs, which is where the growing managerialism in HEIs has stemmed from (Interviewee 9 – SOL). Therefore, Interviewee 23 (SOL) emphasises this may be due to the need for "…*a culture of corporate mindedness within senior levels*" in order to respond to changes and demands HEIs face and work to multiple agendas. These agendas are often set by the focus and history of the institution, however this study found that challenges will impact HEIs regardless of such aspects.

5.5.1.3 Institutional differences

An assumption of this research involved differences between institutions, how they are managed and respond to challenges. Ultimately the leaders reflected on the focus and history of the institution, and importantly when they were formed, allocates them into a 'type' of institution (see Table 3) and with that comes certain expectations and stereotypes, particularly around being research or teaching focused, which can result in different cultures (Interviewees 17 – SIL and 22 – SOL). However, what became clear through this study is that all institutions are experiencing the same issues and challenges, sometimes in different variations but all leaders stressed the pressure from balancing demands in the sector (in particular, Interviewees 22 – SOL and 30 – SIL). As Interviewee 12 (SOL) suggested after having worked in all 'types' of institutions there are consistencies in aspects of their strategies, just their starting point and history differs and will influence in different ways. Interviewee 13 (SOL) stresses these underpinnings are important for HEIs, especially as there can be negative consequences of trying to be something else (Key Informant 1). Key Informant 2 and Interviewee 17 (SIL) deliberate that institutions having a different focus does not need to be a negative. Different institutions were formed intending to be different and therefore the biggest issue(s) could be in trying to be too similar which can result in institutions losing their edge, or niche as interviewee 13 (SOL) and Key Informant 1 emphasise. Interviewees 14 (L) and 21 (SIL) agree with these sentiments, presenting similar arguments and stress the importance of being clear about what HEIs are doing and 'what we are for' in HEIs is vital. Therefore Interviewees 4 (SOL), 7 (SOL) and 28 (SIL) reaffirm the importance of and

influence leaders have in balancing and navigating demands and pressures. Consequently, Interviewee 20 (SIL) suggests staying true to the HEI's focus and history whilst being able to *"…change and adapt enough to bend in the wind and not break."*

However the fact that institutions are measured with the same metrics in things such as the REF and NSS, the pressure to be good in all aspects has increased (Interviewee 17 – SIL). This 'league table' culture can be self-perpetuating (Interviewee 3 – L) however Interviewees 2 (SOL) and 18 (SOL) stress the importance of focusing on the strategic goals of the HEI and *"helping ourselves"*. Interviewee 30 (SIL) argues a key aspect of this is reviewing the league tables and ensuring the institution is as high on the leagues tables as possible. However Interviewee 9 (SOL) stresses a major frustration of aspects such as the NSS is the *"short-term-ist"* mind-set it encourages but actually it needs to go further than this and instead build good processes and systems. Interviewee 10 (SOL) agrees and suggests ensuring that changes and enhancements are overlaid and integrated with current strategies is key. Arguably this will avoid quick fixes which can be extremely problematic (Interviewee 17 – SIL and 24 – SIL). Therefore, a major challenge for individual HEIs in an attempt to meet these metrics can result in significant challenges and pressures placed on individual academics and institutional leaders, particularly when expectations of academics in the different types of institutions tends to be the same. Although the interviewees highlighted a focus on high level research is achievable by all academics in all institutions (Interviewees 17 – SIL, 19 – SOL, 22 – SOL, 23 – SOL) some posited that the process and practices at ancients and chartered institutions can foster this level of research more readily than new universities typically can (Interviewees 22 – SOL and 31 – SOL). For example, Interviewee 22 (SOL) shared that sabbaticals and rotating leadership positions can act in favour of academics in institutions in that they can allow space for research (during a sabbatical) or can share 'management' responsibility which can encourage the maintenance of a research pipeline (via rotating leadership positions). Interviewee 31 (SOL) suggests this is typically due to resources which are more likely to be available in ancient institutions in comparison to new institutions. Further Interviewee 13 (SOL) argues *"You can have the same target on a member of staff in a post '92, and on a red brick, and it would be completely unfair".* Equally, however Interviewee 16 (SIL) stresses senior institutions

leaders at ancient universities will have pressures and expectations to maintain their research and submit as part of the REF, where in new universities these pressures do not tend to be as strong. These demands on leaders and the struggle to balance the 'academic' and 'managerial' responsibilities in a leadership position will be explored in more detail in section 5.5.2.1.

Across all types of HEIs, there were many different approaches to management and leadership, where a role in one type of institution would have very different responsibilities to a similar role at a different type of institution (Interviewee 16 – SIL). Therefore, as Interviewee 13 (SOL) stresses a management approach that works in one institution is not wholly transferrable, because institutions are not wholly transferrable. Consequently, the need to be flexible in the position is alluded to in terms of responding to demands. However as Interviewee 25 (SOL) suggests *"there's this interesting dichotomy between process and innovation"* in that leaders and employees will push back on implementing rigid process as they feel it stifles their innovation, however the leader suggest this often means that *"nothing's written down. It's all in people's heads"* where in comparison management processes tend to be strong in new universities (Interviewee 25 – SOL). On the other hand this concentration and obsession with management processes can cause a *"…constant flux in restructuring"* Interviewee 18 (SOL) suggests, who further reflects restructuring happens quite frequently within their institution although stresses this *"seems to be a modern university phenomenon".*

Overall the pressure and demands placed on institutions are universal, however in different types of institutions the balance sought after will differ (Interviewee 30 – SIL) as HEIs respond to challenges in different ways (Interviewees 21 – SIL and 26 – L). However with the core challenges that are present, Interviewee 26 (L) highlights creating relationships across institutions can be extremely beneficial. Therefore, although increasingly competition will exist within institutions (Interviewee 26 – L), how leaders approach and manage this will make the biggest difference, if inter-sector collaboration is fostered and encouraged this could contribute to effectively managing the sector and navigating the challenges all HEIs will face. A number of the leaders agreed with this and as Interviewee 17 (SIL) stressed;

"Because much as we do compete, we collaborate more than we compete."
(Interviewee 17 – SIL)

Interviewee 24 (SIL) suggests that regardless of the elements of competition, they believe *"the sector of Scottish higher education, it is a massively collegiate supportive sector"* which other leaders agreed with (such as Interviewees 2 – SOL, 17 – SIL and 26 – L). And this must be fostered to enable a sustainable sector with Key informant 3 proposing to achieve sustainability in the sector it must be about sustainability on all levels (financial, organisational and preparing for the future – both in terms of staff and student skill development).

5.5.1.4 Inter-sector Collaboration

The leaders emphasised that Scottish HE fosters collaboration and a number of the interviewees emphasised the significant benefits that can come from this. Notably, three of the senior institutional leaders, Interviewees 5, 8 and 16 directly discussed the major desirable element for them in working with colleagues across the sector is to share ideas. The leaders also suggest this could not only help solve problems but equally foster confidence in processes or practices that are working well within the individual's current institution (Interviewee 16 – SIL), encourage innovation in their practice (Interviewee 5 – SIL) and keep an injection of freshness in a leaders' role and their institution (Interviewee 8 – SIL). Partnerships can especially be pivotal when considering policy development where collaboration (between Government, University Scotland and the SFC) to come to the best plan and impact for all is vital (Key informant 3). Key informant 2 intimates that often if there is no partnership or collaboration then Government objectives may seem impossible and viewed as a 'dictate from government'. Therefore the leader suggests it is important for institutional leaders to *"…own that aim in their own way, making progress towards it…"* (Key Informant 2). These sentiments were also advocated by Interviewees 18 (SOL) and 19 (SOL) who suggested creating a support network with other peers to discuss issues was key for their development and to achieve maximum results. Further, Interviewee 2 (SOL) suggests this collaboration within and across institutions could help foster a move towards sustainable leadership as they advocate collaborations should be fostered across the sector with a long-term view encouraged via sharing of information and

working together to navigate problems/challenges.

An additional discussion of collaboration centred on leadership development, with Interviewee 17 (SIL) submitting HE *"…is good at developing people for the sector"* and therefore when developing leaders Interviewee 20 (SIL) *"people should move around the sector".* Which Interviewee 27 (SOL) suggested was an approach also advocated by their SIL due to the benefits in advancing individual development. Although Interviewee 2 (SOL) shares the view that it can help gain insights from different institutions, the leader believes, it is and should also be possible to remain within one institution and develop as an individual and as a leader. However, Key informant 1 suggests that often individuals within the sector will have more loyalty to their discipline than to an institution so may move on if the opportunity is appealing. From an individual perspective, key informant 1 here stresses they have witnessed a *"strong sense of there being an eco-system of institutions"* where individuals do cross institutions positively and as a result add to the support network which exists within the sector. Key Informant 2 also discussed the wider eco-system of HE and emphasises the role policymaking organisations play in working collaboratively across the sector (which includes Government, the SFC, Universities Scotland and individual institutions) is imperative as it can help foster such an approach. However the leader indicates that each party must acknowledge the intersections with one another and recognise that although priorities may differ it is important to be *"pragmatic, collaborative and compromising to get things done"* yet the leader, Key Informant 2, advocates the HEI culture can drive collaboration. However it is important to recognise that society and issues that are discussed in HEIs do not fit into neat disciplinary or institutional silos (Interviewee 21 – SIL and Key Informant 2). Key Informant 1 suggested hopefully interdisciplinary approaches can help to overcome these silos with Key Informant 2 and 3 endorsing a collaborative approach across the sector can only foster this. Interviewee 22 (SOL) also stresses silo working is the norm within HEIs and this can act as a barrier to collaborative working unless people *"break out of their silos".* Consequently, having leaders who are looking at the wider sector and considering changes which will meet the changing needs of stakeholders is imperative (Interviewee 11 – SIL). However Interviewee 15 (L) emphasises identifying stakeholders and their needs can be difficult. Employees within HEIs are also

stakeholders and linking back to discussions in the inclusive and collegiate institution section (5.3) interacting, communicating effectively with and developing them is a key role of leaders (Interviewees 19 – SOL, 20 – SIL and 21 – SIL). Interviewee 17 (SIL) stresses this is a key element of their leadership approach to ensure they are working with all stakeholders to achieve desired goals is important.

Therefore although inter-sector collaboration is sought after and a number of the leaders highlighted the benefits that can arise from it, the pressures and current circumstances of competition and increased marketization within the sector are major barriers to facilitating this approach consistently and openly throughout the HE.

5.5.2 Individuals attempting to balance demands

Following considerations of the changing HE sector and increasing demands and challenges institutions may face, a number of the interviewees reflected on and shared personal experiences of pressure they feel under to manage and attempt to balance demands in their role within HEIs, in a somewhat unpredictable environment. Interviewee 3 (L) disclosed feeling significant stress by having to be good at a number of things, regardless of where their strengths lie. Additionally Interviewee 1 (L) directly discusses "*…competing demands…*" between achieving high student satisfaction scores and everything associated with teaching plus having great publications is *"…a zero sum game. I see that it's very difficult to be brilliant in all of these areas."* Similarly, Interviewees 18 and 19 both discuss their roles as senior operational leaders in helping their staff to deal with the competing pressures advocated by Interviewee 1 (L). Interviewee 18 (SOL) in particular highlights;

> *"…because of the pressure on the job […] it's trying to support them and motivate them, and some of them get stressed […] So, being supportive, being developmental, at operational [level]." (Interviewee 18 – SOL)*

Further the leader stresses this may be the case due to the ever changing external context where the *"competition is immense"* (Interviewee 18 – SOL). Nevertheless, Interviewee 2 (SOL) reflects their staff do cope with the demands and stresses that although they may experience challenges often they will find a way to achieve multiple targets (i.e. particularly between research and teaching). Consequently, as highlighted

previously, in order to help manage these demands the leaders reiterated the need for HEIs to have a clear strategy and direction regarding what they want to achieve whilst balancing external demands (Interviewee 8 – SIL). Therefore institutions must be transparent about how they can play to their strengths so that individuals can add to the achievement of the HEIs goals (Interviewees 10 – SOL and 28 – SIL), Interviewee 8 (SIL) reaffirms the importance of this to ensure that individuals do not feel these demands are *"incompatible or competing"*.

Overall, the interviewees stressed having a strong, singular focus on targets can be detrimental for individuals (see for example 5.4.4 and 5.5.1.2). However Interviewee 19 (SOL) suggested with experience comes a recognition that results such as the NSS will fluctuate and therefore like interviewee 18 suggests that as an operational leader guiding people and ensuring they are not overly worrying about a singular metric is vital. Interviewee 6 (L) reflects on their experience and suggests that often short-term changes will ensure as a product of the metric but will rarely be sustainable as they will often *"peter out"*, Interviewee 9 (SOL) agrees and rather advocates having good processes and people in place is crucial.

To attempt to manage demands and tensions, institutions may introduce workload allocation models (WAMs) for academics that aim to track allocations and ultimately balance time spend on tasks (Interviewee 32 – SIL). However, arguably, attempting to balance such conflicting demands can put added pressure on individuals to spend their personal time completing task such as research (Interviewee 31 – SOL), especially if they do not fit within the allocated WAM (see also 5.5.2.3). Ultimately, Interviewee 19 (SOL) warns against universities who are trying to achieve targets in multiple areas that they do not burnout and *"squeeze out discretionary effort, because the more you try and manage that, the more likely you are to lose it".* Interviewee 25 (SOL) agrees with this and suggests that if the relationship between the individual and the institution is treated as transactional with a *"what can I get out of you"* attitude then ultimately the individual will turn against their organisation. Thus as Interviewee 4 (SOL) states;

> *"…all metrics are worthy goals, but, in a competitive world they can't all be achieved to the extent any one organisation would like to achieve them. But, organisations, nonetheless, have to try because that's the nature of their*

activities. So, I think it is a case of what's possible, what's feasible, and what's realistic. Because the resources are tight, and there's lots of pressures on people to do all sorts of things." (Interviewee 4 – SOL)

Consequently, from the experiences of the leaders, focusing on employees' wellbeing can positively impact their attitudes, commitment to the institution and ultimately their sustainability in managing demands (Interviewee 25 – SOL).

5.5.2.1 Erosion of 'Academic' when taking on leadership position

When contemplating how leaders undertake their roles, a recurring aspect from the academic leaders was a resulting decrease in their research due to pressures, demands and workload which result from their 'management' role (we discussed rotating leadership positions – section 5.3.2 – to aid in this). Arguably, the erosion of academic identity Interviewees 7 (SOL), 18 (SOL), 19 (SOL) and 30 (SIL) argued is the biggest barrier in recruiting leaders in academia. All academics who discussed the individual pressures of being a leader alluded to ultimately losing or giving up their research, arguably this is because something has to give due to time constraints (Interviewee 31 – SOL) although Interviewee 7 (SOL) suggests, *"I think in theory you don't have to give up your research. In practice I think a lot of people do."* Interviewee 18 (SOL) reflects;

 "A key challenge is, most people came into academia wanting to be academics, or researchers, and that's their first love, and then they accidently get into management. […] linking to sustainability, as an academic leader you feel that your credibility as an academic leader can become less because you lose your academic credibility, because you're not up in time to publish your research. […] So, you almost have to then sort of become eh a professional manager, and that's not what you set out to be. " (Interviewee 18 – SOL)

Key informant 1 agrees with this view particularly as you become more senior in HEIs. However, Interviewee 16 (SIL) shares that there may still be an expectation that in order to *"command respect"* continuing researching and *"being an academic"* can be important for leaders, particularly if they are still assessed *"as a normal academic"* (Interviewee 19 –SOL). However due to the size of their team and their leadership responsibilities plus their research plan and trajectory (Interviewee 18 – SOL), they may be *"out of their depth"* in trying to balance these somewhat competing demands (Interviewee 24 – SIL). Interviewee 9 (SOL) shares their experience that often if a leader is attempting this balance the result may be a perception of prioritising, for example

they have worked with a leader who didn't want to be involved in the more 'managerial' side that accompanied their leadership role which had negative impacts on the staff around them. Consequently, this balance is often managed on an individual basis with the leader navigating the needs of their team with their own priorities and reconciling these somewhat conflicting demands in the best way possible.

5.5.2.2 Separation of teaching and research

Throughout the study and in this section in particular, we have alluded to the experiences of the leaders regarding conflicting demands and pressures on individuals within HEIs. Ultimately, leaders should foster the achievement of long-term goals in an equal balance with short-term achievements, without being detrimental to quality (Interviewee 13 – SOL) which may be difficult (Key informant 2).

A number of the leaders discussed the rhetoric around conflicts in teaching and research though Interviewee 2 (SOL) stresses it is vital that there is a realisation that teaching and research *"are not incompatible"* with Interviewee 32 (SIL) affirming they *"are both interlocking".* However Interviewee 14 (L) shared their differing perspective by stating *"teaching's not particularly valued"* and suggests *"research is more important"* and therefore suggests early career academics focus on this rather than *"fabulous teaching".* Interviewee 31 (SOL) agrees with this and suggests the REF is *"actually deplorable in a lot of ways"* as they feel it places a perceived importance on some topics and devalues others which affects academics focus (e.g. 'basic book keeping' which is an essential topic to teach students but has no research articles written on it). However interviewee 32 (SIL) suggests as a senior leader they attempt to ensure there is clarity around expectations of research by advocating, *"research is about discovery"* and further states *"it's not all about REF".* On the other hand, Interviewee 22 (SOL) corresponds with Interviewee 31's view and suggests that as pedagogic research is not included in the REF these areas have *"become much more muted".* A number of the leaders mentioned the importance of *"research-led teaching"* (Interviewee 22 – SOL) which facilitates a shared importance around teaching and research, however this can be difficult to change particularly if teams have been 'research-led' and teaching has been *"pretty maintenance teaching"* (Interviewee 19 – SOL).

However, the management and balance between teaching and research, was an area of difficulty a number of the leaders discussed. Interviewee 19 (SOL) considered differentiated contracts (teaching or research led) allow flexibility to compose the best mix of people, which can help reach a balance and achieve the outcomes of the HEI. Other institutions often introduced a requirement of employment was to have a PhD and therefore demonstrate you are research active (Interviewees 7 – SOL and 9 – SOL). Interviewee 7 (SOL) explores the advantages and disadvantages of this and shares that although they may help in adding to the research portfolio of the institution, often *"you end up getting people who haven't got experience to be good teachers, etc., don't have the motivation and aren't interested in the teaching."* Further the leader agrees with Interviewee 14's view that often research is given *"undue importance compared to really good teaching".* However Interviewee 22 (SOL) discusses the idea that within HEIs they have witnessed (over the last 30 years) there is often "*a pendulum effect"* which goes between a heavy research focus then to a heavy teaching focus. The leader suggests this is due to the senior institutional leaders focus at that time along with the HEIs performance management but confirms it will have a number of impacts on staff throughout the HEI. How the institution shapes the management of these demands and how individuals respond to these will be explored in section 5.5.3. However, a key role of leaders throughout organisations is to create an equitable work-life balance, although this does come with challenges.

5.5.2.3 Work-life balance

Throughout the research (for example, see 5.3.3.3), we have discussed the increasing demands and challenges within HEIs and how leaders can help manage this. However, a key challenge within this in the management of work-life balance, especially in the balancing of demands, which can be difficult for both leaders and for individuals (Interviewees 2 – Sol and 19 – SOL), as Interviewee 15 (L) stresses;

> *"[a major challenge is] trying to keep people within tolerable limits of work allocation. Some people want to take on too much work, other ones essentially are not over-keen to take on any work" (Interviewee 15 – L)*

Therefore a negotiation ensues between the leader and individual to allocate work but ultimately Interviewee 30 (SIL) suggests ensuring there is a balance of people to deliver

teaching requirements whilst giving people time to undertake their research is pivotal and leads on from considerations regarding having a balance of the right people within every team (see 5.5.2.2). Nevertheless, the leaders discussed individuals who will often use their personal time to complete work related activities, in particular their research (Interviewee 31 - SOL). A number of the leaders who also discussed the balance between personal and work life and reflected that growing demands to excel in academia and achieve promotion can make the balance between work and family life *"challenging"* (Interviewee 19 – SOL). Partly this can be a result of dedication to their discipline, especially if one has a *"publish or perish"* mantra (Interviewee 3 – L). Alternatively personal choices made by individuals to enhance their careers (Interviewee 19 – SOL); or can be due to pressure the individual may feel to aid their institution (Interviewee 22 – SOL) and knowing when to stop can be difficult (Interviewee 2 – SOL).

Interviewee 9's (SOL) experience corresponds with this, as they had to negotiate with their senior leader about responsibilities they had been allocated to enable them to manage demands placed on them. Arguably therefore as Interviewee 9 managed to do, the identification and intervention before reaching/experiencing burnout should come from the individual as *"…people may feel it is a slight on their professional autonomy…"* if a leader is to intervene (Key informant 1). Nevertheless a lack of action from the HEI can be hugely detrimental, Interviewee 18 (SOL) shared an open and honest account of being asked to progress into a more senior position but reflected *"I said I just can't stomach it. I couldn't cope. I needed a break."* Additionally stressed there was no *"…duty of care or follow up at all"* from their leaders or the central institution but they did have peer support which helped them overcome these feelings (see 5.3.4). Interviewee 19 (SOL) also shared their disappointment in their institution's HR department who did not follow the policy regarding succession planning, stating they were *"…really angry, just because of the lack of support and also because of the attitudes of my colleagues".*

Interestingly, Interviewee 9 (SOL) suggests leaders within HEIs will encourage people to be 'strategically selfish', which may have unintended consequences on the collegiality of the team. However, Interviewee 22 (SOL) shared in order to receive promotion they personally worked 70 hour weeks and believes that was/is the expectation and accepted culture in HEIs. Therefore advocate the need to be self-centred or alternatively *"you'll*

just break because of the pressures" (Interviewee 22 – SOL). Regardless suggests that often individuals will typically 'drop' their own projects if a senior leader approaches with a pressing demand in HEIs, hence compounding the demands placed upon them and pressure they feel.

