Senior Managers in the UK: The Development of Educational Leaders in Further Education Institutions

Ismail Mohammed Noriey

Abstract

The knowledge of the enhancement of the journey to educational leadership in the Further Education (FE) sector in the United Kingdom (UK) has attracted the attention of academics. The majority of the experiments reviewed illustrate the formal educational mechanisms that leaders have experimentally learned via their experiences in FE. However, this study proposed that in order to lead admirably, senior academic leaders need additional assistance for their training and hands-on leadership experience. With an emphasis on Gronn's theory of leadership model, the major objective is to critically evaluate educational leadership development at FE institutions in the UK. This supports the recognition of leadership in Gronn's model in career terms and explores the significant impacts of the four phases of Gronn's model in the development of academic leaders. Additionally, this study is interested in learning about leaders' experiences and how they view leadership in FE in general. This study used a mixed-method approach to ensure that the two main research questions were consistently addressed. Twelve leaders at the FBT participated in face-to-face interviews for the data-gathering process, while 61 leaders in the UK completed a questionnaire. The results showed that developing into an effective leader requires a number of factors, or what Gronn's concept of the leadership journey refers to as four sequential phases. Four areas of critical impact were identified during the professional pathway: family influence, educational influence, influential people, and significant experiences. The leader's major experiences, character traits, and leadership aspirations were all shaped by fostering knowledge. The research on educational leadership supports the idea that a school leader's capacity is greatly influenced by their leadership, which is the implication of this study.

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1. Introduction

Recognizing how leadership may be advantageously seen in terms of careers is important, as is determining the significant effects of leadership theories that can be used to practice leading in Further Education (FE). In fact, Greatbatch and Tate (2018) emphasize that FE in the United Kingdom is undergoing significant reforms. The new framework released by the Department for Education in 2016 posed challenges for FE leaders on leadership skills, qualities and performance (Department for Education, 2016). The greater demand for aspirant principals and leaders justifies conspicuous assessment of leadership quality. Hence, revisiting and rethinking leadership is vital in the continuous leadership development (Preston, 2022; Raver et al., 2022; Frantzen et al., 2023; Rizvi & Popli, 2021).

While most of the studies in the educational leadership are anchored on several theories (Endres & Weibler, 2020; Laufer et al., 202; Hoekstra & Newton; 2017; Shiferaw et al., 2023; Cassata & Allensworth, 2023; Saraih et al., 2022; Fateh et al., 2021; Alinsunurin, 2020; Chen et al., 2018; Noriey, 2021), only few focused on leadership development of an academic leader (Day et al., 2014; Förster et al., 2022; Stevens, 2022; Tucker et al., 2014; Chase et al., 2020). In the few academic leadership studies, it has been determined that a person's upbringing, professional interactions, self-confidence, self-belief, and career prospects are all crucial in affecting their development as a leader and the path that secondary practitioners adopt, which ultimately influences their success in obtaining headship. When examining leadership as a job, Comte (2000), for instance, "places a strong emphasis on individual self-belief as a crucial prerequisite for self-realization" (p.63).

One of the most notable theoretical framework in leadership development is Gronn's (1999) leadership theory. This theoretical model tries to articulate a system or process. It is based on a well-known theory and provides an extensive description and illustration of each of the four stages in educational institutions. Furthermore, Rogers (2002) offered a model that takes into account both the known stages of the leadership career framework as well as the transformative journey dealing with an early formative incident. Accordingly, the career pathways of the Gronn leadership theory model that places an emphasis on personal self-belief, has come to light at a pivotal moment. He talks about two types of self-belief, starting with self-efficacy and self-esteem (the ability to influence or improve administrative

outcomes). (p.24). It also demonstrated four crucial stages, and four significant influences along the professional pathway: influences from families, schools, influential people, and significant experiences. These formative events shaped the leader's values, personal characteristics, and leadership aspirations. Therefore, contextual factors influence the process of developing leaders for educational leadership over the course of a leader's life.

This study aims to understand how the profession of educational leadership has evolved in the UK's FE sector. The study looked into the significant effects of the four stages of leadership development on the path to becoming an academic leader using Gronn's theory of leadership model in education. A leader cannot afford to practice every method of problem-solving to develop their leadership skills in FE. Leaders used to be required to assess, examine, and analyze knowledge in FE in the UK. "The professional journey contains four crucial phases, in accordance with Gronn's leadership: formation, accession, incumbency, and divestiture" (Gronn, 1999, p.66).