This once more underlines the idea that growing pressures and demands placed upon leaders has increased and this has only led to a growing number of leaders experiencing burnout, as Interviewee 7 (SOL) states *"there's always burnout, it's the big problem".* Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggest individuals must be able to reflect and achieve a work-life balance which can help to avoid burnout with Interviewees 5 (SIL) and 11 (SIL) suggesting aspects such as diary management and delegation may help to manage pressures. However as experiences of senior operational leaders, Interviewees 9, 18, 19 and 22 highlight this is not straightforward. In fact Interviewee 22 (SOL) alludes that leaders will hide their true feelings as

> *"People would not speak up. They would not voice their anxieties. […] so if you want to get promotion you must be seen to be strong and to cope with these pressures without any support. So, the normalisation of job pressure becomes more and more intense, you can't speak up." (Interviewee 22 – SOL)*

Arguably therefore a number of the leaders alluded to this implicit expectation of *"long hours"* (Interviewee 20 – SIL) and attempt to balance arguably conflicting demands individually (Interviewee 19 – SOL). These leaders (Interviewees 19 – SOL and 20 – SIL) further posited the potentially negative impact on development of leaders which is leading to burnout by attempting to meet these standards. Key informant 1 reflects this is in fact something almost all levels of leaders face, even Principals, as it is *"...an absolute[ly] punishing role"* with the interviewee stressing leaders must recognise they cannot work every hour of the day and that reflecting on their behaviour is vital in an attempt to be sustainable. This can arguably be impacted by the institutional culture and the behaviours role modelled by leaders throughout the HEI.

5.5.3 Institutional Impact

As we have explored throughout this theme there are a range of influences and factors throughout HE, consequently leaders within HEIs are significantly influenced by these factors and must respond to them. We have considered the individual and how they will

attempt to balance the demands placed on them. But is it also important to explore how ultimately they are influenced by in institution they work within and how the approach of the institution will have a major impact on what they will do and how they will be able to do it.

As was initially discussed in section 5.5.2, within HE a number of the leaders discussed academics are *"very loyal"* regardless of how they are treated (Interviewee 14 – L) due to the time it can take to develop excellence in the discipline (Key informant 3 and Interviewee 27 – SOL). Moreover the interviewee suggests that they are "…*engaged with their discipline, they've engaged with their students".* Interviewee 12 (SOL) also proposes a somewhat dispersed attitude with individuals who are passionate to their discipline, subject group or school, Key informant 1 and Interviewee 32 (SIL) correspond with this and suggests often this loyalty is stronger to that than to the institution. Interviewee 26 (L) agrees with the sentiments of these interviewees and emphasises such dedication from individuals will happen and largely *"it's nothing to do with university management system".* However Interviewee 22 (SOL) stresses that regardless of how passionate and dedicated an individual may be they must be supported by the structures and processes within the HEI. Consequently, Interviewee 3 (L) suggests it is important for leaders in HEIs to make an effort and attempt to foster and sustain an engaged and valued workforce. Interviewee 32 (SIL) agrees and stresses *"it behoves the institution to treat people well".*

Therefore, to create a collegiate environment and attempt to overcome these feelings of segmentation, Interviewee 24 (SIL) posits a community approach is important to foster pride in the HEI. However Interviewee 26 (L) indicates this may be a difficult thing to do due to the 'bureaucratic' nature of universities which have historic approaches and can be very slow to change due to their established culture, which Interviewee 12 (SOL) agrees with although does correspond it can be advantageous to attempt to change the culture. Arguably, as HEIs are often *"increasingly Unitarist"* adopting a 'pluralist' approach can help to understand views at different levels, work with numerous stakeholders (such as employees, leaders and unions) to explore and understand pressures (Interviewee 26 – L). Consequently, all parties can collaboratively create a collegiate environment built on trust and transparency as the leader states

currently *"a lot of people are unnecessarily scared because of a culture. They have little to fear, but they fear that fear"* (Interviewee 26 – L)*.* Ultimately, therefore there must be a two-way *"translation"* to give direction to staff but also to represent their views upwards (Interviewee 13 – SOL). To enable this, Interviewee 27 (SOL) corresponds with this idea and suggests that throughout HEIs different levels of leaders will play different roles at different times. Therefore exploring how employees are impacted by the overarching institutional approach is crucial and we will do so by exploring the impact of senior leaders and approaches taken to manage HEIs throughout this section.

5.5.3.1 Impact of senior leaders

Throughout this study, the impact of senior leaders has been discussed on numerous occasions as they can create and foster a collegiate approach, which can be extremely beneficial to achieve institutional objectives. The role and impact of senior leaders was discussed by a number of the interviewees, ultimately they underlined how direction and focus for the HEI must *"come from the top"* (Interviewees 5 - SIL and 14 – L). Although the leaders advocated for a collegiate approach which can have numerous benefits Interviewee 5 (SIL) suggests sometimes a leader must *"be strong as they cannot do everything themselves"* so may be required to say "*this is the way it's going to be"*. However Interviewee 11 (SIL) also suggests that ensuring as a senior leader they have people who can implement and enhance operational practices which support the overarching strategy is key whilst encouraging and enabling this to take place in recognition of the challenges is where they have the biggest impact. Therefore recognising a balance in the teams around the leader is pivotal in an attempt to build a cohesive environment whilst ensuring they are bringing employees along with them simultaneously (Interviewee 23 – SOL). Further, Key informant 3 suggests that often academics believe they exist within an autonomous state, however reinforces in order to enact major organisational change SILs need to ensure staff buy into the process, are on the journey and know what is happening. Interviewee 15 (L) also claims that helping people see the big picture is a vital component of this, therefore persuading people to do certain things is also part of this. Therefore, although there are complexities in building a culture of motivating and inspiring people to get involved and to achieve the best they can, it is indisputably worth it.

Thus, a number of the leaders commented consultation and joint development of institutional strategy is one way to achieve a shared, common understanding (Interviewee 27 – SOL), particularly as *"top down directives rarely achieve anything"* (Interviewee 21 – SIL). However, Interviewee 24 (SIL) indicates seeking consultation from a range of stakeholders and refining it is a much longer process than if it is centrally developed when it can be immediately released and therefore implemented, which is why this may be the more popular approach undertaken. However, in order for SOLs and employees to be able to fully embrace and implement HEI strategy, understanding the overarching perspective and then setting how their area, team or school will influence and positively influence the achievement of these institutional aims is key to embracing a sustainable leadership approach (Interviewees 10 – SOL, 12 – SOL and 26 – L). Interviewees 13 (SOL) and 27 (SOL) agree and suggest as a leader 'translating' to staff is crucial to ensure objectives can be achieved. Interviewee 29 (SOL) suggests it may be that even university values are potentially *"too far removed from the individual to be of relevance"* and emphasises this is not due to disagreement simply a disconnection. Interviewee 3 (L) affirms this disconnect at a local level that often occurs between the university strategy and the operational practices adopted at school level where if there are fragmentations and disconnections between the centre and the local then as a line manager navigating this can be extremely difficult. Interviewee 8 (SIL) argues this is where the importance of translation to local levels is pivotal and reaffirms the need to be flexible. Arguably, therefore senior leaders setting out the direction and vision is vital but this must be accompanied by…

> *"…transparency, and mapping the kind of institutional objectives which link to the government objectives […] down to a kind of meaningful level for individuals, and just trying to pass as much responsibilities so that people can actually shape that result, because you know much better how to teach [your subject] than I'll never know. But, [my role is to] try and give that context."* (Interviewee 8 – SIL)

This once more reiterates the importance on transparency emphasised throughout the study (see for example 5.3.5) and having sufficient rationale behind decisions and discussions is key (Interviewee 12 – SOL). However, Interviewee 27 (SOL) shares that often people want to know and understand each stage of the process before acting on it. Ultimately, Interviewee 21 (SIL) stresses key to this is the need and ability to work

collegiately with people to feel responsibility towards achieving the HEIs objectives, as we explored in section 5.3 where a culture of inclusivity can be key. Further the leader agrees with Interviewee 8 (SIL) by reaffirming the need to contextualise institutional objectives and values will enable *"people to make informed decisions rather than give them directives about what they should do"* (Interviewee 21 – SIL)*.*

Therefore, creating an environment and culture, which enables employees and leaders to achieve the institutional objectives, is crucial (Key Informant 2). Interviewee 27's (SOL) perspective harmonises with this as the leader stresses if everything is too separated and silo'ed and no one talks the same language or demonstrates the same behaviours then the culture of the HEI will not *"swell you forward".* Therefore facilitating shared and collegiate views on the future of the institution, facilitating effective and transparent communication and working towards that together is pivotal (Interviewees 22 – SOL). Interviewees 8 (SIL) and 24 (SIL) emphasise open and honest communication within institutions is essential to achieve this and central to this to ensure that there *"a culture where people feel safe"* (Interviewee 26 – L). Interviewee 13 (SOL) suggested this may not be the case in a number of HEIs, with Interviewee 14 (L) proposing this may be as employees do not feel their views are valued. However, the leader can act as a role model, casting vision and enhancing motivation of their direct reports which can be extremely beneficial (Interviewee 24 – SIL) however creating such a culture can take a long time (Interviewee 27 – SOL) and so must be continually fostered by leaders (Interviewee 11 – SIL). This reinforces a number of the discussions presented in section 5.3.5 (communication) but also highlights the influence and importance of the leader as a role model (Interviewee 22 – SOL) due to the way in which employees respond to the language leaders use (Interviewee 24 – SIL).

To achieve this leaders' throughout HEIs must therefore allow a freedom and creative a supportive environment whilst being a champion for their direct reports, team or the wider institution (Interviewee 2 – SOL). Interviewee 4 (SOL) agrees and highlights this will then becomes a characteristic of the team/school which will allow for and be open to debate and argument to enable to reach a consensus towards *"workable solutions"* collegiately (Interviewee 7 – SOL). Interviewee 23 (SOL) stresses that enabling a

sustainable approach to be adopted in individuals particular context is important and stresses;

> *"…there has to be support and ways to translate what sustainable leadership means for you, and your domain, and your sphere of influence, be that direct or indirect influence, and to enable that to be useful for somebody. So, rather than say, 'you need to lead sustainably', translate that, so what does that mean, and maybe more senior members of staff can help with that translation." (Interviewee 23 – SOL)*

Therefore as Interviewees 4 (SOL), 22 (SOL, 30 (SIL) and 32 (SIL) have advocated displaying the behaviours you want to see and supporting staff to achieve their goal that will subsequently positively impact the HEI can have tremendous impacts on the team and wider institution.

Equally as a leader, creating an environment that recognises the challenges everyone may face is important within this transparency. Interviewee 22 (SOL) stresses as a leader creating a culture of dialogue and trust where people can come together and say *"this is really tough"* or share their feelings can be essential to creating and fostering a sustainable approach both as an individual but also as a team or wider institution. As Interviewee 7 (SOL) argues;

> *"…in theory it's not a one person band but if you get the wrong types of leader then it can be […] very, very negative throughout the organisation […] So, I think there is problems with that if you have control, effective control, in reality in just one or two hands" (Interviewee 7 – SOL)*

Therefore, having decent people at the top is key (Interviewee 31 – SOL and Key informant 1). However, as discussed previously, as external factors such as marketization have increased equally a managerial focus of leaders has also increased throughout all types of HEIs more often external 'business' leaders are being appointed, as opposed to 'academic' leaders. Interviewee 31 (SOL) suggests this may make some academics in particular *"feel threatened".* Interviewee 22 (SOL) shared an interesting discussion about appointments of 'Deans' within HEIs and shared that some institutions had made a conscious decision to appoint an academic *"…with a strong managerial focus"* further the leader suggests some institutions have such strong managerialism that they are appointing external business experienced leaders (in their first role in HEIs). Interviewee 27's (SOL) experience corresponds with this and suggests this

business acumen and knowledge from the private sector is sought after and states these types of appoints make up *"11% of new roles in HEIs"*. However Interviewees 6 (L) and 23 (SOL) stress this can have negative repercussions and argues;

> *"…a lot of managers come in to [university] from outside who have no/any experience in higher education, and it shows because they run it as a business and we're not just a business. We're in education. We're there to provide education and if we forget that then we might as well […] hang up the chalk and the blackboard and just go home." (Interviewee 6 – L)*

Interviewee 16 (SIL) suggests that academic knowledge can be beneficial not just for academic credibility and trust but also in acknowledging challenges and it is useful to know what it has been like but also to give confidence to say *"I think you're being unreasonable, because I know what it's like"*. Therefore, a number of the leaders stressed that there is a requirement for 'academic credibility' in leadership positions (Interviewees 4 – SOL, 17 – SOL and 23 – SOL). Although Interviewee 23 (SOL) suggests having a team of people around the 'academic leader' particularly at Dean level can help achieve a balance in this. This shift within HE is interesting and has posed interesting challenges for HEIs to manage and overcome being led by senior institutional leaders.

5.5.3.2 Centralisation versus localisation and balancing priorities

So far we have emphasised and underlined the importance of institutional strategy in guiding the direction of everyone within HEIs. When considering the achievement of HEIs strategies and the translation operationally of this a number of the leaders went onto discuss a differentiation between the 'central' and 'local' levels of HEIs. In this study, senior level institutional leaders (SIL) are the central university level leaders with the local being senior operational leaders (SOL); namely leaders in senior roles of schools/colleges within institutions (from Dean level and below). Arguably the 'middle managers', represented as SOL leaders are a pivotal player in the translation of objectives throughout different levels of the HEI which can be problematic (as highlighted in section 5.3 and in particular 5.3.5). Nevertheless, the interviewees acknowledged the complexity of SOL roles, especially for 'Deans' who have responsibility for their school, whilst having knowledge of the other schools too (Interviewee 27 – SOL) and are there to ensure *"academic integrity"* (Interviewee 28 – SIL). Interviewee 5 (SIL) talked in depth about the challenges of this middle manager role

particularly around the difficult balance to be struck between the centre and their local level by stating;

> *"they've got above them the university and its strategy, its priorities, and they need to somehow take that on board and feed that down to their colleagues/people that are in their school. At the same time, they're having to feed the view of their school upwards into the senior management, as the strategy develops. So, there's a two way thing. It can be a difficult role" (Interviewee 5 – SIL)*

This view and experience of Interviewee 5 resonates with a lot of the views of the interviewees who recognised the challenges between balancing local and central priorities with Interviewee 6 (L) in particular stressing clarity at local level which compliments institution level is key but can be hard to achieve. Nevertheless Interviewee 10 (SOL) suggests making changes which will positively impact the school and push the school forward is important but again reiterates that it must be done *"mindful of the fact that we are part of a bigger organisation and that has implications".* Interviewee 14 (L) suggests leaders at operational levels and at institutional leaders are currently;

> *"…like beads on a string. They bump up against each other, when they should be like links on a chain, there should be overlap." (Interviewee 14 – L)*

Interviewee 13 (SOL) shares personal experience of this type of overlap during their time in a 'director' role of their school and being part of a group of peers in similar roles in the different schools who worked directly with the principal to inform and write university strategy. The leader shares that this facilitated the opportunity to recognise the local/operational level and bridge the gap to the institutional goals and objectives directly, ensuring therefore two-way translation existed within HEIs. Without this role, the leader believes

> *"…policy and strategy ceases to take full cognisance of what's happening at local level." (Interviewee 13 – SOL)*

This reiterates the need for clarity in the ultimate goals of the institution, which are often unclear but should *"come from the top. The top sets the tone"* (interviewee 14 – L); which is an argument also directly proposed by Interviewee 5 (SIL). However Interviewee 8 (SIL) stresses it is crucial to devolve responsibility and ownership to senior operational

leader levels can help to overcome some issues which may be created by a 'them and us' situation. Yet Interviewee 25 (SOL) suggested often leaders will not acknowledge their role but rather believed it was senior leaders responsibilities, therefore reflected that doing some work clarifying expectations of leaders at all levels is crucial but actually locally leaders assuming responsibility is pivotal.

However, the management layers between the top and operational staff can be complex and confusing with any influence to inform or enact change from the front-line management position would have to pass through several layers of management, consequently Interviewee 15 (L) stresses, *"sometimes decisions are top down rather than bottom up"* due to these complexities*.* Arguably, *"friction"* between the institutional centre and the local schools can cause *"conflict"* when there is disconnect and resentment, particularly around support provided to schools (Interviewee 18 – SOL). However believes and stresses that as individual relationships develop and build the tension and friction *"gets less and less".* Arguably, structures can play a pivotal role in this, when reflecting and comparing the flat hierarchy in their current chartered institution versus a much more tiered hierarchy in a new university comments there are still systems and processes that can be *"much slicker"* but in the flatter structure less levels can help (Interviewee 30 – SIL). Interviewee 8 (SIL) however comments close relationships can be formed at operational levels far more easily than institutional levels and therefore having clear lines of accountability is required.

> *"I think the biggest fib about management is that a flattening structure is some way to be more egalitarian. […] where there is an honest dialogue then the organisation is much more reflective of all of the members, and the trend, at the moment, in higher education, seems to be towards this flattening, which I think should be called centralisation." (Interviewee 13 – SOL)*

Interviewee 20 (SIL) comments their ancient institution is *"a very centrally controlled organisation"* with often central decisions being made (especially around mandatory training) guarantee consistency and this can have a perceived positivity. However, Interviewee 8 (SIL) suggests that actually having blanket approaches often does not work because there is not a one size fits all approach, and stresses that a lot of things are *"best dealt with locally".* Interviewee 18 (SOL) shares that as a head of department they will often work directly with the dean of school and be *"heavily involved"* in the

strategy of the school (local/operational level) and responding to the strategy objectives set for the university. However stresses restructure changes within the HEI may prevent such leaders being involved and therefore postulates this may result in a more centralised set-up and approach (Interviewee 18 – SOL). Having central responsibility in terms of setting out an overarching institutional approach can be important (Interviewee 21 – SIL) however Interviewee 10 (SOL) comments that if this is completely separate this will have negative implications as this approach must be taken on by local levels who have autonomy throughout all levels of leaders who are;

> *"…mindful that we are part of a bigger organisation and that what we do can have implications for other areas […] but that shouldn't stop the school driving forward and doing what is right for the school and the strategy of the school." (Interviewee 10 – SOL)*

Interviewees 9 (SOL) and 23 (SOL) reflect it can be different levels of leaders who assume responsibility, for example it may be that 'heads of'/'directors' adopt these positions, rather than 'deans' who hierarchically speaking should be responsible. Interviewee 23 (SOL) reflects people in associate professor, reader, senior lecturer levels become 'meso' level actors at school level by adopting a lot of the line management responsibility in institutions, whilst also providing key research and educational leadership. However, Interviewee 30 (SOL) stresses they believe that at Dean level areas of responsibility are *"getting much broader"* resulting in bigger portfolios. Arguably therefore this may compound the operational work of the meso level actors Interviewee 23 suggested in supporting the achievement of the school. Interviewees 30 (SIL) and 31 (SOL) shared that in smaller institutions they felt closer to the strategy and communication was perceived as more fluid.

Nevertheless, responsibilities of leaders was a core consideration and overall affirmed the importance of all leaders working together towards the common institutional objectives is imperative. Interviewee 30 (SIL) shared their experience in previous roles and well as their current role is that processes and *"proportionate levels of scrutiny and leadership"* must be more balanced to accomplish HEI objectives collegiately. Interviewee 19 (SOL) corresponds with this and suggests that having staff from throughout the institution, contributing and actively participating in the achievement of the HEIs vision and strategy is extremely beneficial. However, stresses there are

"complexities" in this, particularly as professional services staff can feel one-step removed. Interviewee 29 (SOL) stressed there was often unnecessary separation between academic and professional services staff (in things such as training and development or communication events) but that bringing everyone together can aid the collegiate environment which can be central for success in HEIs. Interviewee 25 (SOL) suggests this may be a result of historically *"niche sort of silo working"* but stresses that a shared understanding of the goals and behaviours required to achieve these is central to overcoming the complexities and challenges. Interviewee 11 (SIL) agrees and suggests processes must support the HEIs academic endeavour. Nevertheless, there is recognition by the leaders of the differences between academic and professional services staff within HEIs that cannot be overlooked, summarised by Interviewee 10 (SOL) who stated;

> *"So I do think, whilst I appreciate whole heartedly that the academic community has many challenges attached to that, it think those changes are different challenges from what the professional services staff." (Interviewee 10 – SOL)*

Regardless of this, Interviewee 18 (SOL) indicates no matter where the differences or the challenges come from there must be a recognition that *"we do need each other".* But there must be a balance achieved between areas of responsibility to ensure there is not a duplication of effort but also to ensure that academics are not over burden with 'administrative tasks' (Interviewee 6 – L). As Interviewee 11 (SIL) stresses everyone (from front line academics and school support staff through to the principal) have different kinds of administrative responsibilities but a shared understanding of who could and should do what is key.

5.5.4 Contextual influences summary

Throughout this section, we have explored leaders' perceptions of sustainable leadership within the Scottish HE sector, learning they believe it must be adopted on multiple levels (individual, institutional and sectoral). However the number of challenging demands placed on the sector can make adopting a long term approach more difficult but the need to respond to these effectively and sustainably is unquestioned by all the interviewees.

As with other sectors (in particular the public sector), resources are tight and therefore management of these resources must be carefully considered. This has resulted in a different approach to leading and managing HEIs but ultimately creating and fostering a clear, transparent direction of institutions is imperative. Within the changing context of the sector with diverse funding streams and the need to 'balance the books' alongside ensuring quality teaching and research is a difficult environment but having flexibility to respond to needs and demands such as mass participation, globalisation etc. is recognised as imperative and the role leaders play in managing and balancing these demands is pivotal.

Across Scottish HE, demands were universal even though there are different 'types' of institutions. Increasingly all institutions are measured by the same metrics with an acknowledgement that lines are becoming more blurred between the HEI types. However, all leaders and particularly the key informants, reflected on the need to ensure institutions are differentiated by their history, their values and their vision is key. Nevertheless, the increasing demand and pressure to excel at all things causes the biggest challenge within HEIs discussed by all interviewees at all levels and types of institution. And although there is no definitive answer to achieve a balance in demands, there was agreement and consensus that adopting longer term perspectives would be vital, therefore avoiding quick fixes and focusing on the core of HE, to deliver good service and contribute to society is key. Consequently the potential to develop a collaborative and sustainable sector was advocated by a number of the leaders and this centres around clear and transparent expectations with an ultimate contribution to the greater good.

Therefore how a leader responds to the challenges and balances demands personally as well as institutionally is vital. Support and reinforcing of expectations was a central enabler to an effective and sustainable balance of demands for individuals. This often means questioning accepted behaviours that exist within institutions. The interviewees were in agreement that the vision and approaches adopted come from the top but must be translated throughout the institution effectively, this means everyone should have ownership of the institutional objectives and be able to contribute effectively to the aim and goals. However, as a result of the increasing marketization and a struggle to balance

short and long term objectives the focus of the institution must be transparent and facilitate a culture which allows open dialogue to ensure everyone within a HEI are working towards the same goals.

Chapter 6: Discussions Chapter

6.1. Introduction

In accordance with the philosophical and methodological approaches undertaken in this study, leaders' experiences and perceptions of leadership along with the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership are analysed in chapter 5. The a priori themes derived from literature (as demonstrated in Figure 8) are defined as embedding a sustainable leadership culture; inclusivity; involvement of stakeholders; individual reflexivity; and balancing objectives. This study identifies three key enabling elements within the a priori themes; namely peer support, leadership development and communication; as facilitating and fostering the implementation of a sustainable leadership approach within Scottish HE based on leaders experiences, which will be discussed throughout this chapter illustrating their pivotal role.

Therefore, this chapter locates the leaders' experiences in line with the a priori themes and applying these to the Scottish Higher Education sector by reflecting on the findings of literature and exploring the key enabling elements that leaders discussed continuously as influencing their development and experiences. Ultimately, research objective 4 is achieved by presenting an empirically based conceptual framework to guide application and future development of sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education in Figure 9. This empirically based framework demonstrates sustainable leadership within the Scottish HE context and shows how developing, fostering and embedding a sustainable leadership culture is central to implementing and achieving sustainable leadership.

6.2. Defining Leadership and Sustainable Leadership in H.E

All leaders interviewed as part of this research were asked to share their understanding and definitions of leadership and sustainable leadership. This is important to explore their interpretations along with the underpinning rationale for leaders' understanding of sustainable leadership. They came to the conclusion that ultimately the way individuals approach their responsibilities, build and foster the culture of their teams

and the HEI, and encourage others around them are dependent on leader's competence and how senior leaders can encourage and facilitate a sustainable leadership approach.

6.2.1 Defining leadership

The variety of opinions and definitions provided by the interviewees on leadership aligns with general leadership literature, which cannot agree on a singular understanding of the term leadership (Northouse, 2013). Arguably, leadership is a *"contested term with multiple meanings and diverse practical applications"* (Western, 2019, p.25) and this was evident from this study (see 5.2). Kort (2008) references authors such as Carroll, Washbush and Ciulla and suggests when addressing the question 'what is leadership' attempting to come to one definitive definition is superfluous and does not always lead to a unique discovery, also supported by Dugan (2017). Kort (2008) stresses ultimately the concept of leadership's underpinning aim is about one person encouraging, motivating and leading others to a achieve a goal, this is usually done by an individual casting vision and building motivation and momentum towards the goal (Crevani *et al.*, 2010). Crevani *et al.*, (2010) further suggest, to date, leadership literature has traditionally been focus on the individual leader and the impact they have with their followers directly.

Although none of the interviewees struggled to define what leadership meant for them, a number outlined how their approach or understanding had developed through experience. Additionally although there was not a singular definition proposed that extended throughout all interviewees, the underpinning ideology of leadership and common ideas existed. These included motivating and engaging with employees, providing a clear direction towards a goal with a supportive environment and adopting extra responsibilities. Ultimately providing transparent communication was imperative for the leaders who stressed this was crucial in embedding a stakeholder approach. Zhu *et al.*'s (2018) research echoed the reality of the leaders' perceptions as they emphasised although large amounts of leadership literature and research published in recent years they suggest although each tends to adapt a different focus they are not necessarily conflicting but do add to the differing perspectives of leadership. As Day *et al.* (2014) contend it is often not the leadership definition or approach that organisations

are interested in but, more the impact it has and how they can develop leaders effectively. This development of leaders personally and in their peers was a central discussion made by the interviewees related to how their experience had developed their approach and had ensured they could achieve positive outcomes as leaders.

6.2.2 Leaders perceived differences between leadership and management

An emergent discussion arising from defining leadership and sustainable leadership centred on the differentiation leaders themselves made during the interviews between leadership and management. When asked to share their views on leadership and discuss key tasks or aspects many reflected on their personal understanding and approach but ultimately resulted in either differentiating or at least exploring leadership and management. Dugan (2017) emphasises these differentiations can stem from the leaders personal values or can be a result of confusion with the role of authority; with a more direct authority stereotypically being more management focused for example. Some leaders felt very strongly about the differentiations, others mentioned it when they are discussing their responsibilities and in relation to their sustainability. Nevertheless, distinctions were made by leaders at all levels in the research and while their discussions and foci varied it does show that views are cross-institutional. Within the exploration of literature and how authors define it, Kort (2008) suggests leadership and management are the same and therefore a stark distinction between them is not required. This argument that 'leadership' is 'management' was in line with the prominent view of leaders in this research. Ashford and Sitkin (2019) further propose both "*…involve influence but through different means*" (p.3) and have slightly different behaviours but again suggest there are times when we will all display leadership qualities and adopt 'leadership' responsibilities. Dive (2008) agreed and suggested that it depends on the way an individual exercises their responsibilities that is the differentiating factor. The interviewees agreed as it was their confusion around responsibility and the influence on individual leaders' identification with their role and responsibilities evidenced by the leaders that is perhaps of utmost concern and could be attributed to the lack of consensus around a singular definition of leadership and the fact people will have diverse views on it (Western, 2019). Ashford and Sitkin (2019) go onto discuss this confusion and highlight how leadership does not need to be a certain

title and that a change in job title from 'supervisors' to 'managers' and now from 'managers' to 'leaders' has only added to the growing confusion surrounding responsibilities.

Regardless, when defining leadership for them the interviewees stressed the important role leaders' play in HEIs and although many made a differentiation between leadership and management, the core concern was how they affected staff and therefore results in the need for clear expectations for what leaders are doing paired with transparency of their rationale via effective communication. Further as Yulk (2013) posits;

> "The empirical research does not support the assumption that people can be sorted neatly into these two extreme stereotypes" (Yulk, 2013, p.20).

The interviewees' experiences reinforced this as a number reflected that noticeably individuals are adopting more 'leadership' responsibilities at all levels in HEIs. In many cases, this has resulted in many operational leaders taking on 'leadership' roles with senior institutional leaders adopting more of a 'management' stance as interviewees discussing the flipped situation between leaders and managers where traditionally stereotypical leadership and management roles seem to have been transposed. Holloway and van Rhyn (2005) intimate this may be the case as

> "...senior managers of organisations believe they are solely responsible for all the key decisions merely because of the organisational position they occupy" (Holloway and van Rhyn, 2005, p.311).

This argument supports the findings of this study, which suggested senior leaders are increasingly adopting micro-management type approaches, this adds to the confusion of the impacts 'leaders' and 'managers' should have. Hence, results in a failure to identify leaders and associated responsibilities and capabilities. Dive (2008) furthers this by stating as hierarchies are becoming increasingly complex effective and consequently sustainable leadership and leadership development in particular may be stifled as people do not have opportunities or may be unable to contribute to the power structures at play, particularly if no 'informal' opportunities exist, see also 6.4.2. Therefore, the competency of leaders must come to the forefront, the culture they create is crucial and whether they view themselves as a leader or a manager this overarching culture created and competency of individuals is of the utmost importance.

6.2.3 Defining sustainable leadership

Although the majority of the interviewees had not heard of the concept of sustainable leadership previously, intriguingly when asked what they would interpret the definition of 'sustainable leadership' to be all interviewees were able to locate it closely to the literature on sustainable leadership (see section 5.2.2). The variety of definitions provided by interviewees were interesting and somewhat diverse, however the majority of interviewees discussed two of the fundamental aspects of sustainable leadership (long-term perspectives and focusing on people). This is promising in terms of leaders existing perceptions which will foster understanding and applicability within Scottish HE. However, the diversity of perceptions does highlight that institutions will need to provide clarity and transparency in their communication when developing and embedding a sustainable leadership approach. Some of the interviewees acknowledged variety in leaders understanding and perceptions which importantly related not only to sustainable leadership but also to leadership more generally.

When provided with the example definition by Avery and Bergsteiner (2011);

> *"Sustainable leadership requires taking a long term perspective in making decisions; fostering systematic innovation aimed at increasing customer value; developing a skilled, loyal and highly engaged workforce; and offering quality products, services and solutions" (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011, p.5)*

The leaders espoused concerns around the language currently used within the sustainable leadership definition of the concept, particularly academic leaders who shared concerns around the private sector based language and its application in HEIs. However as some highlighted, business-like language is becoming more common in HE and although has its challenges is becoming more commonplace. Regardless of this, the leaders did see a value in the approach and felt the underpinning facets of the concept would be beneficial, however suggested they felt the definition language must be adapted to be applicable to all within HE.

When discussing and defining sustainable leadership, the majority of the interviewees focused on the long-term aspect of sustainability and sustainable leadership by discussing the need to achieve institutional goals and strategy in the longer term and the role achieving continuity and longevity played within this. They discussed the need

for clear, transparent communication as a key enabling element requirement in achieving this. This aligns with the principles of the sustainability concept and the idea of developing for the present whilst protecting for the future (Kopp and Martinuzzi, 2003; Burndtland Report, 1987). This also involves ensuring leaders are developed throughout HEIs . Although a number of the leaders did suggest tensions that can exist within HEIs may affect this. Nevertheless, this core component and argument of sustainability suggests ensuring there is an overarching vision (Etsy, 2010) and building momentum towards creating and achieving institutional success by meeting the needs of today's stakeholders while innovating for future stakeholders is central (Galpin *et al.,* 2015), which a number of the leaders also advocated. Additionally it corresponds with the majority of sustainable leadership authors who all mention the importance of thinking for the long-term and considering the impacts of such strategies whilst balancing the short-term needs of the business (Davies, 2007; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Lambert, 2011). This was a core concern of the leaders who discussed current challenges within HE around achieving a balance cannot be overlooked. A number of the interviewees emphasising tensions senior institutional leader's in particular face in an attempt to balance been the tendency to produce short-term action plans for improvement (around aspects such as the NSS due to increasing demands) and long-term strategic decisions. Therefore, the interviewees expressed sustainable leadership and focusing purely on the long-term may be an ideal view and approach, it may not echo the reality of today's HEIs. Consequently how leaders deal with demands whilst building towards a sustainable future is arguably the most important aspect for the interviewees who reflected that ensuring leaders do not have a 'knee jerk reaction' (Interviewee 11 – SIL) but rather strategically plan for the longer term. Davies (2007) and Lambert (2011) recognise this balancing of tensions within the organisation but as Johnson (2011) highlights requires a shift in mind-set to a longer-term view. Ensuring that leaders can be flexible and adapt to the changing needs of their situation and context is of paramount importance (Peterlin *et al*., 2013) however the interviewees all highlighted difficult situations and the growing pressures placed on leaders as key barriers to ensuring this is successfully achieved.

Another key common aspect the leaders emphasised in relation to their perceptions and definitions of sustainable leadership related to the focus on stakeholders and ultimately within this study the interviewees' discussions of leadership came back to the culture or environment created by leaders. This is important as it demonstrates the recognition that one simple act will not determine an overarching strategy or effectiveness of a leader (Peterlin *et al.,* 2015). Further Peterlin *et al.* (2015) suggest the way in which a leader will respond to their surrounding context is of utmost importance. This is important as it reiterates leadership theory development which has come to understand the individual leaders' personality is no longer the dominant concern but rather the culture they create and influence they have within the organisation is central (Zhu *et al*., 2018). This involved ensuring that as leaders having an effective and supportive culture which fosters leadership development and continuity in thinking was central which aligned with the sustainable leadership literature (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Lambert, 2011; Casserley and Critchley, 2010; Davies, 2007; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Therefore, this includes focusing on the environment the leader creates, ensuring that they are role models in how to tackle or learn from burnout but also in how they ensure they build resilience in their people and also in their practices. Consequently, how leaders are developed sustainably and effectively was a key enabling element of this research with a number of the leaders reinforcing the need for leaders to continually consider the impact they have on those around them is vitally important.

Therefore, although the majority of the leaders (13 in total) expressed their belief it could have a value in the sector, there was consensus that the underpinnings exist but ultimately the definition is somewhat problematic. Nevertheless the majority of leaders believed this concept to be relevant and useful for HE, which is on a journey towards implementing sustainable leadership but this is challenged by the growing demands and tensions faced by HEIs, which echoes the view of literature. Overall, illustrating the applicability of the concept, evident from the interviewees' perspectives and therefore this underpins the importance of the concept within the Scottish HE sector. However it does have a number of challenges and prospects which will hinder or facilitate the approach being implemented, as will now be discussed.

6.3 Embedding a sustainable leadership culture

The key aspect to be derived from the research was the culture of the institution and importantly the environment created by the leader and whether this culture and environment is fit for sustainable leadership. The sustainable leadership literature (such as Lambert, 2011, 2012) suggests the mind-set of the employees is fundamental. This resonates with the interviewees perspectives, who suggested they believe it is vital to extend the idea of sustainability beyond a singular leader and underlined the importance of ensuring that both the culture of the organisation, along with the employees within it, are able to perform effectively for a long period of time (i.e. be sustainable). Key authors such as Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) discuss numerous practices, which differentiate a sustainable versus unsustainable organisation, and therefore this organisational focus of sustainable leadership and how as an approach organisations must integrate and embed it throughout organisations. Further Shattock (2010b) argues;

> *"Successful university management represents not an imposition from the top but the outcomes of continuous dialogue between the centre and the operating units combined with realistic implementation skills and a drive to success. No university can sustain success unless it is equipped with a management style which mirrors its ambitions and commands the trust of its community" (Shattock, 2010b, p.201).*

Comparatively, a number of the leaders stressed the way a leader does something, rather than the task/objective itself always had the biggest impact. As a result, a number of the leaders discuss facilitating collaboration by allowing leaders to adopt different responsibilities allowing them to develop successfully and sustainably. Consequently, this means leaders must rely on influence, gaining buy-in, building momentum and working with people to push, motivate and inspire them is key, but can be very challenging according to Interviewee 32 (SIL) (see 5.3.5). Stoker *et al*. (2019) also emphasise a leaders behaviour is a key consideration and must be vital for all stakeholders. This must begin with the senior institutional leaders and then be adopted by leaders throughout the institution who take ownership and will 'translate' objectives throughout therefore building collaboration (see 5.5.3). A number of the leaders argued the foundations of institutional strategy must be set out by the senior institutional

leaders but in bringing the strategy to life and developing as an institution arguably all levels of leaders play a role to enable translation to local issues and ultimately successful achievement of the strategy. Emphasising and underlining the importance of effective and transparent communication is key. A number of the leaders emphasised ensuring you have 'buy-in' for objectives is vital and in particular emphasises communication strategies and the culture of the organisation must support the foundations whilst 'brining people with you' via your communication strategy in particular (see 5.3.5). As Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) affirm, *"everyone matters"* and therefore ensuring individuals feel involved and can relate to the objectives is vital, this includes creating an environment and culture which not only fosters leaders development but also encourages peer support and learning to embed and develop an overarching culture which facilitates a sustainable leadership approach. Lee (2017) emphasises that by securing active participation in the achievement of objectives along with approaches adopted by the institution can be extremely beneficial. Therefore, this translation of objectives and building this into the culture of the organisation is key when considering the development of other sustainable leadership facets, namely 'inclusivity' and 'involvement of stakeholders'. Consequently, illustrating and developing an open and collegiate culture is a requirement for developing a sustainable leadership approach.

Furthermore, communication and transparency can be a key aspect of a sustainable leadership approach (Kang and Hustvedt, 2013). Correspondingly, leaders at all levels, in all types of institutions interviewed as part of this study did recognise the importance of communication as a key enabling element. They highlighted that it is vital to secure a shared understanding and must be inclusive so that everyone has a sense of ownership, feels involved and can build towards a more successful future for the HEI. Importantly it was clear that leaders throughout the institution must embed this approach in order to build and foster a collective, inclusive organisational culture. However a number of the leaders did suggest the reality in a number of institutions was often a breakdown of communication and lack of facilitation of a two-way relationship somewhere in the process. This can have negative results particularly if people are not necessarily given the right information at the right time or if they believe they are not involved. Hence, ensuring and fostering an inclusive culture within the HEI can help overcome negative

repercussions which may occur if this is ignored (Van der Voet *et al.*, 2015). Interviewee 24's example of their change in culture which facilitated more communication further supports this. Therefore although there may be some changes happening in some institutions, there is currently a challenging reality where communication may be broken and people may not feel involved. However the fact that a large number of the leaders involved in this research at senior operational and institutional levels did recognise the need to involve staff at different levels, in different roles demonstrates a movement to make a more inclusive culture the new reality. Therefore what is evident from the leaders discussions is ensuring communication extends the length and breadth of the institution is important which aligns with Hargreaves and Fink's (2006) sustainable leadership approach.

6.3.1 Integration throughout the culture

Following on from identifiers between leadership and management, an interesting observation from the research is that no leader was comfortable identifying people they were responsible for as followers; nevertheless, they all share some interesting insights into considerations that literature would identify are pivotal in the leader-follower relationship along with key challenges related to being a leader (see 5.3.3). These include being an advocate for staff, being a role model and helping to create an environment where employees could balance demands. As Bolden *et al*. (2012) emphasised the role of leaders have become increasingly important as HEIs attempt to balance excellence in all areas. Further the interviewees, and particularly senior operational and institutional leaders emphasised the environment they create can have tremendous benefits for employees, Interviewees 2, 24, 28, 32 all advocated the actions of leaders in creating a supportive environment, developing trust and collegiality within the team whilst demonstrating effective behaviours was key. Consequently, central to creating a trusting, collegiate and inclusive environment a number of the leaders believed was to be a role model. Furthermore, the leaders stressed being visible, creating personal connections and 'walking the floor' are imperative for leaders. Burke *et al*. (2007) agree with this and suggest trust in leadership is imperative, with McCann and Sweet (2014) indicating knowing if leaders are worthy of trust is crucial and this is evident via their behaviours and actions. Consequently, a key element of this, the

leaders suggest is how they interact and how they communicate with those around them that is fundamental to building an inclusive culture in HEIs. Kantabutra and Avery (2013) further posit trust will flow between the institution and stakeholders, leaders and followers more readily when ethical behaviours are exhibited. Kang and Hustvedt (2013) similarly argue trust will play a pivotal role in sustainable leadership while there is transparency and 'effective' relationships built with stakeholders, arguably achieved by being a role model and creating lasting relationships which put staff at the centre, as Interviewee 31 suggests 'caring for employees'. To enable this a number of the leaders discussed having a smaller team in order to foster the support and create these relationships, but equally they stressed delegation and sharing responsibilities was vital to build a support and cohesive network that would continue after one individual may leave. Therefore, the culture of support (from leaders and peers) along with inclusive leadership development must be championed by senior leaders but then embraced by individuals throughout the organisation to create such relationships and contribute to a sustainable organisational environment (Lambert, 2011 and Casserley and Critchley, 2010).