This research aims to investigate the four stages of individual activity with a focus on academic leaders, such as heads of department or faculty, and how their unique experiences during their formative years, academic careers, and professional education prepared them to eventually become academy leaders. This is to understand the extent to which these influences are thought to have impacted the leadership journey. The following two main research questions capture the focus of this study:

RQ1. What are the most influential factors in the path of leadership in Further Education in the United Kingdom?

RQ2. How does Gronn's model correspond to the academic leaders' experiences who further their education?

The significance of this study redounds to the benefit of academics and leadership experts by determining the elements academic leaders need to accomplish to become effective leaders. Moreover, this study explores the challenges that academic leaders encounter in directing their educational institutions. Thus, academic leaders with a desire to lead in FE would gain significantly from this study.

2. Literature review

This section is intended to examine the literature on the journey of academic leaders in FE and within the UK zone concerning FBT College at the heart of Birmingham City. It also provides a theoretical framework to support the research questions. This research begins by establishing the basic concepts used to determine the significant aspects that influence leadership in FE.

2.1. Academic Leaders in Further Education

According to Gronn's (1999) leadership theory, the imperative aspects use four phases: the values, attitudes, beliefs, and attributes, which are the keystone of every leader's focus in the period of educational leadership. As stated by Macaulay (2008), "educational leadership is the method of soliciting and supervising the talents and energies of leaders, teachers, students, and parents in the direction of accomplishing shared educational aims" (p.18). Likewise, as indicated by Bass and Riggio (2012), in FE, leaders must provide "a strategic vision, manage college finance, ensure a reputation for quality teaching and learning remains high, run a large student-centred, and deliver clear accountability" (p.27). Furthermore, Bass and Riggio (2012) claimed that their previous research focuses on "executive leaders in FE Colleges and seeks to provide a personal challenge of who they are, what they do, and how policy can help them to be most effective in challenging times" (p.23). In their project, 179 leaders in FE colleges in England acknowledged the importance of other parts of the sector, such as independent training providers, land-based colleges, and other specialist colleges. They emphasized that these institutions face diverse stresses and possibilities, and their leaders may require a range of experiences and talents. The highest senior managerial position in an FE college is generally designated as "Principal", "Executive Director", "Director" or a combination of the three.

The structure of FE colleges, as well as the structure of leadership teams, varies greatly. These factors have resulted in a significant disparity in the organization of FE Colleges as well as the alignment of educational leadership teams. Conversely, the traditional structure is a stand-alone college on one side with a principal and a senior staff in charge of activities, financing, external relations, and curriculum. As stated by Nigel (2018) "some institutions seek to hold the autonomy of the original individual colleges by having a head of FE and a chief executive control the wider institution" (p.34).

2.2 The Journey of Performance Leadership in FE

The term performance leadership in FE has been variously defined in the strategic management literature. For instance, Burns (1998) stated "performance leadership means enhancing human potential, which is about creating the right environment for people to develop as leaders and it is also about communicating clearly and effectively" (p.66). Thus, good leadership entails ensuring unity and cohesion in the face of FE decisions in the UK. As stated by Gunter (2001) "career leadership progression is implicit generally as desired, vertical, ladder-like movement through age-related and time-phased stages" (p.27). It means that leaders in FE, conclude that acknowledging a person's life history is crucial to special qualities and experiences that capable leaders bring to the performance in their leadership journey. Similarly, critics of perspective point to the lack of clear boundaries between the career stages and the unclear criteria for performance leadership in FE. Callan (2001) has argued that the four stages are the only or best way to view the journey of performance leadership in FE, and he has represented "the most significant influences in the journey of performance leadership are characteristics such as self-belief, self-esteem, skills, responsibility, capabilities, and behaviour of senior managers and leaders" (p.26). In addition, Ryan (2008) claimed that "performance leadership may be thought of as four broad career phases: formation, accession, incumbency, and divestiture" (p.43). Individual leaders moving through these four phases make sense of them prospectively, but either way, they experience them as linear, sequential, and chronological. In addition, Punch (2001) stated that leaders in FE are "increasingly aware, which meansresponsibility that their performance will be judged by the performance of their faculty" (p.16). This study believes that the four sequential phases of leadership, as indicated by Gronn (1999), were the most significant impacts on the journey of performance leadership:

Formation. Leader formation has been proposed in two ways: from the entire society's perspective or critical sectors' standpoint. The seminal work of Jeff (2003) provides a comprehensive theoretical framework of a career pathway followed by a leader academy in FE. Gronn (1999), driven by a desire to empower future leaders through his work, compared the lives and careers of school leaders "at any one point in time across space, place, circumstance and time, to provide them with a vantage point from which to get their own lives as possible future leaders into perspective" (p.21). The character structure is formed throughout this formative period, which lasts from childhood to early adulthood when significant factors

such as parents, siblings, school, and friends are present. Gardner (1995) has distinguished that "characteristics, self-belief, and self-esteem are the vital points to consider the appropriate analytical construct on which to build performance leadership within FE" (p.32). Likewise, according to Jeff (2003) "the three principal institutions which shape individual characterare families and their modes of upbringing, schooling, and educational agencies" (p.34). These represent a number of the systematic efforts used to identify early leadership performance.