One of the most important relationships a leader will have is with their followers (Northouse, 2013). Part of this and a key role of leaders is to ensure that you are able to enhance individuals' motivation, to inspire involvement in and engagement with the HEIs objectives whilst providing them the autonomy to be creative and innovate (Jones *et al.*, 2012). This also involves continually communicating and discussing development of all employees, particularly leaders who may be direct line reports. A key aspect of this the leaders suggested is how the leader can encourage everyone, regardless of their role, to get involved, to feel they are valued and have the opportunity to develop effectively and sustainability. Discussions around motivation and inspiration of individuals were encouraging in the research as a number of leaders at all levels and in all types of institution emphasised the importance of having a motivated workforce who could contribute to the wider HEI. Dalati *et al.* (2017) correspond with these findings and further emphasise the importance of the relationship between the employee and the organisation is a key element within sustainable leadership, and suggest developing

trust and working for the greater good of all is vital. Therefore underlining the importance of creating a supportive environment which fosters sustainable leadership.

6.3.2 Developing for the long-term

A major concern for all leaders who participated in this research were increasing demands within HEIs for both individuals and for leaders, particularly related to how the demands could be managed to achieve a balance whilst leading sustainably. Osborne *et al*. (2015) echoed this ability to balance demands was crucial in creating sustainable public organisations. Further the authors emphasised one of the most important aspects of leadership is integration of the aims of the HEI with the strengths of those they are line managing to ensure that they are working towards the right objectives with targets that are sustainable and suitable for the individual institutions. The reality espoused by interviewee 8 suggested it may be more like 'football managers' where the achievement of targets are the prominent concern, consequently toxic behaviours may become accepted. Although a number of the leaders' experiences throughout the research alluded to such behaviours, overall they were in agreement that challenging toxic behaviour must be the responsibility of all leaders. However the interviewees did stress that always matching institutional, local and individual objectives whilst balancing 'positive' behaviour can be difficult due to the ever increasing demands. Therefore a number of the leaders advocated creating a motivating culture which fosters development and encourages reflection on action to enable leaders to recognise toxic behaviours or when things have become too much is central, all of which are aspects Casserley and Critchley (2010) also stress. With that said, Bosanquet *et al.* (2009) accentuate within their research it is evident universities put in *"insufficient time"* to develop leaders for the long-term. Nevertheless, leaders discussed aspects such as promotion criteria could provide clarity of expectations around leadership development but these must be sufficiently communicated and reinforced via discussions by leaders. Throughout the interviews, there was a discourse of frustration and concern with HEIs being run like businesses with targets on short-term outcomes which will be explored more in 6.7. However, it is important to acknowledge that overall the views of the leaders echoed the sentiment that for development of HEIs and the sector, long-term

considerations should be made with a balance in focus between this and short-term objectives.

6.4 Inclusivity

Within the Sustainable Leadership literature, an inclusive approach to leadership is important to evidence at differing levels, the researcher has used this term to represent the literature arguments which emphasise leaders must be developed from throughout the organisation, rather than just select employees (Davies, 2007; Lamber, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). This inclusive approach relates particularly to 'junior' members of the hierarchy and encouraging them to embrace leadership responsibility and adopt sustainable leadership approaches (Davies, 2007; Lambert, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Interviewees discussed this by referring to formal and informal leaders and continually discussing leadership development that must include or be offered to everyone. Literature emphasises this inclusive factor, and as discussed in section 6.2, similarly to literature, the interviewees could not agree on a singular definition but did agree on the fundamental principles of leadership and associated development activities. Ashford and Sitkin (2019) go as far as to suggest this can be compounded due to positions often be mislabelled as leadership positions which is a cultural norm in a number of institutions and organisations. Regardless, there must be a recognition that leadership can come from a variety of places throughout the HEI. Therefore, for sustainable leadership this confusion and identification can provide both prospects and challenges. As Hargreaves and Fink (2006) underline a clarity of expectations and care to ensure that people are not 'depleted' is important, further Day and Schmidt (2007) suggest this is where a values-led approach, which fosters trust and transparency throughout the institution, can be imperative. The interviewees emphasised that leadership development activities had been crucial in their experiences and by embracing an inclusive approach HEIs could facilitate leadership development on a number of levels. Therefore, the advancement of aspects such as distributed leadership and sharing responsibilities, which are enabled through the recognition that leadership comes from throughout the institution can help develop a sustainable leadership culture which is not dictated by levels in the hierarchy. Consequently, there must also be a

recognition of the impact and influence within the culture of the HEI of embedding this inclusive approach to involving as many as possible within such 'leadership' roles therefore reinforcing the development of leadership competencies of individuals.

Therefore, Western (2019) stresses the development of leaders comes from a number of different sources, which can affect individuals in a number of different ways. Experiences of the leaders echo this as discussed in section 5.4 and stress the importance of this within Scottish HE, which was discussed in the sustainable leadership literature (by authors such as Davies, 2007; Lambert, 2011; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). However, within the literature it was not identified as an a priori theme where within this study and the experience of the leaders having a variety of development opportunities is crucial. An interesting observation from all the interviewees was the most effective form of development was one which allowed them to experience and build skills and knowledge via reflecting, for example via learning from others or coaching and mentoring in particular. Therefore fostering opportunities for experience, to build knowledge, to reflect, to undergo coaching and to build 'communities of practice' all hugely influence leaders (Western, 2019). The interviewees corresponded with this as they shared their views and experiences of leadership development, which had been varied and included a range of different learning opportunities at different stages of their careers.

6.4.1 Adopting an inclusive and collegiate approach throughout

If leaders' experience an inclusive and collegiate environment, created by senior leaders, which facilitates individual choices and allows people to develop skills they choose to, this can help them engage with the institutional objectives and purpose whilst enabling individuality, a number of interviewees stressed have been extremely beneficial practices in their HEI (in particular, Interviewee 1 – L). Leaders reflected on the impact that having a collegiate, open and honest environment has had on their commitment but also in their development as leaders, which Hargreaves and Fink (2011) suggest must then run through the entire organisation to 'lengthen' the sustainability of leadership. Equally Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue this approach must extend beyond individuals,

and be viewed as a continuum throughout the institution. Shattock (2010b) corresponds with this and suggests within HEIs;

> *"Leadership, cannot be restricted to a single post or even to a team or subset of colleagues in the centre. Leadership must be dispersed around a university [...] No central leadership group can deliver university success unless there is leadership elsewhere in the institution" (Shattock, 2010b, p.102)*

However, a number of the interviewees reflected on their experiences of friction between the centre and local areas which from their perceptions had hindered the ability to have open and honest contributions across the university (see 5.5.3). These concerns from the interviewees centred around the negative impact on the achievement of an inclusive approach being adopted throughout the entire institution. Shattock (2010b) corresponds with these arguments and experiences, with the author discussing tensions that exist between the centre and local 'faculty/department' level and suggests this is due to a number of reasons; such as having to;

> *"...satisfy the demands of an extensive regulatory framework while at the same time observing a market orientation and practicing private sector innovation" (Shattock, 2010b, p.93)*

Van der Voet *et al.* (2015) also highlight that typically public organisations have high levels of centralisation and formalisation of practices and policies in a bid to maintain consistency however the authors stress this can stifle innovation and creativity. Therefore there must be a balance struck and the author goes onto suggest that creating a partnership or matrix where there is involvement from the centre but also stakeholders from throughout the local faculties/schools is crucial and must be supported via transparent communication which is clear for all stakeholders throughout the HEI. Therefore, the leader in the middle management or senior operational leader role, who could act in this partnership or as the link between the centre and local, must be open, honest and constructive, according to interviewee 13, as they can play a key role in influencing the achievement of objectives on both local and institutional levels. But this is dependent on the facilitation of this role, the set up and ultimate management by senior institutional leaders. Shattock (2010b) advocates;

> *"The great strength of a centre:department matrix is that communication, networking and decision making required to make it work effectively, is faster*

and more direct than other models and incentivizes creativity and a sense of corporate endeavour" (Shattock, 2010b, p.94).

This is interesting as a number of the leaders did suggest these types of roles had been removed in recent years. Particularly in the experience of Interviewee 13 fluctuated as their role changed and the cross-institutional group was disbanded. This resulted in policy which was centrally developed and operationally passed to the middle managers to enact. This translation of objectives between the centre and local levels and the importance of these partnerships were once more emphasised by the interviewees (see 5.5.3). Consequently, ensuring partnerships exist throughout the institution, which in turn informs both the strategic and operational goals of the HEI, is arguably crucial. However, can only be achieved if a 'matrix' as Shattock (2010b) suggests exists although as the interviewees (particularly Interviewee 5 – SIL) suggest this does not come without its own challenges in terms of balancing between institutional and local priorities. Nevertheless, overall the leaders commented that a key benefit of senior operational leaders is in facilitating shared understandings between the centre and local levels. A number of the leaders discussed developing peer networks within their institutions to enable facilitate and develop partnerships which enable effective working and development throughout, hence contributing to the achievement of the HEIs objectives.

Leaders play a pivotal role in creating and adopting an inclusive approach and encouraging development within their teams/institutions. Consequently, the leaders suggested one of the most effective ways to ensure this development could take place is to encourage their direct reports, even informally, in order to foster encouragement and recognition of a job well done whilst ensuring that the individual and others reflect on and share findings from successful initiatives and projects. A key aspect of this includes encouraging and fostering peer networks amongst their employees. This sense of 'inclusiveness', Lambert (2011) suggests, will encourage collaboration rather than competition. Consequently, a number of the leaders stressed that central to building an inclusive environment where people had equal opportunities and responsibilities was to ensure there was effective performance management along with promotion criteria which sets out clear expectations. Dive (2008) suggests accountability for actions is key in effective organisations but also in ensuring performance of individuals and ultimately

in developing leadership capabilities. However a number of the interviewees reflected that in their experience performance management generally was avoided in HEIs (see 5.3.3.4). Some leaders commented this was because the right 'environment' had been created which enabled employees to achieve their best was fostered (in particular Interviewee 19). To achieve this the leader, along with others, suggested being authentic and encouraging with transparent communication and dialogue is essential and this must extend throughout levels of HEIs, not just at the front line but also through senior management too. Furthermore, a number of the leaders discussed the importance of developing leadership competency in employees throughout HEIs. To enable this, leaders must engage in developmental discussions with their followers, encouraging and motivating them whilst developing their leadership skills and competencies. Gardener, Cogliser, Davis and Dickens (2011) highlight the idea of authenticity within leadership is long-standing and suggest it is key to *"establishing enduring relationships" (p.1123).* The interviewees' experiences correspond with this and from their discussions and reflections pinpoint a trusting, collegiate and inclusive culture is pivotal to achieving this.

6.4.2 Opportunities to develop

Within this study, all interviewees discussed leadership development as a key enabling element in their own experiences and ultimately in fostering a sustainable leadership approach. However, at the outset of this chapter (see section 6.2) we touched upon the extent to which confusion exists in leaders perceived definitions of leadership and management whilst emphasising the need for clarity in responsibilities but also in identifications of 'leaders' and importantly their associated development. Ashford and Sitkin (2019) offer an interesting perspective on this by highlighting that by labelling hierarchical positions as 'leadership' positions we are somewhat ignoring leadership from 'below' and in 'informal' positions. They purport;

> *"Leadership is an activity, not a position" (Ashford and Sitkin, 2019, p.3)*

Arguably therefore one of the best ways to develop an institutions leadership capacity is to encourage all employees within HEIs to take on some leadership responsibility appropriate for their role which the interviewees also advocated. Creating an inclusive environment is pivotal in building a sustainable workforce and organisation, therefore

actively considering and undertaking succession planning is arguably an important facet of this and of sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2007). Within the interviews some leaders highlighted discussions around succession planning were currently common place or in development, however in the majority of experiences there was often not a consistent approach but rather it was haphazard throughout HEIs. The leaders however discussed aspects such as the use of formal and informal positions facilitated and enabled leadership development even when formal succession planning was not undertaken. Therefore even if there is no institutional approach, a number of the leaders highlighted it may still be a consideration at a more local level. Lambert (2012) however argues an institutional view can be imperative to ensure consistency and transparency but also to develop the overarching culture, which will then facilitate a sustainable leadership approach. Although the leaders agreed with this, many commented on the difficulties of bringing this to a reality whilst attempting to balance demands due to the limited resources in place, which Kwiek also argues (2005). One way to attempt to find a balance was to initiate rotating leadership positions. A number of leaders highlighted advantages of rotating positions related specifically to developing the sustainability of leaders and encouraging an inclusive approach. There are a number of significant barriers and challenges to overcome, such as encouraging people to take on roles, which may be perceived as detrimental to the individuals' research career, and equally leaders may find it difficult to become the first amongst equals with a role of influencing and ultimate responsibility, whilst balancing existing and ongoing relationships with peers. However such activities can aid and enhance the overarching leadership development focus of HEIs. Osborne (2010) posits facilitating a developmental culture within institutions can be vital to ensure *"sustained success"* but ensuring reflection and multiple perspectives are considered is key. For example, a common approach experienced by the interviewees was in 'coming through the ranks', therefore having taken advantage of different opportunities, which had aided in their development. Osborne (2010) reflects this can be both a positive and negative for institutions although overall suggests *"…universities that grow their own talent […] build a sense of institutional coherence and an institutional culture which can be very valuable in confronting external challenges" (p.199).* Therefore, from the experience of leaders in this study, although a culture of facilitating succession planning, implementing plans and

development opportunities for future leaders is the ideal. Even if this is not done, it is not necessarily a barrier to leadership development, as long as the culture and approach taken by leaders (even on a local level) is developmental and embraces inclusivity.

Bosanquet *et al.* (2009) correspond with this and suggest leadership activities *"are not necessarily linked to a formal position of authority" (p.3).* As an academic, this will often start with module leadership and progress with more responsibility, growing academic credibility and influence which can then lead to other roles. Therefore individuals have the opportunity to continually develop in their skills and experiences in leading and should be encouraged to do so by their own leaders. However if there is no inclusive environment or sharing of responsibilities then ultimately future leaders will not be fostered, developed or be sustainable. Further, Western (2019) suggests that recognising that traditional hierarchical notions of power and formal positions are no longer sufficient, rather recognition that people throughout organisations can influence, contribute and innovate is vital, but to do so they need transparency. Therefore if a HEI wishes to embed a distributed, sustainable approach (Dive, 2008) leadership should not be seen as a top-down approach (Western, 2019). Consequently, considering 'formal' and 'informal' leadership positions is important as having leaders in roles, which do not have official hierarchical/status power or clear lines of responsibility guaranteed was commonplace in HEI via responsibilities such as module/programme leadership, which are separate from any line management or hierarchical responsibilities. A number of the leaders reiterated this sentiment discussing significant benefits associated with a natural progression through different leadership levels, particularly 'informal' leadership opportunities which allowed them to take on wider responsibilities incrementally, suggesting they were imperative to develop key leadership skills (such as influence and negotiation). As Heslin and Keating (2017) contend *"learning to be an effective leader is an ongoing endeavour"* (p.367). This is an interesting idea in that the leadership journey is more flexible than planned, hence ensuring employees can develop their skills and competencies at any opportunity can be imperative. Therefore does not necessarily mean a clear direction through a hierarchy of positions within HE, it can be more about taking on different opportunities at different times. The experience of interviewees emphasise the importance of using informal positions which can encourage and

facilitate leaders to develop their capabilities and therefore plan for a more sustainable leadership approach of those in formal leadership positions. Particularly as this builds and develops an inclusive and collegiate culture within teams and the wider HEI.

Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm and McKee (2014) reflect on leadership development literature and agree that the experience a leader has will have the most prominent impact on their development, not necessarily the role they are in, the time they have been in that role, or even the formal training provided. There were a number of discussions regarding leadership development programmes (see 5.4.1) with a range of opinions shared by the leaders, particularly related to external programmes which some have found useful. Although the majority of the leaders discussed their belief that their leadership development was enhanced due to their experiences and reflections on approaches taken personally and by others, rather than by simply relying on formal leadership development programmes. This reinforces other forms of leadership development activities (such as informal learning, reflection and coaching/mentoring) must compliment formal development programmes (Peterlin *et al.*, 2013; Casserley and Critchley, 2010), the importance of which may go unacknowledged currently. Nevertheless Day *et al.* (2014) highlight development of any individual is complex and will be individualistic therefore blanket approaches should not be taken as automatically producing certain outcomes; which Interviewee 6 (L) in particular agreed with. Heslin and Keating (2017) stress experiential leadership development is vial in this as it can ensure that leaders are able to apply their learning and subsequently facilitates a deeper level of learning. Providing different opportunities for individuals by building an inclusive culture throughout HEIs can be concluded as a vital aspect for developing a sustainable leadership approach within Scottish HEIs. Providing leaders with chances to enhance their skills and to hone their approach by facilitating and encouraging a collegiate and inclusive environment for all employees and stakeholders is key.

6.5 Involvement of stakeholders

One of the founding principles within sustainability is the need to ensure that institutions move beyond the singular focus of profit maximisation and therefore adopt a view which considers all stakeholders (Young and Thyil, 2008). The movement in the

public sector towards NPG has also facilitated this approach with a focus on leadership/management (Diefenbach, 2009) and citizen participation and management as key contributors of success (Farrell, 2010). This extends to Scottish HE and the aims of institutions as outlined by the key informant interviewees in particular but also by a range of the interviewees that considering the 'greater good' of higher education across the sector is imperative. Reflecting on Osborne's (2010) model of public policy implementation and managerial action taken (see Table 4) at policy level within NPG 'stakeholder management' is advocated, within this study all key informants, at policy level, aligned with this view (unprompted) as they discussed the prospects and development of collaboration across the sector as being pivotal. Overall, regardless of the fact that institutions within HE are 'grouped' together by type, this study demonstrates that all institutions will share similar concerns and pressures regardless of their type. A number of the leaders stressed the need for institutions to continue to have differentiation and outlined pressures in attempting to impose the same targets or expectations on all institutions (see 5.5.1). Regardless of this, the interviewees aligned with the views of literature by discussing the importance of collaboration across the sector and managing the needs and demands of stakeholders. However Interviewee 5 in particular shared concerns that identifying stakeholders was not always an easy task, Connolly, Farrell and James (2017) correspond directly with this and argue even when stakeholders and their needs can be identified there may be conflicts which arise. Interviewee 21 discussed how a major barrier to collaboration across stakeholders and the sector was increased competition which meant often the 'needs' of stakeholders did conflict and this places a huge pressure on leaders to overcome this. The role of leaders in managing their staff to balance the pressure and demands on their employees whilst creating an inclusive culture was reiterated as pivotal to embracing a sustainable leadership approach (see 5.3.3). Arguably, this centres on the leader's skills along with the supportive environment fostered by them as key elements to this; once again reinforcing the underpinning key enablers of leadership development, communication and peer networks. Learning from others along with the social approach to leadership and the learning associated with it comes through as a key element in ensuring leaders develop effectively (see 5.4.1.2). However the interviewees warned that due to

increasing pressures and overarching cultures of HEIs often this social learning is overlooked.

Overall, the leaders reflected attempting to achieve a balance and meet competing demands was to encourage collaboration and to work toward a sustainable sector (see 5.5.1.4). The views of the leaders' advocate this must come from throughout the sector especially if this is to become the prominent attitude, which each of the key informants and a number of the interviewees advocated would be extremely beneficial for everyone in the sector. Additionally, a number of the leaders reiterated the important role of peer networks which existed and they had built over the years as key in helping navigate challenges and overcome issues in their own leadership roles. These networks exist from an institutional and sector perspective, and the leaders experiences demonstrate how utilising key support networks have aided in their development of collegiate and inclusive cultures, hence reinforcing the social nature of development in leadership roles the interviewees reflected upon.

Building on such considerations of inclusivity and building a collegiate environment, it is therefore vital to recognise and underline that leaders develop in a number of ways, which allow leaders to emerge, to reflect on experiences and to build their competency regardless of their role (Western, 2019). These informal experiences also involved learning from others within their peer networks and encouraging the same informal learning within their teams. However Day and Schmidt (2007) suggest the trust and confidence an individual has in their leaders and the wider institution is important to enable this, which as discussed can be fostered via embedding a sustainable leadership approach throughout the culture of the institution. As Sharma (2019), emphasised leaders should have *"stakeholder's interests at the centre"* and therefore to achieve sustainable leadership on institutional and individual levels, focus must be placed on the relationship between leaders and followers with a focus on ethics and 'humanistic' principles.

6.5.1 Fostering support throughout HEI

A number of the leaders discussed the importance of being an advocate for staff, which involved being transparent, authentic, supportive, a champion for employees, and

ultimately employees' voice whilst being a line manager. Which Lee (2017) maintains are crucial elements associated with sustainable leadership. Therefore, the interviewees once more reiterated the importance of the key enabling elements in facilitating an effective environment for employees. Further, this supportive nature of leadership echoes the literature with Graen and Uhl-Bein (1995) and Ewen *et al*. (2013) suggesting effective stakeholder relations are crucial to achieve leadership outcomes with Burke *et al*. (2007) underlining the importance of trust within the relationship. The leaders discussed this should be underpinned by the support and communication employees receive to ensure the relationship and the positive outcomes associated with this can be sustainable which will in turn be dependent on the environment and culture the leader facilitates.

In 5.3.4, support networks were discussed at length, and it is vital to emphasise this support should be provided by leaders to their own followers but also the support they receive as leaders, from others, from senior levels of HEIs and from peers throughout the sector. This echoes the sentiment of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) in particular who emphasise 'learning' as a core component of sustainable leadership which can be facilitated via support networks which create this collegiate, inclusive environment. Furthermore, Hallinger and Suriyankietkaew (2018) suggest *"collective or distributed efforts aimed at shaping the organisational culture" (p.4)* enables a sustainable leadership approach. However a number of the leaders highlighted this may be difficult to achieve and they had to learn from experience how to balance giving advice and micromanaging. Within these discussions the idea of sharing responsibility whilst acting as a role model were central to leadership development and ensuring an effective culture is nurtured. Additionally, being visible and around to support employees is importantly seen as a key activity of leaders the interviewees argued, highlighting they have learned from leaders, who they consider role models (in particular, Interviewee 29). This idea of being a role model for others and learning from their own role models was a key aspect in the peer networks theme. Leaders discussed having the opportunity to learn from positive actions taken by others but also having the opportunity to discuss different approaches available was key in their roles and approaches but also in the development of their employees' associated approaches.

The organisational culture and overarching leadership approach plays a major role in ensuring successful outcomes, but can also aid or deter from the sustainability of the leader and the followers, for example a number of the interviewees discussed support networks had been vital for their development. However the way in which an institution encourages such networks is key, some interviewees shared examples of interventions to build such a network (through leadership forums for example) where others highlighted these had been created informally on a local level with peers. Interviewee 23 (see 5.3.4) directly espoused their belief of the negative impacts of not having a supportive environment, a view which was alluded to by a number of the leaders. Schein with Schein (2017) underlines the importance of sharing can foster a collective, supportive organisational culture. Therefore the support network the leader has but also that they develop is a key aspect the interviewees felt can help, or hinder them undertake their role to the best of their ability. The impact on staff who feel supported was notably more positive than those that felt they had limited levels of support and this was true of the interviewees themselves and of their direct reports. When considering building and fostering an inclusive approach and culture in HEIs the leaders all maintained the people directly surrounding them had the biggest impact and this should not be overlooked. Osborne *et al*. (2015) advocate relationships with stakeholders is imperative within sustainable organisations. Therefore the emphasis placed upon relationships by the interviewees further demonstrates the importance of facilitating such relationships and developing peer networks which can include a variety of stakeholders is pivotal in not only developing a sustainable leadership approach but also in developing leaders within HEIs.

6.5.2 Impact of senior leaders

The impact and competency of senior leaders has grown in importance (Chandler *et al*., 2002) with an increasing focus on strategic objectives (Young and Thyil, 2008) and relationships becoming the focus of considerations (Ewen *et al*., 2013), sentiments that the interviewees echoed in this study (see 5.3.4 for example). A number of the interviewees underlined the argument that direction of the institution must come from the top whilst recognising the responsibility of leaders throughout an institution to embed and enable achievement of the HEIs vision, which Stuart (2013) also advocates.

Further, the interviewees stressed the culture and SILs will determine approach the organisation will take. The perspective of a number of the leaders (see 5.5.3.1) align with Shattock (2010b) who also discusses 'strong leaders' and suggests;

> *"Strong leaders in universities are for the most part successful because they build robust structures and strong teams and work with them to seek institutional success not because they are always out in front leading the charge" (Shattock, 2010b, p.101)*

Shattock's (2010b) argument matches the leaders' views when discussing the importance of a leader (particularly senior leaders) building a complimentary team around them as a core building block for success. Additionally, the role of communication and translation of objectives was underlined as crucial in embedding new approaches and fostering a collegiate culture. Equally, the leaders discussed the importance of having the ability to create and maintain effective relationships (internally – followers, peers and senior leaders; as well as external stakeholders) and being a role model to encourage other leaders to develop this approach. Within the literature Verheul and Schaap (2010) stressed relationships with all stakeholders is pivotal in creating such a collegiate and inclusive environment which fosters sustainable leadership, although importantly the buy-in from leaders lies in championing such approaches (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies, 2009), this was also acknowledged by the interviewees as pivotal. Therefore, Young and Thyril (2008) stress the importance of senior leaders as stewards or guardians and linking all practices and discussions continuously to the organisational goals. This was also an important element for the leaders who underlined their roles in 'translating' institutional and local objectives via effective transparent communication facilitates a collegiate institution and working environment which must be part of the overarching culture and reinforced by everything that the institution does, as discussed in sections 6.3 and 6.4.

Clarity of the overarching institutional goals, accompanied by transparency are crucial as they can help ensure such practices are embedded in the culture of the organisation (Szekely and Knirsh, 2005), a consideration the interviewees and importance of communication as an enabling element also align with. The leaders advocated that adopting a sustainable approach to them meant ensuring an overarching institutional approach was adopted, and underline their role in this. Therefore, individuals having the

ability to reflect on and learn from experiences was key in this, not only in relation to understanding expectations placed upon them but also in developing a sustainable environment within the organisation (Florea, Cheung and Herndon, 2012). When considering the role of senior leaders (see 5.5.3.1), interviewees 13, 14 and 22 in particular shared views that they felt their institutions were not currently facilitating an open culture where individuals could share views, or that these views if shared were not valued. Other leaders did talk about the benefits of ensuring people feel safe and confident to share views, although Interviewees 11 and 27 both underlined this can take a long time to be embedded. However it must start by leaders championing such approaches and Davies (2007) along with Hargreaves and Fink (2006) stress that dialogue focused on building a successful and sustainable future is key. The interviewees acknowledged the importance of embedding a collegiate approach throughout HEIs, which meant translation from top to bottom but also relationship building between the centre and local levels. Therefore ensuring that all stakeholders, throughout the HEI, are engaged with and contributing to this dialogue is imperative in a sustainable leadership approach and in developing sustainable institutions. Accordingly the relationship between leaders and stakeholders cannot be overlooked when aiming to achieve sustained institutional performance (Middlebrooks *et al.*, 2009).

Growing demands within HE (see 2.3 and 5.5) have increased the need to develop resilient employees as increased pressures placed on the individual (either by themselves, via expectations, or directly by their institution) can result in burnout which should be avoided at all times, however the interviewees alluded to how challenging this can be. Nevertheless, having support networks and a collegiate environment within HEIs which encourages involvement of all stakeholders is an essential element of sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) however, how a leader will develop in such a way will arguably depend on their own choices and experiences (Casserley and Megginson, 2008). Therefore a strong emphasis and relationship between involving stakeholders whilst giving them the space and time to develop and reflect on their actions is key and elements leaders should embed throughout HEIs.

6.6 Individual reflexivity

As discussed the interviewees reflected that they had developed in a number of different ways with a range of influencers (see 5.4) all of which had been vital within their careers. Throughout the previous sustainable leadership facets, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to develop is vital for a sustainable leadership approach. Reflections from the interviewees regarding identifying capabilities and developing leadership competencies was discussed with the majority of the interviewees stressing their perceptions that often leaders may be promoted to positions with gaps in their 'leadership' abilities as they have been promoted due to their subject expertise. Overall the leaders shared this can have detrimental impacts on those around the leader.

> *"Sustainable leadership presupposes organisations have reliable methods of assessing potential. Most do not." (Dive, 2008, p.15)*

Dive (2008) goes onto suggest often relying on systems which evaluate tasks and utilise grading systems end up creating ineffective environments which add to confusion around realistic expectations. Therefore as some of the leaders (in particular, interviewees 9, 23 and key informant 1) emphasised the importance of assessing the leaders full capabilities was crucial. Again the leaders stressed the importance of providing opportunities to develop inclusively (i.e. via informal or rotating positions) can be crucial for their development. However as Ashford and Sitkin (2019) suggest development in a number of areas will depend on the individual, how they identify as a leader and respond to development depending on the skills they exhibit. Nevertheless, from the leaders' experiences it is clear that although identifying leader's competencies can sometimes be complex, encouraging an inclusive approach to leadership development with opportunities to enhance and refine skills is the best way to combat possible limitations in leader's competencies and approaches. Although this must be supported and reinforced by the culture and approach surrounding leaders foster to enable individuals to reflect on and further develop their skills.

Western (2019) considers how leaders develop and suggests it is imperative for leaders to recognise and manage their psychological wellbeing to ensure they are able to develop and to adopt a sustainable leadership approach. To do so he posits that organisations can introduce aspects such as coaching, mentoring, and communities of practice (which provide leaders with support) all of which were also advocated by

Casserley and Critchley (2010) and discussed as crucial for the interviewees in this study. Further, Day *et al.* (2014) contend that since empirical work has acknowledged that a lot of leadership development will take place in the *"so called white space between leadership development events"* (p.80), it will be important for leaders to recognise this and be given the opportunity to reflect and focus on their experiences in order to develop. A number of the leaders discussed taking such opportunities but warned this was often due to personal reasons or decisions, rather than an institutional approach. Overall although the leaders did indicate benefits of building resilience, they espoused individuals in HEIs often experience burnout as they cannot manage their conflicting demands especially when they do not have support from their leaders or the institution (see 5.4.4 and 5.5.2.3). Rather individuals had to build a personal resilience by 'being self-centred' (Interviewee 22), 'strategically selfish' (Interviewee 9) or engaging in coaching and mentoring relationships with either their leaders or other peers, which facilitated their reflection. Further, reflecting on Day and Schmidt's (2007) definition of resilience (see 3.4.5), it is important to recognise how leaders develop their competency and ability to be resilient is key. Reflection on action and experience is vital to developing leaders, building their resilience and encouraging them to adopt a sustainable approach, however this culture and approach must be embraced throughout the institution. Therefore, reiterating the role of the institution in aiding the development of leaders and also in encouraging reflection cannot be overlooked.

6.6.1 Individual considerations

A number of the leaders reflected on having to make individual decisions regarding their future at different times in their career. As highlighted previously, a key aspect of leadership development can involve sharing opportunities and including leaders via a rotation system within leadership roles/posts (see 5.3.2). As a number of the interviewees discussed this system is currently used by some Scottish HEIs, although they all had differing approaches the leaders reflected on their experiences within such posts and shared benefits and drawbacks of them. One of the prominent benefits was the ability to develop and experience the role without having to make a formal decision to move onto a 'managerial' track and a number of leaders discussed coming to a 'crossroads' at the end of the positions tenure. Some mentioned deciding between

staying in a managerial role or stepping back down to their previous position. This was an interesting decision they had to make with the biggest influencer being the erosion of their 'academic' role and responsibilities by taking on leadership roles. All academic leaders who discussed personal pressures on them in leadership roles stressed the impact the leadership role had on their academic research. In section 5.5.2.1 these experiences were explored with a number of the interviewees discussing the struggle to balance demands and navigate the pressures placed upon them was not unique to just individuals in leadership positions. A number of the interviewees reflected on how the changing, demanding context of HE can cause somewhat conflicting pressures where individuals feel they have to make a choice on their focus to ensure they are able to be sustainable and not burnout. Therefore it is important to recognise the relationship between taking advantage of opportunities will be most successful if they are accompanied by individual reflection and support provided by the institution to do so (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). One of the biggest influencers on the success of rotating positions was support received formally and informally, which echoes discussions in section 6.3. A number underlined it is vital for HEIs to ensure that leaders who do step into leadership positions are supported throughout and after their tenure position to ensure they can retain the leader along with their knowledge and skills developed during their position(s) at the institution (in particular interviewee 30). This support is imperative as from the experiences of interviewees 9 and 19, in particular, this can have detrimental psychological impacts if not provided. Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) stress the benefits of valuing staff and creating an 'employee-orientated' workplace, which can be essential when developing employees and fostering effective organisational performance.

Additionally competing demands and growing tensions to be 'good' at all things can result in individuals feeling significant pressure and pose potential conflict between different responsibilities, predominantly creating a rhetoric which separates 'teaching' and 'research' (see 5.5.2.2). The majority of interviewees believe although such a rhetoric exists, a balance must be struck between the two activities. However suggest this must be an approach adopted and embedded predominantly by the senior

institutional leaders and then filtered throughout the institution rather than one which is made by individuals themselves (Osborne *et al.*, 2015).

6.6.2 Balancing demands

Whilst reflecting on their experiences, a number of the leaders shared challenges associated with balancing demands placed on them, for example to continue to research and publish, to reach high levels of student satisfaction and to be an excellent leader (Bolden *et al.*, 2012). This led to a number of leaders reflecting on their work-life balance, and although only some used the words 'burnout', it was evident a number had been working at such high levels they were nearing burnout with some sharing honest accounts and reflections of this. Caldwell (2007) discusses a 'crisis in leadership' occurring throughout education and shares that typically leaders in education sectors will work on average 60 hours per week and stated this is well above the average of leaders in other areas which is typically around 45 hours a week. A number of the interviewees reflected on this 'normalisation' of work pressure and stress (particularly Interviewee 22). Further Chandler *et al.* (2002) highlight *"the presence of stress appears to be a part of organisational life in higher education today [according to respondents in our research]" (p. 1058).* Therefore this recognition within this study along with previous research, demonstrates this expected norm of the sector a number of the leaders discussed, with individuals having to manage this individually in the best way they can. Many of the leaders did reflect having a good peer network was extremely beneficial in doing so as it allowed them to learn from others and to discuss available opinions. However, when reflecting on their personal experiences of attempting to avoid burnout or experiences of having dealt with burnout, the majority had experienced a lack of support from those around them particularly from central support systems of HEIs. This had detrimental impacts on the leader particularly when the relationship between the leader and the institution or their own leaders becomes negative. Lee (2017) emphasises Hargreaves and Fink's (2006) argument that sustainable leaders should not 'deplete resources' and therefore acknowledges, *"sustainable leaders also acknowledge that employees are the resources that are vulnerable to depletion when abused or overused" (p.425).* Therefore Lee (2017) goes onto emphasise a close work-life balance is central to enable individuals to develop effectively and sustainably. This requires leaders to

work with those around them, including their own leaders and employees, to navigate the optimal balance of demands, consequently creating an inclusive culture that can help avoid burnout.

This research strongly found individuals within HEIs would ultimately adopt their own approach because typically that is the only option they believe they have. It may also be because academia can focus on individuals who have their own specialisms and therefore may act as *"lone wolfs"* (Interviewee 2 – SOL). This compounds a sense of isolation and therefore this can result in individuals having more loyalty to their discipline and specialism than to the institution, especially if they feel they have to balance demands on an individual level with varied support from their leaders and/or the institution. This resulted in a number of the leaders turning to the peer support networks they had developed and fostered through their careers to help and support them manage this.

In balancing demands and avoiding burnout leaders also advocated delegation helped them (see 5.5.2); this also benefits others whilst allowing leaders to share responsibility and develop their employees leadership skills (see 5.3.3). As Fullan and Sharratt (2007) propose by encouraging a sustainable approach, the focus should not be on a singular task but rather continuous improvement. Arguably by delegating and sharing responsibility such an approach can be fostered by considering the improvement of others which therefore transcends an individual leader or a specific task. However, Interviewee 7 in particular shared the importance of achieving a balance during delegation to share the right level of responsibility at the right time with trained staff. Sharing responsibility and having a number of people involved was a key benefit the interviewees discussed which alluded to the development of an inclusive culture in HEIs. This was only possible for the leaders to conclude as they had reflected on their experience, which Casserely and Megginson (2008) along with Kopp and Martinuzzi (2013) suggest is vital in ensuring the leader personally develops and learns from their experiences. Therefore such reflection is vital in managing burnout that can be vital in achieving sustainable leadership, and contributing to sustainable institutions by encouraging development and reflection in others.

However, it may not be possible to have time to reflect, as Interviewee 23 in particular argued (see 5.4.4). This corresponds with the pressures placed on leaders, which the interviewees discussed throughout the research but also emphasises that an encouragement to reflect, which comes from throughout the institution (via role models, HR/L&D interventions, encouragement from line managers etc.), would aid in embedding the importance of reflection in the culture of the HEI. Within their research Casserely and Megginson (2008) argue a leader's reflections and decisions they make as the prominent way leaders emerge, over attending formal training for example. The interviewees highlighted having different opportunities to develop in different ways was crucial. Western (2019) also considers reflection as a key element of leadership development. However, from the experiences shared by the interviewees, this may not be current reality of HEIs although some leaders (in particular the HR specialists) did emphasise they were attempting to introduce this with others acknowledging the benefits of embedding it.

Therefore by personally undertaking and encouraging their direct reports to reflect on their actions whilst planning for their future continuous development is crucial but arguably to do so leaders must be able to achieve an effective balance between short and long-term objectives within HEIs. Hence the relationship between these facets is prominent due to the inter-dependence they have as reflection will allow the development toward long-term approaches while on the contrary placing short-term objectives as the focus will hinder the ability to reflect and therefore will create a vicious cycle based on a short-term mentality which is task focused rather than development focused.

6.7 Balancing objectives

As discussed, the interviewees stressed they felt growing pressure and demands within the sector are increasingly difficult to contend with. As established, the ability to develop a sustainable institution which is able to respond to demands by meeting todays needs without deleting resources is crucial (Osborne *et al.,* 2015; Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Consequently the last facet within the conceptual framework is 'balancing short and long-term objectives'. The interviewees discussed the

need to find a balance and advocated ensuring transparency in communications around expectations of both staff and students was a key role for them to undertake as leaders. To aid in this, a number of the leaders discussed the influence, they believe, should be fostered and developed as a sector approach to sustainability and sustainable institutions to ensure that it can become an approach welcomed as crucial by senior institutional leaders and subsequently embedded throughout HEIs (see 5.5.3). Osborne *et al*. (2015), like the interviewees, also suggested considerations should be explored on individual, institutional and societal levels. Therefore both sectoral and institutional leaders play a role in navigating the purpose of the sector, clarifying and focusing on what universities are in place for and setting a direction with clear vision for the future. Each of the key informants strongly emphasised the partnership approach and collaborative working is pivotal within HE, especially in times when external influences and policy development will be introduced, Brexit is one example of this Key informant 3 highlighted. This reinforces the role of peer networks and cross-sector collaboration a number of the leaders advocated is pivotal in their roles particularly to tackle challenges, share ideas but also recognise good practice within HEIs.

Regardless of the appetite for cross-sector collaboration, the majority of leaders discussed challenges and tensions that may result from attempting to balance demands, which can lead to uncertain and turbulent times for institutional leaders. Although overall the interviewees suggest leaders within HEIs will always do the best they can to navigate these tensions suggest it is not always an easy task. The major changes discussed by the interviewees centred around four main aspects which align with discussions in 2.3; the changing funding model which can cause HEIs to become more 'business like', globalisation (including Brexit) which causes an unpredictable, unstable environment, increases in technology and mass participation all which provide challenges around resources and implications of the lack of resources. One thing this study highlights is that all institutions regardless of type or history experienced growing challenges. Although there were different approaches taken to manage them, the leaders advocated their role in helping their HEI navigate the challenges and shared that peer networks and cross-sector collaboration could help them to do so.

6.7.1 Mutually reinforcing short and long-term objectives

When discussing these changes, a number of the interviewees also reflected perceived changing expectations throughout the HE sector. Although there is recognition of the ultimate aim to achieve the 'greater good', the leaders reflected this could be somewhat lost whilst simultaneously reacting to metrics and objectives which are increasingly placed on HEIs. Therefore they stressed there must be a balance between the short-term thinking focusing on objectives brings versus a longer-term management of institutions; which Osborne *et al*. (2015), Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also advocate. However, for the leaders one of their biggest concerns was attempting to achieve a balance between trying to excel in metrics whilst staying true to the purpose and history of each institution. There is evidence that leaders at both sector and institutional level recognise the need to achieve a balance, which is promising for future development in both the sector and for institutions.

With that said, the fact that all 35 interviewees discussed challenges and pressures within their institutions and/or the sector demonstrates in reality this balance is not currently equitable. Equally leaders' highlighted external factors mean that HE, along with other sectors, exist within an unstable environment of unknowns which can cause pressures on leaders who can struggle in balancing demands.

Overall when reflecting on changes, some leaders proposed these pressures may be a result of the fast pace of change within the sector. Others suggested the demands may be due to underlying public sector influences such as NPM, NPG along with limited resources available. Ultimately, the interviewees stressed it is vital within HE that institutions are not run as profit and loss businesses, a sentiment echoed by Shattock (2010) and Peters and Ryan (2015). Rather the interviewees suggested by staying true to the focus and nature of the HEI can help manage the demands. Literature also highlights the negative impacts which can arise from a focus on short-term targets (such as Osborne *et al*., 2015; Jamieson and Naidoo, 2004). The interviewees agreed and espoused they view the changes in the sector and the demands as challenging but highlight their belief that such a changing environment is here to stay and therefore HEIs must learn how to manage and cope with these changes to ensure they are sustainable.

Tideman *et al*. (2013) correspond with this and suggest adopting a long-term view is pivotal for *"survival"*. Johnson (2011) further suggests that ensuring strategies and 'gradual improvements' take place will be key to enable this and facilitate a movement towards achieving long-term goals. In order to aid in this and to ensure that there is flexibility within the sector, the key informants all stressed clarity of goals and 'flex' or ability to change quickly was important for HEIs. Within Scotland, there are currently 1-year funding cycles which echo this need. Additionally outcome agreements between institutions and the SFC aid in clarifying expectations and agreements made by senior institutional leaders play an important role in thinking about how each institution contributes to the wider sector and community. Within such outcome agreements, the key informants stressed will be a combination of mutually reinforcing short and long-term objectives, which therefore can facilitate this gradual change Johnson (2011) advocates.