Accession. This stage refers to a mentor in which leaders preparing for leadership responsibilities rehearse or test their potential capacity to lead through direct comparison with current leader-academies in FE for external facilitating conducive to growth, a vital internal pre-condition for self-realization in individual self-belief. Gronn (1999) argued, "candidates for leadership learn quickly in this period that the knack is to position themselves or to jockey with one another for preferment" (p. 38). From the aspirant's point of view, if she or he is to conform to anticipated institutional demands, then they have measured up based on their experience and to meet the first challenge means to undertake the necessary internal psychological construction. Furthermore, Ribbins (1997) discusses "the construction of oneself as a credible successor for office and the acquisition of a marketable performance routine to convince talent spotters, panels, and selectors" (p.466). During this period the leader compares their performance with others in similar roles and those holding roles that they aspire to achieve.

Incumbency. According to Gronn (1999), these stage leaders have developed and honed their public personas. "They now seek to give further expression to their quest for mastery and self-realization by gaining experience through circulating amongst various elite postings and leadership roles" (p.28). This means, during role incumbency; leaders may occupy a number of roles varying qualitatively with respect to status and significance, and circulate between functions and offices.

Divestiture. In this stage, Gronn, (1999) stated that "due to factors associated with ageing, illness, lack of performance or incapability, leaders have to divest themselves of leadership by releasing their psychological grasp" (p.38). Undeniably, the leader academy in FE moves on to comforts and compasses other than leadership, which may entail Robbin's (2007), indicated notion of reinvention. Nowadays, the focus is on the extent to which

candidates in these early career stages actively select their educational experiences and pathways to maximize their advantage.

2.3 Leadership in Further Education

According to Corners (2005), "FE leaders do not matter what their stage, experience or ambitions have development needs, which should be addressed through professional development. This should be offered by the college; such as workshop or training event because it is important both for individual success" (p.39). The purpose of providing leadership skills is to grow, develop, and improve leadership competencies in administrative, professional, and guiding personnel in the leadership journey within FE. Parker (2002) has identified the powerful belief held by the leader academy in FE that they had the capacity, and were highly motivated, to make a difference in leadership performance by eagerly seeking new challenges along their career journey.

Gronn (1999) argued that the values, self-beliefs, attitudes and attributes of school leaders are vital for performance leadership. In other words, "they had to continue to meet their family and work commitments, balancing one against the other, for the whole of their working lives" (p.42). On the other hand, the relationship between leadership theory and leadership practice presents a conundrum. As stated by Bryman's (2007) recent literature review on leadership performance in FE, "not enough is known about exactly what makes an individual effective as a leader-academy in FE, and what, in turn, can make them ineffective in their journey" (p.14).

2.4 Factors Influence Leaders in Further Education

Several aspects influence leaders' views on the leadership journey in FE. These influences could be the length of their experience, self-belief, self-confidence, and cognitive theories that shifted leadership from being construed as an objective phenomenon to a concept that was seen as socially constructed. According to Gornn (1999), "accession is the time of grooming where individuals experience a range of roles, equipping themselves with a variety of skills and begin to assemble and rehearse a 'role repertoire" (p.34). This is clear evidence that length of experience is a factor that influences leaders' views on leadership performance. Furthermore, according to Fullan (2001), there are "multiple pathways and trajectories through different phases of the head of departments at college lives, and they obtained this from the

length of experience" (p.206). Similarly, Gornn (1999) agreed with Fullan (2001) that "the length of experience, lack of clarity, and leaders are subject to direct and indirect of the fear-factor in leadership in FE that influence leader's views on leadership" (p.32). This causes difficulties for leaders because the scaffolding of a character structure in FEs differs and is difficult to develop. Gronn's (1999) key work gives a complete theoretical framework of a career path followed by leaders in educational institutions. In comparison to the lives and careers of educational institution principals, he has been motivated by a desire to inspire future leaders through his work.

Finally, all leaders are required to be aware of four fundamental aspects of leadership: family influence, educational influence, influential people, and significant experiences. All four variables must constantly be considered when exercising leadership, although they influence each other differently at different times. This study intended to explore the features and conditions that influence college leaders' ability to influence colleagues in FE.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Methodology

As stated by Noriey (2019), quantified to shape an actionable knowledge base; "three research approaches must be measured: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The three methods are not as isolated as the first gives an impression. Quantitative and qualitative methods should not be viewed as rigid, diverse categories, tropical, contraries or contrasts" (p.6). To generate a more comprehensive analysis, this study used both quantitative and qualitative research designs.

This study looked into the perspectives of 12 leaders who hold leadership roles at FBT College in order to get the answers to the research questions. Through face-to-face interviews with 12 participants, which were utilized to gather the primary data, it describes the methodologies used and the circumstances under which successive stages of investigations were conducted. Conversely, 61 academic leaders in the UK answered a questionnaire on this research. Last but not least, maintenance has been engaged to guarantee that all aspects of the study plan and data collection are conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

Table 1

Classification of Respondents

Name of FE Institution	Participants of Leader-academics	Number of participants
FBT College	**12 (interview)**	**12**
Sandwell College	21 (questionnaire)	15
Mathew Bolton College	21 (questionnaire)	14
Birmingham City College	26 (questionnaire)	21
Birmingham South College	21 (questionnaire)	11
Total number of participants		**73**

3.2. Interview

The goal of the interview was to employ a different strategy to fill in any gaps that the questionnaire may have missed. According to Noriey (2021), "it is one of the superb tools for data collection" (p. 5). It is also crucial for this study that realistically since the researcher looked into the biggest effects of the four stages of development in leadership on the path to becoming an academic leader.

3.3. Interview Questions and Analysis

One of the cornerstones of qualitative educational research is the in-depth, open-ended formal interview. According to Brown (2005), "in explanatory studies, semi-structured interviews and structured interviews are frequently used because they help to explain the themes that emerged from the results of open and closed questions" (p. 28). Additionally, the researcher avoids subjects lacking analytical and problem-solving abilities. This initial analytical structured interview was conducted to gauge a participant's aptitude for problem-solving, question-asking, and problem-analysis. The researcher also listened to the audio of the interview while taking notes. Lastly, for matters of privacy, the interviewees were given the code A each with a number from 1 to 12 (i.e., A1-A12).

3.4 Questionnaire Design and Development

In the questionnaire procedure, the researcher created twelve online statements that participants could choose from so they could complete the form truthfully and humbly. According to the study, the top colleges in the area are Matthew Bolton College, Birmingham City College, Birmingham South College, and Sandwell College, all colleges in the area are located close to Birmingham City. Furthermore, the researcher chose questionnaires utilized

by others who were interested in measuring the same constructs. Table 2 shows the source questionnaires, and the researcher for this study extracted and changed the items from existing questionnaires based on Dr. Spiegel's preliminary site-specific research.

Table 2

Questionnaire design

Questionnaire	Source	Validated
The short version of the Social and Community Opportunities Profile (SCOPE).	Huxley and colleagues (2012)	Yes
Participant Questionnaire for Arts and Social Inclusion	Jermyn (2004)	Yes
Participants' Questionnaire on the Social Impact of Arts Participation	Matarasso (1997)	Yes
Personal Growth Initiative Scale	Robitschek (1998)	Yes

3.5 Principles

The researcher of this study alleged it is essential to explain each of the two aspects of validity, and reliability.

Validity. According to Creswell (2002), "the validity of mail questionnaires can be seen from two viewpoints. First, whether respondents complete questionnaires precisely, honourably, and appropriately. Second, whether those who fail to return their questionnaires would have given the same distribution of answers as did the returnees" (p.34). The questionnaires are valid depending on the validity standards as it has been patterned by three leaders from Mathew Bolton College. Furthermore, it has face validity which appears to be the same for all participants, and is divided into two parts. Each question has a distinct section and set of options. Additionally, the interview is valid. The interview questions were approved by six leader academics at FBT College. As stated by Noriey (2022), "they are indeed allowed to respond to the questions by relying on their own experiences as academic leaders. It is not necessary to concentrate just on the exact responses" (pp.138.144).

Reliability. The reliability of a questionnaire is a method of analyzing the quality of the data collection operation. To consider a valid outcome, the measurement process must first be dependable. Furthermore, while investigating the study's construct, select a measure. The construct being measured is the theoretical variable, and questionnaires are one of the means.