Another major area of concern the interviewees had in relation to demands from the sector, surrounded funding and being 'business like'. Within Scotland, Government funding has historically been a significant form of funding for universities however the growth in commercialisation has changed the way HEIs 'balance their books' a number of leaders reflected. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge resources throughout the sector are limited and caps on student numbers (and therefore funding) from the government echoes this and work with institutions to ensure they are 'viable' in the long-term. Throughout literature, authors acknowledge such pressures and changing environments, Shattock (2010) in particular reflected on the *"often unanticipated effect on HE"*. This has given rise to 'competition' within the sector as a key concern of leaders. However, the interviewees suggested that often collaboration trumps this competition within Scottish HE or at least this is the hopeful approach and argue that by utilising peer networks the sector will be stronger together. However many suggested this may be an ideal more than reality due to short-term demands both individuals and institutions face.

6.7.2 Competition

When discussing changes in the sector a number of leaders reflected on implications of

changes such as mass participation in HE, technology and globalisation. Interviewee 28 (SIL) presented an interesting view which a number of the leaders alluded to regarding 'buying degrees' and 'giving out degrees like sweeties' and particularly in the 'global online marketplace' this rhetoric seems to be more prominent. However balancing this on a long-term basis that means staying true to the institutional strengths, which may go against the achievement of short-term targets that increasingly leaders are being measured on (as advocated particularly by Interviewees 8 – SIL and 28 – SIL) due to the increase in marketization. Deem and Brehony (2005) highlight their belief that 'selling' to students has been a culture shift and emphasise *"if there's no business there is no job"*. Marketisation discussions did resonate with aspects of this although overall when engaging in debate about 'students as customers' the leaders had a range of views (see 5.5.1.2). Nevertheless, in order to ensure these things are achievable the interviewees all agreed the need to consider and manage for the long-term prospects of their HEIs whilst delivering a quality experience was of utmost importance. Consequently, although a number of the leaders recognised increasing competition within the sector, there was agreement that the overarching purpose of universities is to achieve 'public good' (Interviewees 14 – L, 21 – SIL, 28 – SIL and Key informant 1). Osborne (2017b) discusses a movement within public sector literature away from a service dominant logic to a public service logic where the value of the service offered is of core concern. This mirrors the hopes the interviewees have around the stakeholder considerations and greater good of HEIs along with fostering and developing peer networks and relationships (see 5.5.1).

With that said, as Shattock (2017) emphasises within the HE sector competition has increased which could be a result of a league table culture which a number of the leaders also reflected upon which can hinder this sharing of information openly. Arguably, how management processes and practices of the institutions can act as enablers or barriers to managing the demands was advocated as a vital precursor for all interviewees. As Davies (2007) emphasises there is a danger in *"…seeing short-term benchmarks as the outcomes and not indicators of progress"* (Davies, 2007, p.14). Lee (2017) corresponds with this and further suggests this focus on the future differentiates sustainable leadership by suggesting;

"conventional leadership tends to focus on proper execution of sanctions and rewards based on what employees have done, while sustainable leaders view the current performance ratings as indicating what needs to be done in the future to improve performance" (Lee, 2017, p.424)

Therefore by looking for improvements and continually thinking about the future can enable leaders to guide towards a longer-term sustainable objective (Lee, 2017). Osborne *et al*.'s (2015) arguments compliment this when they discuss sustainable public organisations and emphasise adopting a focus on the longer-term enables sustainable development. The interviewees discussed at length the impacts this could have as currently in a number of their experiences the short-term benchmarks were becoming the sole indicator of success. Jamieson and Naidoo (2004) warned of the potential impacts that can arrive from having strict business like management structures placed upon academics, acknowledging that they will often avoid risk and innovation in order to ensure they are about to achieve high levels of satisfaction and respond to the metrics. These views and pressures were represented in the views of the interviewees. However they also advocated that setting and managing expectations of students and staff was key to ensure a balance in demands could be struck. This was particularly true for leaders when they discussed managing perceptions and understanding of expectations from them related to meeting any short-term demands. Hence once more reinforcing the importance of clear, transparent communication.

The key informant interviewees discussed the need for HEIs to demonstrate value, to ensure they are meeting the common good but also to be responsible for the outcomes agreed and the public money that is being invested in them. Here in lies the crux of the challenges and tensions placed on institutions when it comes to societal concerns and the idea of 'doing good' in that this is based upon perceptions. Therefore as the leaders advocated the more developed their leadership skills became the more they are able to ensure these perceptions are accurate. As Osborne (2017b) emphasises what constitutes 'value' will be based on the individuals perceptions;

"[institutions] do not create the value for citizens – they can only make a public offering. It is how the citizen uses this offering and how it interacts with his/her own life experiences that creates value. [...] how the student choses to engage with this offering and how s/he makes sense of it in terms of his/her life experience that will ultimately generate learning and value for that

student" (Osborne, 2017b, p.4-5).

This aligns with the views of the leaders that institutions must provide a collegiate and open offering for students who will deduct their own value from it, whilst ensuring employees throughout HEIs mirror this sentiment. Therefore not focusing on short-term targets such as NSS scores but rather focusing on the long-term and thinking of the best or an innovative approach to offer to students will be more beneficial, which includes having transparent expectations.

The same can apply to individuals, who work within HEIs, adopting a sustainable leadership approach will not automatically produce results. Rather the value that someone takes from the approach and the impact on them overall will depend on the individual but integrating the approach and support to achieve it via mechanisms within the HEI then this will ultimately be unachievable. Therefore, the role of leaders in helping guide and manage this is crucial.

6.8 Building an approach for sustainable leadership: key findings, discussions and conceptual framework (based on empirical research)

Western (2019) discusses when making changes within organisations often *"there is a huge gap between rhetoric and delivery, and also between good intentions and facing the hard issues"* (p.263). This emphasises leaders must identify and recognise the institutional demands and challenges they face, plus think strategically and operationally regarding changes to enable them to become reality, and not just rhetoric.

Following the leaders' views and experiences, analysis and discussions have driven a change to the Researcher's conceptual framework of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE (Based on literature) previously presented in Figure 8. Figure 9 presents the researcher's conceptual framework of sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education based on the empirical research. Following the presentation of this framework, an overview and summary of the key findings and discussions with the differences between the literature based (Figure 8) and empirical based framework (Figure 9) is discussed to illustrate the key findings of this study.

Figure 9: Researcher's Conceptual Framework of Sustainable Leadership in Scottish Higher Education (based on empirical research)
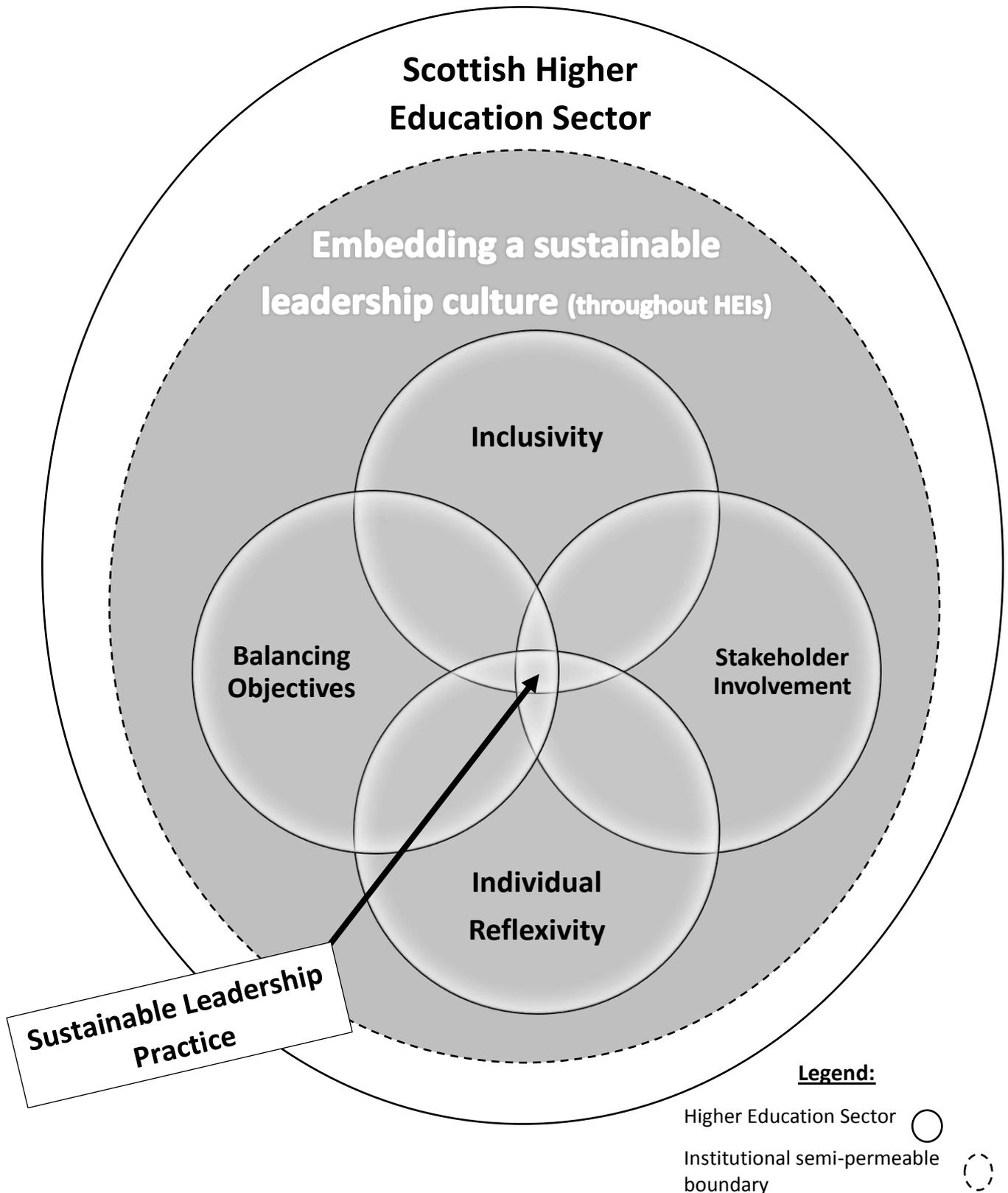
Similar to the conceptual framework derived from the literature, the empirical based framework (Figure 9) once more presents a Venn diagram to illustrate the inter-connected, inter-dependency of the identified sustainable leadership facets, with the optimum achievement of sustainable leadership only possible when all come together, as demonstrated in the focal point of the diagram. However based on the empirical research the facet of 'embedding a sustainable culture' is removed from the Venn diagram (as displayed in Figure 8) and instead is an underlying principle required to enable a sustainable leadership approach. This marks a notable change in the conceptual framework.

This study finds that culture acts as the foundational crux of the adoption of a sustainable leadership approach, which must enable and foster such practice. The empirical research demonstrates if it does not, then the actions of leaders and attempts to embrace the sustainable leadership facets may be unsuccessful. Within literature, the idea of an organisational approach which supports the sustainable leadership facets, was discussed but the culture was not directly and specifically illustrated as playing such a pivotal role, as this research has found. The key enabling elements of a culture which is needed to support sustainable leadership are identified within this research as being leadership development, peer networks and embedding effective communication and these are shown by the leaders to have been central to their experiences in HE, having positively impacted their leadership roles. These key enabling elements underpin all aspects of sustainable leadership literature and while these are implicit and somewhat understated to date, within the body of sustainable leadership literature, the experiences of the leaders in this research highlight these more explicitly as being central to successful enactment of sustainable leadership. Therefore, this study has found that a sustainable leadership approach in Scottish Higher Education must embrace and foster these key enabling elements as they can ensure an inclusive and cohesive culture, which enables sustainable leadership practice in HE to be achieved. The following sections discuss and analyse the key findings associated with sustainable leadership facets, exploring how they are underpinned by the key enabling elements that have been identified as central to creating a culture which fosters a sustainable leadership approach.

In order to **embed a sustainable leadership culture**, Van der Voet *et al.* (2015) emphasises the role of senior leaders in setting out the direction and vision in public organisations. They argue that direct line managers can have the biggest influence on individuals' commitment to change as the behaviours of leaders and how they encourage participation and ensure transparency of changes, is imperative. This research underscores the importance of leaders throughout the institution having an active role and influence in adopting institutional objectives (whether that be strategic outputs or change processes within the institution). To enable this, clear, transparent, two-way communication is pivotal, with both interviewees and literature concurring that a leader who demonstrates these behaviours and fosters the development of others must facilitate the creation of a supportive environment, which develops trust and collegiality. Therefore, relationships between leaders and those around them becomes critical when embracing and developing a sustainable leadership approach. The impact leaders on their followers have was underlined as a pivotal concern for the interviewees who suggested ensuring leaders develop with an inclusive and collegiate approach can be crucial for their sustainability. Therefore ensuring that institutions are adopting the 'everyone matters' mentality is fundamental in fostering and embedding a sustainable leadership approach. This can be done by adopting an inclusive, stakeholder approach particularly related to leadership development but also within communication strategies to build ownership and commitment throughout the HEI whilst is facilitated via the culture.

Ensuring that institutions are developing for the long-term is a fundamental aspect of sustainable leadership and therefore when embedding a sustainable leadership approach, the culture of the institution must be receptive to enabling this approach to be adopted by leaders throughout the institution. This research suggests that when the fundamental relationships and attitudes within institutions adopt a short-term-ist unsustainable perspective, no matter which principles of sustainable leadership are undertaken, they will be met with resistance. Hence facilitating a culture of trust and transparency is fundamental for all leaders throughout HEIs, but particularly for senior leaders. Therefore, the way in which senior institutional leaders set the tone and how this is embraced and enacted by leaders will act as either an enabler or barrier of

sustainable leadership. Consequently, organisational culture will either be a prospect for developing a sustainable leadership approach, although only if based on an inclusive, transparent, trusting relationship between leaders and their stakeholders, and focuses on development for the long-term without depleting resources in the short-term. Conversely, if it takes an opposing stance on these elements it will act as a major challenge and ultimately stifle a sustainable leadership approach. Therefore, culture can act as a prospect of sustainable leadership by embracing and enabling the facets of a sustainable leadership approach, or equally, it can act as a major challenge, which prevents such an approach being adopted. The interviewees affirmed throughout the research that the overarching culture leaders foster throughout HEIs was a determining factor in their own approaches, development and actions. Therefore, it became evident that each of the sustainable leadership facets could exist in isolation but if they are not supported by the institutional culture or key enabling elements (communication, peer networks and leadership development) then they will not have the same benefits and overarching value. This was evident from the experiences of leaders who had attempted to adopt different approaches or felt challenges would appear if they did. Consequently, as a result of this the conceptual framework (Figure 9) now presents 'embedding a sustainable leadership culture (throughout HEIs)' out-with the Venn diagram (as it was presented in Figure 8), and demonstrates its importance as underpinning the development of sustainable leadership in Scottish HE.

Each of the facets that have been identified will now be summarised in the context of the importance attributed within them to the key enabling elements identified by the interviewees in this research.

When considering associated impacts of adopting the **inclusivity** facet of sustainable leadership, the importance of and benefits associated with adopting an inclusive and collegiate attitude throughout the institution was recognised and acknowledged by the interviewees. This aligns with the literature which advocates providing development opportunities for leaders at all levels throughout the institution is vital. Within this research this also involves adopting an inclusive, stakeholder approach in relation to communication strategies and encouraging peer networks to support and further enhance development is vital for leaders to foster. Overall, the positive impacts and

connotations of facilitating and enabling a collegiate, open and honest environment that values everyone was evident in both the interviews and from literature. Further, a partnership approach and inclusive, collegiate environment embraced throughout the HEI (particularly in relationships between central and local levels) was seen by literature and the interviewees as imperative to achieve objectives throughout HEIs. This was highlighted within the HE literature but not emphasised as much in the sustainable leadership literature due to the contextual factor of this consideration. The crucial finding of this research, demonstrates the impact of inclusivity by involving everyone, providing opportunities to all and extending this throughout an institution, which is based on trust and transparency, can act as a pivotal prospect for sustainable leadership.

Having an overarching institutional view is seen as vital however this must be accompanied by innovation and ownership in order to include and engage employees with objectives and achieve *"sustained success"* (Osborne, 2010) via ensuring a diversification of views are encouraged and communicated. Hence the role of leaders in adopting this inclusive approach is underlined and reinforced to ensure everyone in the HEI is involved. Overall Lambert (2011) posits collaboration over competition will always foster greater results. Thus, the leaders suggested being authentic and encouraging open and honest communication would include and integrate stakeholders whilst hopefully helping to overcome challenges, which may appear. Again reaffirming the importance of the relationship between leader and stakeholders as previously mentioned.

Therefore the most important element of inclusivity is the recognition that leaders throughout HEIs must have the opportunity to develop and embrace leadership responsibilities. The idea of inclusivity must be applied regardless of the leaders 'formal' role, which aligns with Ashford and Sitkin's (2019) view regarding leadership as an activity and not simply an allocated role. Therefore a distributed, shared approach which involves all leaders should be embraced to facilitate a sustainable leadership approach and develop sustainable leaders. This is advocated by Dive (2008) and although is highlighted within HE literature is not given significant importance. However, this research has shown that building an inclusive environment which encourages and fosters development and transparent communication is imperative.

There is growing recognition that **involving and considering institutional stakeholders** (including policy makers, other intuitions, colleagues, direct reports and students) is key. The interviewees' in particular advocated collaboration across the sector resulted in beneficial outcomes for all parties. Similarly as explored in the inclusivity facet, treating employees equally while supporting and developing them is imperative in adopting a sustainable leadership approach. The interviewees strongly believe a supportive, collaborative environment is essential when developing and suggest it may be central to aiding the embedding of a sustainable leadership approach as it can foster trust, transparency and collegiality, this however is dependent upon the approach facilitated and fostered by leaders and how much they embrace the key enabling elements. Arguably, involving stakeholders must be an institutional approach to comprehensively foster and embed sustainable leadership within the culture and overarching approach of the HEI. Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) emphasise the organisational focus sustainable leadership should have. However, this study has found within HEIs the role of senior leaders, in particular, and building such an approach that all leaders throughout the institution embrace and embed is imperative. This is essential as an individual leader may care for, support and involve their stakeholders directly but if this is not part of the institutional approach, then the efforts of individuals can be undermined and may be ineffective. Hence, once more underlining and reiterating the role and importance of the institutional culture as the key finding of this study.

Therefore integrating and considering stakeholders by supporting and developing them is crucial. An individual leader will demonstrate behaviours that should be echoed by their direct reports, therefore this approach and involvement of stakeholders must begin with senior leaders and be embraced and championed by leaders throughout the institution in both formal and informal ways. This is vital as fostering individual relationships although key, must extend beyond a singular leader-follower relationship and instead embrace inclusivity principles adopted on a wider scale and by all leaders. This also signifies the importance and fundamental role the organisational culture will play in enabling this. If the institutional culture does not facilitate this or is in opposition of it then this will be a major challenge and ultimately hamper any attempt to embed a sustainable leadership approach. Consequently, fostering a supportive environment

that integrates all stakeholders with the institutional objectives is vital, especially as fostering transparent communication with stakeholders is crucial when developing sustainable leaders and sustainable HEIs. Therefore when involving all stakeholders, the leaders must consider the impact they have and ensure a supportive, collegiate environment is embraced by all, this begins at the top but then must be embedded throughout HEIs.

Within the **individual reflexivity** facet leader's personal identifications and reflections are of the utmost importance when considering how they develop and sustain such an environment within their teams. Many of the interviewees shared they had often had to make difficult decisions based on upon their own needs and aspirations versus pressures placed upon them in their roles. All interviewees discussed pressures and growing demands within Scottish HE as an area of major concern. As a result, most shared having to be 'selfish' or to decide what was best for them was the only way to avoid burnout. Therefore, although previous facets of sustainable leaders have strongly advocated for inclusive opportunities and share of leadership opportunities within a collegiate and supportive environment and peer network, it is equally as essential to provide opportunities for and to encourage reflection on experiences the leaders have had. Casserley and Critchley (2010) affirm this is fundamental for an individual in developing and embracing sustainable leadership. However within HEIs this is becoming increasingly difficult as individuals face ever growing demands and pressures. For example both interviewees and literature allude to growing expectations of working excessive hours in order to achieve objectives and attempt to respond to demands. However this conflicts with the underpinning sustainable leadership principle that resources should not be depleted. Therefore when considering the development of leaders, it is vital to embed and embrace an inclusive approach so that leaders can develop within and adopt a sustainable leadership approach. Within this study, the culture within HEIs and particularly around leadership development must therefore embrace trusting relationships which enable transparent communication around pressures and demands individuals and leaders feel within HEIs. This includes leaders encouraging ongoing reflections and development opportunities by everyone.

Therefore, this research argues that adopting a sustainable leadership approach can aid in avoiding burnout by creating, fostering and developing a supportive, collegiate culture in HEIs, as by adopting such an approach in line with sustainable leadership the central concern is not to deplete resources. This is a major issue for everyone within HEIs, as all interviewees discussed challenges due to the changing demands and issues within the HE context. However, institutions cannot continue as they currently are as the experience of the leaders dictates often individuals feel they are left alone to balance demands which therefore compounds the issue of burnout they feel. A number of the interviewees stressed there are activities which can aid in this but they must be embraced throughout HEIs. Consequently, this research advocates institutions, particularly SILs, must encourage and facilitate an equitable balance between demands whilst simultaneously encouraging leaders and individuals to reflect on and share their experiences. This will aid in embracing and embedding a sustainable leadership approach, but must be enabled by the overarching institutional culture.