The Cronbach Alpha (1999) reliability of the questionnaire was calculated in this study. Cronbach's alpha calculates the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. As a result, Cronbach's alpha is a reliability index linked to the variation accounted for by the true score of the "underlying construct" (Santos 1999). The questionnaire is reliable in a variety of ways. Since the submission procedure is reliable, all participants received the link. They also had enough time to complete the forms. The researcher offered the URL when they were not scheduled for any exams or holidays, according to their schedules. In order for people who participated in this study's questionnaire to be relevant and truthfully expressed.

3.6 Research Design

Figure 1

Research Design
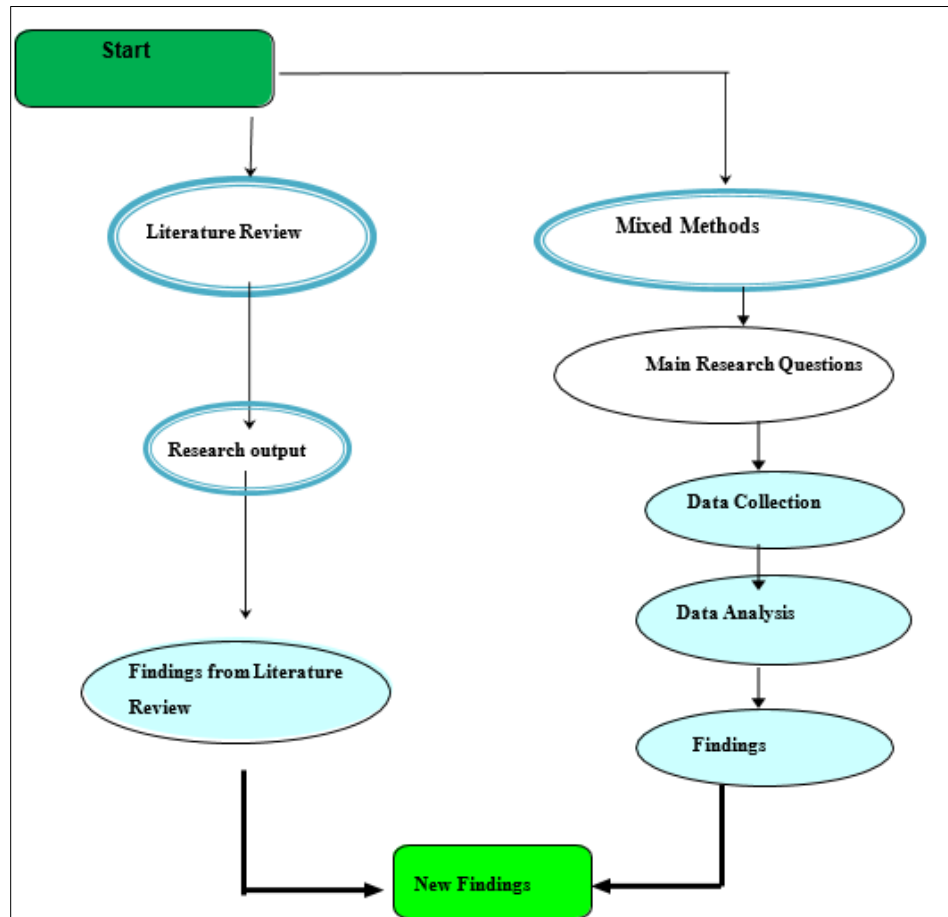
For the research design in this study, the researcher created the following diagram, which is comparable to Denscombe (2003, p. 25). To clarify the instruments used for data collection and analysis, the diagram presented the study design, which is directly related to the

major research questions. The first findings from the analysis of the literature review reasonably guide the researcher in this study to determine which component of the research is lacking and needs to be found. The second findings integrated the first result to have the final findings. This typically refers to the entirety of the results rather than the conclusions or suggestions derived from them.

3.7. Philosophical Approach

Clarifying the researcher's philosophical stance is crucial to comprehend the technique and procedures used for this study. This is accomplished by outlining the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives. As stated by Thomas (2009), ontology is "...a study of what there is or what exists in the social world" (p.87). Ontology is interested like reality, truth, and existence. It investigates the nature of the world and what is found there. As life stories are recalled and the significance people attach to their experiences are investigated, the researcher felt academic leaders in FE have uniquely formed their social environment. Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned with the study of knowledge. It is "how do we know about the world that we have defined ontologically?" (Thomas, 2009, p.87). It makes an effort to respond to the following queries: what sets true, appropriate knowledge apart from false, inadequate knowledge; how do we define knowledge and how do we acquire it? This study is based on the interpretivism paradigm and focuses on people, specifically one FE leader.

4. Findings and Discussion

Analysis and discussion of the results are provided in this section. To react to the important issues mentioned in the literature review and methods section, each research question was addressed one at a time. In doing so, the data gathered from one candidate will be analyzed using a framework to reflect the new information acquired in answering the study questions. The part also addresses two major research questions:

1) What are the most influential factors in the path of leadership in Further Education in the United Kingdom?

2) How does Gronn's model correspond to the academic leaders' experiences who further their education?

Research question 1: What are the most influential factors in the path of leadership in Further Education in the United Kingdom?

The results revealed that four factors had the greatest bearing on the respondent's journey toward leadership performance within FE during his or her early years. Four main factors have been recognized as the surrounding, major impacts: family influences, education influences, influential individuals, and significant experiences. Table 2 displays the results.

Table 2

The most significant influences in the journey of performance leadership

Indicators	Factors	Total (n=73)
Family influences, i.e., individual character, social class location, Parents and friends	**Formation 1**	**68 out of 73**
Schooling influences i.e., colleagues, Self-belief and Self-esteem	**Accession 2**	**63 out of 73**
Influential people	**Incumbency 3**	**58 out of 73**
Significant experiences	**Divestiture 4**	**54 out of 73**

The results indicated that four factors have the most bearing on leadership success inside FE. Based on the interview, the following are generated.

A-2, added "I figured that family pressures could have an impact on how leadership performance developed in FE colleges. I once had family stress, which interfered with my ability to think critically and make leadership decisions."

A-1 concurred with A-2 when he said, "I firmly believed that social influence or family influence is the ability to persuade another person to change their attitudes or behaviors, either consciously or unconsciously."

Consequently, A-5 added that social characteristics such as individual character, social class location and family consist of how individuals adjust their behaviour to meet the demands of the leadership journey. It proceeds in several forms such as peer pressure, leadership, persuading and socialization.

A-4 pointed out that "the expression leadership formation intentionally the focus, from emerging leadership journey in individual to how to create good leadership performance in FE

colleges". Similarly, A-6 agreed "In my view, developing a leadership journey is vital to make better leadership performance in FE.

Furthermore, A-10 claimed that "I have developed a formula that aids my leadership performance at FBT College and I believe it is beneficial to anyone who is going to use it." The key is to comprehend the idea of "forming great leaders". This technique, which has four levels, is dynamic to use while training people to be excessive leaders. The first level is to encourage them to listen to understand not to reply, which means leading by example. The second level is empowering which is characteristics such as respect, building rapport, showing responsibility, and confidence. The third level is value, which is evaluate the relationship and provides the opportunity for them to see value. The final level is vision includes being determined, goal-oriented and following the vision.

A-12 shared his experience as an FE leader at FBT College and said "I have been the head of the business department since 2017, I have excellent team leadership and they are supportive during the jobs. Moreover, I have an excellent principal who always supports me during difficult circumstances and her leadership skills and experiences influenced me to lead my team in the facility effectively".

A-11 concluded that the four factors had the greatest impact on how leaders perform within FE in the UK. A-7 mentioned as a leader at FBT College, I firmly believe that the most important factors that have been found in a leader's history include influences from college, influences from family, influences from prominent individuals, and substantial experience.

Finally, A-8 said "I was working hard at the outset of my leadership experience to develop a coaching culture in my college. This was significant because coaching promotes a trusting and supportive culture, which fosters collective and interpersonal efficiency". Similarly, A-9 stated, "The words you use, how you say them, and the actions you perform as a leader are all being studied and absorbed by people you lead." This was a crucial learning experience for me.

Accordingly, the participant's answers are summarized and presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The most significant influences in the journey of performance leadership in FE
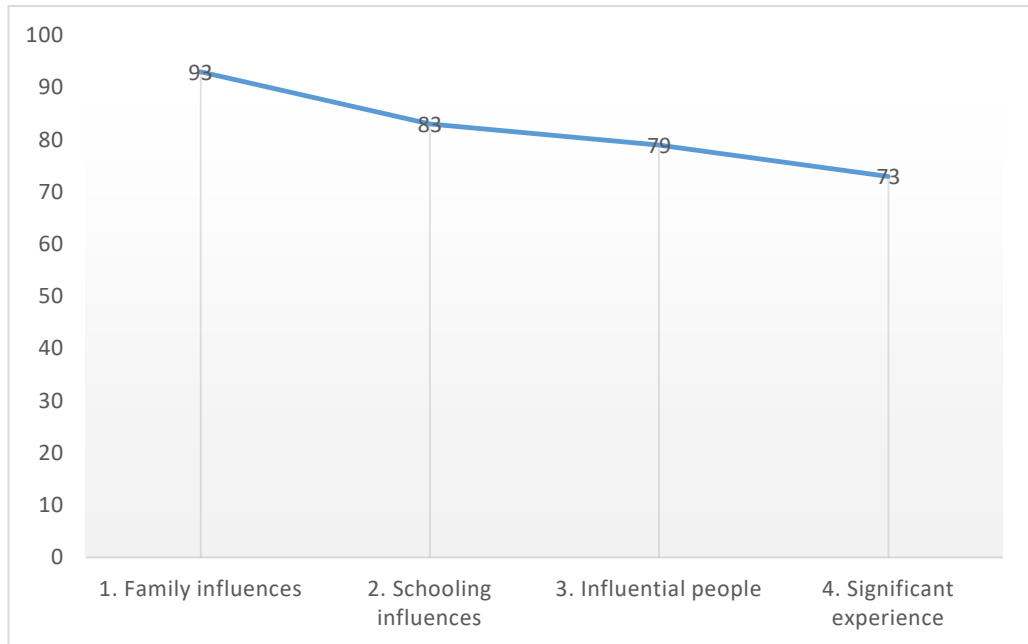
The researcher also asked participants to answer questions based on measurements claimed to assess personal improvement. They scored their level of agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (very agree). Participants rated each of the indicators higher after participating in the leadership journey in their educational institutions. Participants with higher scores were more optimistic about their personal growth for leadership positions. As a result, this demonstrates the most significant factors in the journey of performance leadership in further education in the United Kingdom.

Based on the results presented in table 3, the "n" in the first column represents the number of participants who responded to the question, the "mean pre" column represents the average score based on the responses of all participants who responded to the question about how family influences, individual character, and social class location influenced the respondents' leadership journey. The "mean post" column relates to the average rating for how they feel about their colleagues, as well as how their self-belief and self-esteem influence their leadership journey. The P values allude to the influential persons who make a difference in the leadership journey. A P-value of less than 0.001 indicates the impact of the background experience of academic leaders in their educational institutions.

Table 3

Personal Growth on the Leadership Journey

Variable	n	Mean Pre	Mean Post	P value
Feel comfortable expressing your thoughts, opinions, or ideas.	63	3.16	4.58	<002
Do you believe your viewpoint is valued by others?	73	3.42	3.92	<.001
Are you able to think through challenges and come up with your own solution?	72	3.41	4.15	<.003
Do you frequently feel like a failure?	70	3.68	4.44	<.003
Do you feel at ease interacting with people who are different from you?	73	3.61	4.19	<.004
Feel self-confident?	73	3.65	4.13	<.006
Are you proud of your personal accomplishments?	73	3.81	4.88	<.004
Do you feel comfortable expressing yourself creatively?	64	2.85	4.66	<.001
Will I go out of my way to assist others?	68	4.15	4.94	<.007

The participants in this study were asked to answer items from the social inclusion scale, which was evaluated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants rated higher on social inclusion markers as academic leaders after participating in social life. Individuals who scored higher felt more confident in their own social integration.

Table 4

Social Inclusion (Self-belief and Self-esteem)

Variable	n	Mean Pre	Mean Post	P value
Do you like the way your social life is going?	71	2.88	4.11	<.001
Do you have a good feeling about where you live?	68	2.84	4.19	<.011
Are you satisfied with your family's relationship?	73	3.45	4.24	<.006
Do you feel like you're a part of a community or a group?	73	3.51	4.88	<.012
Are you satisfied with the ability to obtain suitable work if you so desire?	70	3.15	4.43	<.005
Feel socially accepted	73	3.44	4.41	<.001

Furthermore, the researcher inquired as to how likely participants were to embark on various leadership journeys in order to successfully lead their educational institutions. Participants stated improved scores on all engagement markers, indicating that he or she

believes that he or she has successfully adapted to every aspect required to become a great leader and obtain significant experience.

Table 5

Social Participation in Leadership Journeys

Variable	n	Mean Pre	Mean Post	P value
Do you get involved in groups, community projects, or social activism?	73	3.55	4.01	<.002
Do you have a positive assessment of the leadership style?	73	3.61	4.15	<.001
Are you comfortable with your leadership path?	73	3.62	4.82	<.003
Do you consider yourself a successful leader?	73	3.74	4.51	<.008
Are you pleased with your abilities to embark on a successful leadership journey?	73	3.68	4.21	<.006

Research question 2: How does Gronn's model correspond to the academic leaders' experiences who further their education?

All the respondents reported that they were born and raised in immediate families of their own in the UK and none was adopted or fostered. Notwithstanding, they reported that they might have had several challenges that were turned into opportunities for professional development in their careers. The following are the results of the interview.

1. Family Influences (The formative years)

A respondent was asked to recount their childhood from birth, through schooling to the completion of a Master's degree. A-1 described being brought up by a working-class family, and being deprived. A-7 respondent added; "………Looking back, I suppose we were reasonably poor but we did not feel like it because everybody else was in the same boat". Similarly, in A-4 the respondent recalled an upbringing where education was regarded as a vital aspect of family life and gave it a high priority in their academies. Conversely, … "Fortunately I had two parents who were both very keen on reading so for me it was quite normal to be taken to the library from a very early age so I think that sparked off a lot of interest" (A-3). A-6 has mentioned stated by Gardner (1995) that "characteristics, family life,

a variety of peers and school are the vital points to consider the appropriate analytical construct on which to build performance leadership" (p.32). I strongly agreed with him.

The study's researcher took into account the fact that a respondent had grown up with family members who had pursued careers in leadership when determining the factors that had the greatest influence on their job choice. Added by A-5, "The family is filled with several leaders. My sister is a principal. Since then, many of their nieces and relatives have become teachers. So, did that have anything to do with it at all? Well, I had to decide. A-9 further stated, "I recall telling my Mom that I would be getting this job at FBT College...and I recall her telling me, "Well that's nice sweetie. Are there any sandwiches you need for the train? And that was the comprehension level of my parents. My accomplishments have always been greatly admired by them".

The respondents' "career journeys" were not influenced by outside or internal influences as implied by the word. As a result, the phrase "opportunity" was modified by familial influences to refer to important events. "This shows that individuals chose their own career paths by taking advantage of possibilities that they actively sought out or just happened to come upon". Added by A-8.

2. School Influences (Accession)

When the researcher asked to describe their school experiences, primary schooling appeared irrelevant to a respondent. A-3 comment on primary schooling remembered mostly positive experiences, "When I was a vice principal, I was influenced by the principal which he was supporting me during the jobs…. This was useful because I learned from him what staff needs are and how can I communicate effectively with them. This was supporting me as a leader that influencing skills allowed me to lead my team in the faculty"

The researcher has found that A6 stated during school life he has a significant leadership role, for example as a head boy or sports captain, which was viewed as the major influence on their personal development. A-11 added that he described their relationships with staff in detail and it was evident that these encounters influenced how they behaved when they become leaders. "…. I used to go to school and enjoyed praise, I enjoyed the fact that I was one of the few clever kids in the school, and I was selected to become a sports captain".

According to Gronn (1999), "accession is the time of grooming where individuals experience a range of roles, equip themselves with a variety of skills, and start to create and rehearse a "role repertory" (p.34).

Additionally, A8 defined leadership impact as a person's ability to affect academic leaders by changing values, beliefs, or attitudes towards education. Similarly, A-9 added on to say, "I strongly believe that any academic leaders influenced by school experience can use their knowledge and communication skills to offer a new perspective to an audience or team". A-7 agreed with A-8 as mentioned "I was a first-class student for success and outstanding communication skills with others, my school life was critical for me to become an academic leader in further study.

3. Influential People (Incumbency)

A-1 identified an excellent elementary school teacher whom they felt truly cared about them and their education as a major influence in his life. "…What would have been my year 10 teacher was the one who most inspired me because teaching was his profession, in my opinion. He was wonderful, single, and a good deal older."

A-12 further elaborated on his self-awareness of their working-class heritage in his memories, saying, "It is quite a badge of honour really, working-class hero." On the other side, A-11 outlined the bad characteristics of particular teachers, feeling that they had experienced terrible instruction at some point throughout their stay in school.

The responder who preferred secondary education most likely remembered being motivated by one or more head teachers:

A-7 "…. I once had a head teacher who was incredibly motivating, intelligent, and young but who was also very much one of those people who gave people their head teacher, wasn't concerned with your position in the company and would accept ideas without seeing them as a threat. Correspondingly, A-8 mentioned by Gronn (1999), "The three principal institutions which shape individual character are families and their modes of upbringing, schooling, and a variety of peers" (p. 34