Ensuring a clear, coherent vision is established is pivotal in achieving a **balance in objectives** and overarching institutional approach which can help navigate and set targets on both short and long-term basis. This balancing of objectives and demands was the biggest challenge identified by all leaders in this study. A number of the interviewees along with literature suggest a sector level focus on managing and meeting demands felt by all institutions within HE should be transparent as this will hugely influence the approach(es) taken by senior institutional leaders and therefore influence the culture of the HEI and consequently ability to embrace a sustainable leadership approach. This institutional focus must then be communicated throughout the HEI to aid everyone in achieving a balance in their objectives. Central to this however is the ability of institutional leaders to set mutually reinforcing short and long-term objectives which are translated and embraced throughout the HEI.

A number of the leaders shared concerns associated with managing HEIs as businesses, concerns which echoed literature. In order to overcome and avoid this the leaders stressed staying true to the history and overarching institutional objective is pivotal. However this will be strongly influenced by senior leaders along with the culture experienced by people within the HEI. Nevertheless a league table culture (Shattock,

2017) does exist in HE although the interviewees suggested they believe focusing on long-term implications along with the history and future of institutions is important. Lee (2017) corresponds and emphasises sustainable leadership must focus on developments for future enhancement rather than short-term targets and results. This increasing need to be competitive within HE the interviewees felt was increasing although emphasised their belief that the impact they have has leaders will be influential in ensuring this is not the primary focus of their teams/schools/institutions. However, this is can only be achieved by leaders within HEIs who can facilitate such an approach and utilise this as a prospect for developing sustainable leadership within their institutions.

Therefore although currently the most challenging facet of sustainable leadership in HE, the interviewees stressed securing mutually reinforcing objectives must be the focus of senior leaders and subsequently welcomed by leaders throughout the HEI. Further this study suggests one of the best ways to do so was to emphasise clear, transparent objectives are clearly communicated and which facilitates value to be derived by the stakeholder is imperative and must be underpinned by the culture of the HEI.

Therefore, this study found all facets of sustainable leadership and the overarching approach could be of benefit within Scottish HE. However the underpinning institutional culture and approach adopted by leaders will significantly influence the success, or not, of a sustainable leadership endeavour. This was the key finding of this study, as although the other facets of sustainable leadership, inclusivity, stakeholder involvement, individual reflexivity and balancing objectives, are all still imperative to achieve a sustainable leadership approach as they are inter-dependent and collaborative. The culture of the institution is pivotal to embrace and foster the facets and overarching sustainable leadership approach.

Central to the culture of the HEI are the key enabling elements of communication, leadership development and peer networks which the interviewees reaffirmed throughout the research as pivotal to their experiences. These can enable and foster an inclusive and collegiate culture whilst also underpinning and facilitating the sustainable leadership facets which are central to the ability of HEIs to embrace and develop a

sustainable leadership approach. Ultimately the approach adopted by leaders and culture they create, foster and develop is of central importance when embracing and embedding a sustainable leadership approach. Therefore, following this empirically based conceptual framework (Figure 9) and to advance knowledge of developing a sustainable leadership approach, the researcher will present implications for leaders in chapter 7. The importance of this is summarised by Day *et al*. (2014) who contend that organisations do not necessarily seek out the 'best' approach to leadership, rather they seek to develop leaders effectively, and arguably doing so by adopting a sustainable leadership approach within Scottish HEIs will have tremendous benefits.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this doctoral study is to examine perceptions of the challenges and prospects for developing sustainable leadership within Scottish Higher Education in order to explore implications for leaders. This is important as challenges such as globalisation, mass participation, decreasing resources and growing pressures identified within the sector have huge implications for HEIs and their leaders. The leaders interviewed as part of this study discussed these demands at length in line with potentially embracing a sustainable leadership approach. Therefore exploring prospects of and challenges for sustainable leadership in Scottish HE allows an analysis of the leaders' experiences to ascertain the impact and influence of the sustainable leadership facets within HEIs and, as a result, provide implications for developing a sustainable leadership approach.

This chapter will conclude the research by reviewing the achievement of the research objectives. Next, the chapter will outline and discuss the key findings derived from the research with resulting implications for Scottish HEIs in adopting a sustainable leadership approach presented. It will then provide an overview of the contribution to knowledge, research limitations and scope for future research.

7.2 Research objectives and conclusions

Research objective 1: *To critically review literature surrounding sustainable leadership in the Scottish higher education context*

Beginning in the introduction, the growing importance, relevance and value of sustainable leadership is identified and discussed in relation to Scottish HE. A review of implications from the HE sector allows key discussions of current issues and considerations for HEIs in chapter 2. By exploring literature surrounding NPM and contradictions faced by public sector organisations, an identification of the key practical issues for the HE sector are considered and discussed. The role of leaders in navigating these are underscored with a prominent focus on the relationship between the leader and their stakeholders in overcoming potential issues experienced by HEIs. This paves

the way for an analysis of the sustainable leadership literature, presented in chapter 3. Beginning with the underpinnings of the theory of sustainability, the need for a shift from singular profit maximisation to stakeholder considerations is required in order to facilitate the continued development of organisations. Seminal authors of sustainable leadership adopted in this research are Avery and Bergsteiner (2011), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Davies (2007), Lambert (2012) and Casserley and Crtichley (2010).

The a priori themes were derived in order to allow an identification and analysis of sustainable leadership, based upon the research and frameworks of the five seminal authors identified. These are (1) embedding sustainable leadership throughout the organisation; this centres around the need for sustainable leadership to be embraced by leaders throughout an organisation, this however is dependent on being fostered by the organisational culture within the organisation and shared understanding of leadership requirements along with being embraced and championed by all leaders. (2) Inclusivity; provides opportunities for development to all employees, provides transparency and importantly ensures that the sustainable leadership approach extends beyond the individual. (3) Short and long-term objectives; balancing demands of the organisation by creating harmony between short and long-term objectives, focusing predominantly on short-term targets fosters unsustainable practices. (4) Stakeholder considerations; create and foster a collegiate internal environment which adopts the views of multiple stakeholders, building opportunities for individuals to develop and foster an inclusive culture built around these multiple views. (5) Individual reflexivity; ensuring leaders avoid burnout by encouraging reflection on experiences by providing opportunities to share and develop.

Research objective 2: *To develop a conceptual framework for the analysis of leaders views on sustainable leadership in the Scottish higher education sector*

In exploring the current complexities which exist within Scottish HE and the literature around sustainable leadership, the result of research objective 1 culminated in the presentation of a conceptual framework (based on literature) which integrates the work of the five seminal authors and the a priori themes identified. The researcher proposes this conceptual framework (Figure 8, section 3.7) in order to conceptualise existing

literature and provide a framework for the primary data collection. It presents these a priori themes, described by the researcher as facets of sustainable leadership, which are inter-dependent, and the findings from this study suggests that it is only when all are in place that a sustainable leadership approach can be effectively developed and integrated. The conceptual framework portrays them within a Venn diagram to illustrate their inter-connected relationships with the focal point illustrating the achievement of a sustainable leadership approach.

Research objective 3: *To undertake in-depth interviews exploring leaders' perceptions of sustainable leadership in order to explore prospects for future development and challenges leaders may face*

As outlined in chapter 4, by adopting an interpretive, qualitative approach to this research, 35 in depth interviews with leaders from a variety of levels were undertaken. 13 out of the 19 Scottish institutions participated (with each institution type represented at least once). This provided leaders perceptions and experiences from across Scottish HEIs. The variety of experiences and perspectives shared throughout the research was extensive and allowed a rigorous exploration of prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership in Scottish HEIs. An interpretive phenomenological analysis approach allowed these experiences to comprehensively explored and analysed. The interviews were all audio recorded and consequently transcribed complete verbatim style. The NVivo CAQDAS computer tool was used to facilitate research analysis with rich, deep data facilitating an exploration of individuals experiences but also facilitated similarities to be derived and explored in the analysis and findings chapter then subsequently discussed in line with wider literature and contextual considerations in the discussions chapter.

Research objective 4: *To establish an empirically based conceptual framework to guide the application and future development of sustainable leadership in Scottish higher education*

Following a critical exploration of the leaders' perceptions and experiences, key findings were discussed (chapter 6), and consequently a conceptual framework based on the empirical research is presented in Figure 9 (see 6.8). It is based upon the conceptual

framework, based on literature, as discussed in objective 2, however has been amended in line with the key findings. In particular, the fundamental and crucial role of institutional culture identified in this research is now demonstrated as underpinning the Venn diagram with the facets of sustainable leadership and consequently embedding an overarching sustainable leadership approach. This conceptual framework will be used to illustrate implications for leaders in this chapter, but first key findings must be discussed in order to provide a foundation understanding of how the framework and can aid in developing a sustainable leadership approach.

7.3 Key findings

The extensive qualitative data allowed a detailed exploration of leaders' perceptions of the sustainable leadership theory and the implications for Scottish HEIs. The fundamental prospects and challenges of adopting a sustainable leadership approach revolve around the underpinning internal and external environments in which it is developed. External contextual influences from the HE sector and internally the institutional culture run as undercurrents throughout each interview, which allow this study to consider and explore their impact on fostering and developing a sustainable leadership approach within Scottish HEIs. Across the interviewees experiences, and across the sector, there was agreement of the value sustainable leadership could have within Scottish HE with some advocating their HEI or parts of the sector was already on a journey towards potentially embedding this approach.

The conceptual framework (presented in Figure 8 as a result of the literature) was amended as a result of the empirical research based on leaders perceptions and experiences which impacted their ability to adopt a sustainable leadership approach (as presented in Figure 9). From the leaders experiences, it became evident the underpinning institutional culture was a pivotal aspect of enabling and fostering a sustainable leadership approach within Scottish HEIs. Although literature highlighted embedding sustainable leadership throughout organisations as crucial, this study found the institutional culture can be a major barrier of the development of a sustainable leadership approach, or it can enable and foster the facets to have the positive impact they aim to have. Therefore, the most notable change between the conceptual

frameworks is in the 'embedding sustainable leadership throughout' facet. This is no longer part of the Venn diagram as was identified in Figure 8, rather in Figure 9 it is demonstrated as an underpinning and fundamental aspect of adopting a sustainable leadership approach. Throughout the research, it is evident that institutional culture has a prominent influence on each facet and must be a pre-curser for development as it can be either a prospect or challenge in adopting and embedding a sustainable leadership approach throughout HEIs. Importantly, if sustainable leadership is to have an impact, and benefit the HEI, it must be more than rhetoric. Rather it must become the reality of HEIs and be embraced by all leaders throughout the institution. This involves having a clear, coherent vision from senior leaders which is operationalised by leaders in an inclusive, transparent and trusting environment. This key finding is crucial as it demonstrates that in order to foster, create and develop a sustainable leadership approach, this must be embedded and embraced throughout HEIs. Consequently, the role and impact leaders have is imperative, therefore ensuring they develop such an environment and culture within their teams/schools/institutions is vital. This is not strongly advocated by literature however in this study the environment and culture fostered by leaders enabled or hindered their overarching leadership approach.

When exploring the leaders' experiences and associated sustainable leadership facets, three key enabling elements are identified as playing a pivotal role in leaders' approaches and experiences. This study has discovered these key enabling elements (leadership development, peer networks and communication) were not emphasised by the previous body of literature on sustainable leadership. Whereas, the leaders' experiences in this study identify these as critical for the development and fostering of a sustainable leadership approach and culture within HEIs as they underpin and are paramount in enabling all of the sustainable leadership facets.

Overall a supportive environment can facilitate the adoption of inclusive approaches where leaders from across and throughout the institution are provided with opportunities to develop their leadership competencies. This facilitation of development and sharing of responsibilities is vital when embedding and embracing a sustainable leadership approach to ensure it extends beyond a singular leader or individual. Hence, it can be adopted and championed by leaders throughout the HEI,

whether these leaders are in formal or informal, senior or operational roles. Therefore, the importance of leadership development is evident here via the inclusive approach sustainable leadership literature advocates, ensuring that approaches, culture and leaders can be sustainable throughout HEIs.

This however is dependent upon the way in which employees and leaders are treated by their HEI, by their peers and the trust they have with their leaders then consequently with their followers is vitally important. This approach must stem from the senior institutional leaders who should be the ultimate role models for behaviour and approaches throughout the institution by building and fostering an effective environment that transcends one leader. Therefore involving stakeholders and creating an institutional approach and culture which embraces sustainable leadership is crucial. A supportive institutional environment will not only help to develop individuals and other leaders but it will also facilitate achievement of institutional objectives. This is enabled via communication, which must be transparent and engaging for all throughout the HEI. The benefits of enhancing this ensures that people embrace the overarching objectives of the institution. Further by embracing an inclusive approach which places stakeholders at the heart of future developments HEIs strive for, aspects such as succession planning and opportunities for formal development will facilitate a collaborative, inclusive approach throughout the institution. These formal processes must be reinforced by a supportive environment which fosters trust, transparency and collegiality.

Part of this supportive environment must centre around providing individuals and leaders with the space and opportunity to reflect upon and develop as a result of their experiences and actions. The interviewees discussed often the opportunity to do so may not formally be offered by their HEI, however doing this on an individual basis and by embracing individual reflexivity, leaders can arguably avoid burnout. However whilst facing growing pressures and demands this can be challenging. Therefore the supportive peer networks leaders cultivate play a pivotal role in helping manage the balance of and response to demands. This support occurred between leaders in both senior and junior positions, both internal and external to the leader's HEIs. When reflecting on how they had developed their own approaches, the leaders emphasised the many differing

development opportunities they had taken advantage of, which were identified as central to achieve an effective and sustainable response to pressures of leadership and leading within HEIs. Ensuring no resources are depleted is a pivotal aim and outcome of adopting a sustainable leadership approach, this includes people, and therefore leaders throughout institutions must ensure demands do not lead to burnout. Therefore they should encourage and facilitate reflection on action and provide a supportive environment where individuals can share their concerns openly and honestly with no fear of repercussions.

However the ability to have this reflection on action and balance demands individually was strongly influenced by the institutional approach to balancing objectives. A major factor of sustainability and sustainable leadership is the focus on long-term objectives and fostering approaches which facilitate their engagement, however these must harmonise with the short-term objectives. Once more underlining the fundamental role the institutional culture will play in the approaches adopted by leaders. Within HE growing managerialism and marketization have increased demands throughout the sector and particularly those placed on leaders within HEIs. Every interviewee discussed these growing pressures, which shows the commonality regardless of the type of institution or level of leader within the HEI. Hence, having the ability to share with others both within and out-with their own institutions could help the individual leader develop in their own approach. Regardless, the way(s) in which an institution and its leaders approach and manage these demands can have significant impacts on individuals. Consequently ensuring there is clarity in expectations of leaders, via transparent communication, along with a focus on continual improvement for the future is central to balancing objectives and adopting a sustainable leadership approach. This study found this must therefore be embedded within the institutional culture, which will foster and enable such an approach.

To date, the majority of sustainable leadership literature has taken place in a private sector context. The key findings of this study illustrate important considerations for individual leaders but also institutions. This will be explored in the implications for leaders section to illustrate how a sustainable leadership can be embedded and fostered within this study's context, the Scottish Higher Education Sector. Overall, this study

adopts a singular context (Scottish HE) but it can be applicable to other public domains along with other educational contexts. Contextual influences have played an important role in this study to explore how they will influence a sustainable leadership approach. From the experience of leaders, however these are ever-changing and so flexibility and adaptability in approaches must be adopted by leaders, the same would be required for developing and fostering a sustainable leadership approach. Therefore, the key findings have the ability to be transferred across the public sector, in particular, as similar major challenges such as balancing demands are often also experienced. Overall external context influences have and will impact on the development of a sustainable leadership approach and so considerations around their influence and impact may differ depending on the context. Nevertheless, it is the researcher's belief that as existing literature has been applied to a range of sectors and organisations, these findings can also be applicable for leaders and institutions/organisations to learn from.

7.4 Implications for leaders

There are a number of implications for leaders which relate to sustainable leadership. From this study's key findings and researcher's conceptual framework of sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education, three prominent implications are discussed.

7.4.1 Collegiate, transparent culture fostered by strong communication

Building and fostering a collegiate, transparent culture fostered by strong communication. The institutional approach taken to embed a sustainable leadership culture will be the biggest determinant of sustainable leadership. It is acknowledged throughout literature and within the research that any change to institutional culture will be a long-term endeavour. However leaders play a pivotal role in affecting and influencing the culture. As senior institutional leaders must set vision, direction and transparency for both long and short-term goals within HEIs. Regular, transparent communication is vital. Within this, it is suggested leaders utilise a variety of communication methods both formally and informally, whilst most importantly providing opportunities for direct discussion and debate with a range of different stakeholder groups. This use of communication must be facilitated via a two-way

exchange where individuals feel their views are welcomed and can share open and honest reflections of their experiences in order for senior institutional leaders to acknowledge the clarity of goals and overarching understanding and attitude taken towards them. For example it is vital to acknowledge that if communication is broken or not translated as planned from an institution to local level then this must be addressed to ensure a consistent and collaborative approach forms the basis and works towards achieving institutional objectives. Additionally the research underlined the importance of fostering trust and benefits associated with this and how it can help to create an environment and culture within HEIs which will contribute to achieving and embedding a sustainable leadership approach.

7.4.2 Inclusion and development of 'leaders' throughout HEIs

As identified throughout the research, it is important to not simply identify 'leaders' based on their hierarchical positions. Rather it must be acknowledged that leadership can come from throughout the institution and therefore providing development opportunities for individuals and leaders throughout HEIs, both formally and informally, must be encouraged. Practices such as rotating leadership positions can provide leaders the opportunity to embrace a leadership position and consequently decide if this is where they see their careers advancing. This can also facilitate reflection on action and act as an identifier of skill development required when considering future leaders in terms of succession planning. A number of the leaders reflected on their own experiences of developing as a leader and the aspect with the biggest impact on the leaders was learning informally from others, via informal opportunities they took advantage of or via reflecting on their own experiences. Therefore findings from this research suggest facilitating and creating opportunities for leaders at all levels will aid in facilitating an inclusive approach but will also ensure that a sustainable leadership approach is embraced and embedded throughout as it will extend beyond a singular leader.

By adopting an inclusive and developmental approach which encompasses leaders in a variety of posts at a variety of levels, HEIs can distribute responsibilities to share workloads and enable individuals to share pressure to ensure individuals can achieve an

equitable, fair and balanced work-life balance. Pressures and demands in HE and within HEIs do not seem to be diminishing but rather increasing and therefore by ensuring that individuals can acquire key skills by taking advantage of development opportunities can be extremely beneficial.

7.4.3 Providing a supportive environment

Stemming from the previous implication of providing an inclusive and developmental approach for leaders, a supportive environment is essential to facilitate the advancement of individuals and leaders. Key to this is encouraging and facilitating support. It is important this does not become too task focused or institutionalised but more should focus on leaders facilitating reflection and encouraging their direct reports, peers or other leaders to develop in a sustainable way. This means ensuring that leaders or individuals are not depleted or burnt out as a result of too much pressure or work intensification which has become normalised in HEIs. Challenging this and ensuring that leaders can be resilient enough to balance demands whilst providing an employee-centred approach can aid not only in an individual's development but can also effectively contribute to embedding a sustainable leadership approach throughout HEIs. As the interviewees discussed 'reflection' may be formally facilitated via training events and programmes however discussing, sharing and encouraging reflection may have an equal benefit as it can engage others and once more facilitate a culture of learning from others which the leaders commented was extremely beneficial for them. Therefore having fora (such as programme leader forums, communities of practice, etc.) which encourage and enable reflection and sharing between colleagues and leaders can be extremely beneficial.

7.5 Contribution to knowledge

The development of an original conceptual framework derived from literature (Figure 8) and subsequently advanced based on application to the context of this research (Figure 9), the Scottish Higher Education Sector, has enabled a comprehensive picture of the essential facets of sustainable leadership with the importance of an inclusive, collegiate culture highlighted as fundamental to a sustainable leadership approach. Exploring

seminal authors and synthesising their models to create a singular conceptual framework of sustainable leadership contributes to knowledge and fills the literature gap identified by authors (such as Farooq, 2018). Further, the application of this conceptual framework demonstrates these facets could act as both prospects and challenges for sustainable leadership depending on how they are approached and implemented within organisations. Therefore, an enhancement of the conceptual framework based upon the empirical research demonstrates the pivotal role embedding sustainable leadership within the institutional culture has. This was identified as the biggest influencer as the culture could act as either a prospect for development or major challenge, which could stifle a sustainable leadership approach. Importantly, regardless of individual actions and approaches taken by leaders, if the overarching culture of institutions does not facilitate a sustainable leadership approach then such individual actions will be stifled. Previous research has not significantly stressed the importance of culture, rather it reinforces ensuring a sustainable leadership approach is embedded throughout organisations. Therefore, this contribution to knowledge is significant in advancing literature understanding of a major challenge associated with the development and facilitation of a sustainable leadership approach. Existing literature explored have different underlying interests, philosophical approaches and external influences. Therefore the key findings of this research have the ability to potentially influence future advancements of the sustainable leadership literature and how a sustainable leadership approach can be fostered and adopted within organisations which could inform further research.

The empirically based conceptual framework (Figure 9) facilitates the presentation of key findings and implications for leaders, which aim to guide the application and future development of sustainable leadership in Scottish Higher Education. The implications for leaders illustrate that alongside the consideration of the impacts of the sustainable leadership facets, this study demonstrates key enabling elements crucial to the facilitation and cultivation of a sustainable leadership approach. Therefore, leaders must consider their actions related to how they foster development, in themselves but also in other leaders via inclusive approaches with multiple opportunities. Additionally facilitating peer support from throughout HEIs via leaders, teams and external groups

will help advance leaders competencies and abilities to manage and balance demands. These actions must be reinforced via clear, transparent communication, which enables an inclusive, sustainable approach and culture to be adopted throughout teams/schools/institutions. Consequently, the important role of all leaders throughout HEIs in fostering a sustainable leadership approach is underlined in this study via the development of the facets and their key enabling elements. Therefore institutions can use the framework to initially explore their culture, identifying challenges leaders may face and subsequently expand this to analyse and evaluate actions undertaken by their leaders in line with the sustainable leadership facets. This allows both individuals and institutions to learn from and reflect on the impact(s) they have within HEIs and consequently can allow an identification of how a sustainable leadership approach can be fostered on multiple levels. Therefore, this contribution may not only impact HEIs, but again by transferring and exploring these key findings to other contexts could allow an identification of their importance to be identified in other organisations, as well as HEIs.

7.6 Research Limitations

Within every research study there will always be potential research limitations, three are identified in this study and will now be discussed.

Firstly, the snowball sampling strategy which was utilised allowed for an organic development in the sample. The researcher had outlined pre-established criteria for involvement but did not set out to create an equal distribution or spread across levels or institutions. In hindsight, as the spread of interviewees was wide with 13 out of the 19 institutions interviewed, if the researcher had undertaken the primary data collection over a longer period of time it may have been possible to have participation from all 19 institutions. The sample size of 35 was deemed to be sufficient for this research particularly given the data collection timescale and as saturation was reached. However to ensure all institutions were represented by all levels of leaders, a stratified sample may have been used. Nevertheless, the prospects and challenges findings of this study have been found to be similar and evident across leadership levels plus types of institution within Scottish HE.

Secondly, as the topic of sustainable leadership is new and contested within literature, language and application often differed between literature authors. Therefore the researcher had to navigate the literature in order to ensure that all relevant literature and seminal authors were represented and considered in the research. This results in the conceptual framework derived from literature as an analysis and synthetisation of this literature, based on the researchers perception. Therefore, at the beginning of this research journey, the researcher experienced confusing in navigating the literature. This was a time consuming, somewhat problematic period in the research journey as the researcher clarified perceived understanding, and knowledge corresponded with the literature. This meant amending and adapting the focus of the research a number of times to ensure that the key facets of sustainable leadership were identified and thereafter researched in the most appropriate way possible. Therefore by utilising and exploring the conceptual framework in other contexts could help to influence sustainable leadership literature advancements.

Finally, the timeframe of this research and the research design of this study was designed as a snapshot of the current Scottish Higher Education, however it is acknowledged that the research could have adopted a longitudinal approach. This would have allowed an exploration of the facets throughout time in different institutions. Nevertheless, throughout the research leaders discussed their experiences throughout their careers and so the discussions encompassed a longitudinal focus in relation to the prospects and challenges of sustainable leadership.

7.7 Scope for further research

Future research following this study's contribution to knowledge, could utilise the development in understanding of the enabling elements and underpinning culture of a sustainable leadership approach. These aspects, identified as pivotal in this research, could be explored in other contexts to analyse how they are influenced by different contextual influences. This could enable the advancement of sustainable leadership literature which has not articulated the importance of these aspects to date but following this research could be explored to analyse the impacts they have. This would

allow an exploration of the influence and importance they may or may not hold in other types of organisations and potentially other sectors.

Although this research was undertaken as a snapshot of Scottish HE, it was intended to be cross-sector and cross-institutional to explore challenges and prospects for sustainable leadership in Scottish HE. Nevertheless, scope for further research could include an in-depth comparison of individual institutions to explore the role their culture has in facilitating a sustainable leadership approach by examining different institutional cultures and the direct impact on developing sustainable leadership. A comparison across case study institutions will allow a greater exploration of the different cultures to garner the feasibility of the concept for that institution. Equally adopting an institution specific research project to explore how sustainable leadership could be implemented within one specific institution could be interesting and would allow specific practices to be explored in order to assess how they impact on embedding and achieving a sustainable leadership approach. Using the researcher's conceptual framework (Figure 9), the institution can assess each facet within their institution and explore perspectives around institutional prospects for but also challenges of a sustainable leadership approach to foster the prospects and overcome the challenges. This could be done by analysing the institutional approach then exploring individual practices and actions undertaken by leaders, allowing an evaluation of the individual and institutional approach to sustainable leadership.

Further research expanding the research outside Scottish HE to other educational sectors could be undertaken. It would be of interest to conduct the research in another HE sector to reflect on the influence of potentially differing external factors and the development of a sustainable leadership approach in HEIs. For example, potentially within other UK HE contexts (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to allow a comparison between the Scottish and English higher education sectors. The differing public policy base and underpinnings of each HE context could be interesting to explore in relation to the sustainable leadership facets and the ever changing external influences and the impact this could have on the adoption of a sustainable leadership approach. A number of the leaders alluded to perceived differences between the two, for example the external influence of differing fee systems has on HEIs may play a significant role.

Therefore, research in these different geographical sectors, then potentially a direct comparison between this study and the differing contextual based study would be interesting. This would allow an investigation into whether the empirically based conceptual framework for sustainable leadership would still apply, if the challenges and prospects are similar or more acute in some areas and if the key enabling elements play such a crucial role.

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Appendix 1: Research Integrity Application and Approval

Research integrity approval confirmation letter recieved:

Application reference: ENBS-2017-18-047

Response dated: 1st May 2018

Title of proposed research: An analysis of sustainable leadership challenges and prospects within the Scottish higher education sector.

Dear Laura

The revised application you submitted to the Research Integrity Committee has now been approved.

Please use the above application reference if you need to demonstrate that the Committee has approved your PhD study.

Regards

Matthew Dutton

Convener, Research Integrity Committee

BUSINESS SCHOOL RESEARCH INTEGRITY APPROVAL FORM

Section 1 – Research details

Name/s of researcher: **Laura Gerard** (nee Strachan)

Date: **March 2018** (original submission - 13th May 2013)

Staff: **Yes, but undertaking as part of my PhD**

Student - Matriculation number: ▮▮▮▮▮▮

Undergraduate ☐   Masters ☐   Doctoral | Yes |

Title of project
An analysis of sustainable leadership challenges and prospects within the Scottish higher education sector.

Aim of Research
To examine perceptions surrounding the challenges and prospects for sustainable leadership within Scottish higher education to explore implications for leaders

Objectives

1. To critically review literature surrounding sustainable leadership in the Scottish higher education context

2. To develop a conceptual framework for the analysis of sustainable leadership in the Scottish higher education sector

3. To explore leaders' perceptions of the development of sustainable leadership in order to explore prospects for future development

4. To establish model guidelines to aid development of sustainable leadership in Scottish higher education

Details of the research methods to be used, please consider all of the following in your response:

a. how the data will be collected (please outline all methods e.g. questionnaires/focus groups/internet searches/literature searches/interviews/observation)

Initially data will be gathered via a literature review which will allow for seminal themes to be derived and as a result the primary data collection will be designed around these themes, the research method will be one-to-one semi structured interviews conducted by the researcher and it is proposed this could take place either face to face or via the telephone; whichever suits the respondent.

b. data collection tools to be used

Semi-structured interviews structured around seminal themes derived from the literature review.

c. where the data will be gathered (e.g. in the classroom/on the street/telephone/on-line)

Preferably face-to-face but also flexbile to include telephone interviews.

d. who will undertake the data collection if not the lead researcher detailed in section 1 (list all involved)

Only the lead researcher

e. how the data sample will be selected (e.g. random/cluster/sequential/network sampling)

At the moment my sampling strategy hasn't been confirmed, the plan is to undertake research in three layers, 1) Policy level (Scottish funding council); 2) Representative body (e.g. universities Scotland); 3) Institution level (the 4 perspective institutions I would like to be involved are Glasgow university, University of the West of Scotland, Edinburgh university and Edinburgh Napier University).

Within each layer of this research I perceive that I will use non-probability sampling and perhaps use a sliced sample of senior managers (who are in formal leadership positions and at grade 7 or above (or equivalent) and hope that I will gather participants from a range of different functions. I would also be looking for an equal split between the different institutions in order to ensure the results are not bias to one type of institution.

f. the criterion for an entity to be included in the sample

Participants will be in a formal senior leadership position in their organisation. This means that they will either be a representative for the SFC or Universities Scotland in a senior role.

Within institutions the participants will be at senior manager level and above (I will also be looking for a mix of academic and professional services staff). The senior managers will be determined by their formal leadership responsibilities and grades (this recognises the difference in grades and responsbilties between universities and services within each insititution). I will be looking for a split between the different insitutions in order to compare perceptions between senior leaders in a post 92 versus ancient/red brick university.

g. how research subjects will be invited to take part (e.g. letter/email/asked in lecture)

It is expected that participants will be invited to take part via email and provided with an information sheet and all will sign and have constant access to a consent form which will detail the research aims and objectives and the repondents right to withdraw at any time. It is assumed all respondents will be communicated with via emails and possibly telephone calls.

h. how the validity and reliability of the findings will be tested

Each interview will be recorded, with permission from the respondent and then transcribed following the interview. The transcription will then be offered

to be sent to the respondent to clarify accuracy and reliability before it is utilised.

When analysing, each transcription will be coded with no identification of the participant held beside or with the transcriptions to ensure security. This will ensure that the information is confidential, valid and reliable as they have approved the transcription and ensured that my interpretation of what they have said is correct (where applicable) whilst also compling iwht GDPR regalations around the personal information which is being used and processed.

   i. if applicable, please attach a copy of the questionnaire/interview
       questions (for student researchers, please include notification of
       approval of the questionnaire from your supervisor)

An indicative question set is included as an appendix.

Who/what will be the research subjects in the research?

a. Staff/Students of Edinburgh Napier (please give details)

Yes – individuals in a formal senior management position from either academic or professional services department (at grade 7 or above)

continue from section 2

b. Vulnerable individuals (please give details e.g. school children, elderly, disabled etc.)

No

continue from section 2

c. All other research subjects (please give details)

Representatives from Scottish funding council and universities Scotland along with leaders in formal senior leadership positions at other identified institutions.

continue from section 3

Section 2 – research subject details

Will participants be free NOT to take part if they choose?

Yes. This is vitally important to ensure that they know and understand this, I will be sure to give them a choice, and even if they wish to withdraw at any point, this decision would be respected immediately. These details will be transparent to the participants and included in the consent form along with details on how they can request to withdraw.

Explain how informed consent will be achieved.

When contacting eligible participants from the relevant organisations, I will provide them with key, detailed information.

When inviting employees to be participants of this research, I will provide them with detailed information sheets and consent forms with all my contact details to expand on discussions if necessary.

I think this is important as I want to ensure the participants in the research are taking part for the right reasons and are not or do not feel coerced in any way. I will outline their right to participate and withdraw thourghout all communications.

In terms of enuring that informed consent has been granted, at the begining of the data collection interview I will ensure that the respondent knows my aims and objectives and is clear on the goal of the interview. Then after the interview I will ensure that they check over their transcript to ensure accuracy and consent to all information that has been received.

Will any individual be identifiable in the findings?

All interviewees will be coded and anonymised using a coherent framework (that will be finalised once all interviewees have been set up). No information will be used that could potentially identify the individual who has participated in the research. For example, individuals who take part in the survey will be identified as senior leader of their school or service however their institution will not be revealed along side this information.

How will the findings be disseminated?

The findings will be disseminated initially in the form of each individual's interview transcript to him/her.

Then within my thesis I will have a findings and then discussion chapter where I will discuss the findings in relation to the themes that have come from both the literature and emerging themes from the data analysis. However each interviewee will be coded to ensure confidentiality.

The findings and conclusions of the PhD thesis will then be prepared for dissemination in research journals and publications.

Is there any possibility of any harm (social, psychological, professional, economic etc) to participants who take part or do not take part? Give details.

I don't foresee this no, no sensitive questions are being asked and no sensitive personal data is being gathered or stored.
Almost no risk due to anonymity as unable to trace back to their university.

How / where will data be stored? Who will have access to it? Will it be secure? How long will the data be kept? What will be done with the data at the end of the project?

The electronic data will be stored on a secure university networked computer in my university office. Interview that are digitally recorded will be saved as audio (mp3) files. All back up materials will be encrypted.

Any paper formats of the data will be stored in a secure locked cabinet in either the researcher's university office or researchers home.
All raw data will only be available to just the researcher and supervisory team.
The data will be kept as long as the study is ongoing and when the research is complete the data (full interview transcripts) will be kept for 10 years post-study and then deleted (in line with university protocol).

Any other information in support of your application

Research integrity was initially approved for this study in June 2013, however it has subsequently taken on a change of focus in relation to the context/participants.

Continue to section 3

Section 3 – RI (Research Integrity) Advisor's Approval
Delete as appropriate: I approve this research / I refer this research to the FRIC (give reason for referral)
Name of RI Advisor   Signature of RI Advisor   Date
Signature of researcher/s to confirm understanding and acceptance of RI Advisor's decision   Date

Section 4 – FRIC (Faculty Research Integrity Committee) Approval
FRIC decision
Does this issue need to be referred to the URIC (University Research Integrity Committee)? If YES Secretary to forward to URIC Secretary for referral with any appropriate paperwork Date actioned
Reason for referral
Signature of Convener of FRIC   Date
Date researcher/s informed of FRIC decision – include copy of email to researcher/s

Appendix 2: Invite Email Sent to Invitees

All interviewees were invited to take part in the research via an email, the following is an example of the basic email sent to all invitees. If another interviewee recommended the invitee, his or her name was added to the email.

Hello,

My name is Laura Gerard I am a PhD candidate and academic at Edinburgh Napier University studying sustainable leadership in the Higher Education sector. I am looking to explore perceptions of this concept and your experience within the sector of the elements involved in the topic of sustainable leadership. I hope you do not mind me contacting you today; I am doing so due to your role and expertise in the sector [and on the recommendation of (name of person who initiated snowball contact)] as a possible interviewee for my study.

I have attached additional information regarding my project and would welcome any questions you may have. I looking to undertake in-depth interviews with academics and professional services staff at level 7 and above with leadership and line manager responsibilities in either their current or previous role(s) in higher education. The interview should last between 45-60 minutes and could take place either face-to-face or alternatively over the telephone, whichever would be more convenient for you. I hope to schedule interviews to take place before the end of August and can be flexible around your schedule.

I hope you are able to participate or if not could recommend any colleagues you think would volunteer.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope to speak with you soon,

Best wishes

Laura Gerard

Appendix 3: Detailed Participant Information Sheet

An analysis of sustainable leadership challenges and prospects within the Scottish higher education sector.

My name is Laura Gerard and I am a Lecturer in The Business School at Edinburgh Napier University. I am currently undertaking research for my PhD studies and would like to invite you to take part in my research project. Before you decide to consent, I would like you to understand why the research is taking place, what your role will be and what the data collected will be used for. Please read the following and let me know if you have any questions or queries.

Topic of Study

I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD doctoral studies at Edinburgh Napier University. My research involves examining perceptions surrounding sustainable leadership within the Scottish higher education sector. I am approaching you due to your leadership role within your organisation and would like to learn more about your views on this topic. The aim of my research is to examine perceptions surrounding the challenges and prospects for sustainable leadership within Scottish higher education to explore implications for leaders.

Informed Consent

It is up to you to decide to join the project and take part in the data collection interview. If you agree to take part I would conduct an interview which should last approximately between 45 and 60 minutes. With your agreement, the interview will be recorded and transcribed; you will have the opportunity to validate the transcript if you wish. The interviews could take place either face-to-face or over the telephone whichever is your preference. All data will be securely stored and will be coded to ensure anonymity. The data will be predominately for this research although may be subsequently used for research journal publications to disseminate the findings of the project. Only the researcher and supervisory team will have access to the raw data.

Prior to the interview, I will ask you to sign a consent form to acknowledge you understand and consent to the researcher utilising your data. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Usage of the Data

The analysis and findings of the research will be utilised within the researchers PhD thesis and also conference papers and journal articles. However all data will be anonymous with only agreed demographics attributed to the data. Participants will have the option to verify their interview transcript and will also be granted access to summarisations and the findings and analysis.

Ethical Considerations

I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you and the data you give will be handled in confidence with your anonymity ensured. This research has been scrutinised and given favourable opinion by the ethics committee at Edinburgh Napier University.

If you have read and understood this information sheet, any questions you had have been answered, and you would like to be a participant in the study, please now see the consent form.

Contact Details

Researcher: Laura Gerard (PhD candidate)

Email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Telephone Numbers: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Address: Edinburgh Napier University, Craiglockhart Campus, Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ

If you would like to speak to an independent person, who knows about this project but is not directly involved in it, you are welcome to contact Dr Janice McMillan, Associate Professor at Edinburgh Napier University, telephone ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ email address ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

Participant Consent Sheet

Topic: Sustainable Leadership

Researcher: Laura Gerard

Edinburgh Napier University and GDPR regulations requires that all persons who participate in research studies give their written consent to do so. Please read the following and sign it if you agree in regards to Laura Gerard's research project:

1. I freely and voluntarily consent to a participant in the research project conducted by Laura Gerard, who is a PhD candidate at Edinburgh Napier University.

2. The broad goal of this research study is to explore perceptions of sustainable leadership in the Scottish higher education sector. Specifically I have been asked to share my leadership experiences within higher education whilst discussing challenges and prospects for sustainable leadership within the sector.

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised. My name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the research.

4. I understand that if at any time during the interview I feel unable or unwilling to continue, I am free to withdraw. That is, my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from it without negative consequences. However, after data has been anonymised or after publication of results it will not be possible for my data to be removed as it would be untraceable at this point.

5. In addition should I not wish to answer any particular question, I am free to decline.

6. I understand that Laura wishes to record my interview, transcribe the data and retain the raw data transcription for a period of five years. I will have the opportunity to validate the transcription.

7. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and the interview with Laura.

8. I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in this interview and study. My signature is not a waiver of any legal rights. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to keep a copy of the informed consent form for my records.

_____   _____

Participants Signature   Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the respondent has consented to participate. Furthermore, I will retain a copy of this form for my records.

_____   _____

Researchers Signature   Date

Appendix 5: Sample Interviewee Scheme

Interviewee Number and level of leader	
Type of Institution	
Date and time	

Hello, I want to say thank you once more for agreeing to be part of my study, I really appreciate it.
To give you a bit of background, I am an academic at Edinburgh Napier University undertaking my PhD studies on the topic of sustainable leadership. The aim of my research is to examine perceptions surrounding the challenges and prospects for sustainable leadership within Scottish higher education to explore implications for leaders.

Can I start by asking you about your background in the higher education sector please?

Can I ask about your current role and any previous roles where you have had leadership responsibilities within higher education?

How would you define leadership?
- Does your organisation have an agreed definition of leadership?
-
What would you say are the key roles of leaders within higher education?

Can you outline the importance of leadership within the Scottish higher education sector from your perspective?

Do you see leadership changing in the future and if so, in what ways?
- Why do you see these changes occurring?
-
What is your understanding of sustainable leadership?

I would like to now give you a literature definition of sustainable leadership which is: "Sustainable leadership requires taking a long term perspective in making decisions; fostering systematic innovation aimed at increasing customer value; developing a skilled, loyal and highly engaged workforce; and offering quality products, services and solutions" (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011)

Split up the main aspects from the definition – Long term perspective; innovation; engaged employees; maintaining quality products.

Given this definition, do you believe the concept of sustainable leadership resonates with your experience of leaders and leadership in the Higher Education Sector?
- Why or why not?

If sustainable leadership is/isn't present within either your organisation or the sector why do you think this is?

Do you think it has or could have a value within the sector?

How could this value be enhanced and better embedded throughout the sector?
- In what ways?

What are your thoughts on how you could enhance or develop your own sustainability as a leader?

Have you got any examples of how you have or could develop this further?

Can you give me an example of approaches to sustainable leadership you have seen within the sector?

Are there any practices or people from your own experience who have embraced a sustainable approach to leadership?
- Why do you think this is?
- In what ways have they embraced this approach?

Are there any challenges you have seen or can foresee to adopting this approach and how could they be overcome?

What role do you believe individual leaders play within this?

How do you balance the competing demands of managing in higher education?
- Is there anything that could be done to aid this?

Thank you very much for all your answers it is much appreciated. Before we finish is there anything else you would like to add surrounding our discussions today?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study and answer my questions.

Appendix 6: Published Journal Article – Conceptualising Sustainable Leadership (2017)

Front page of published article: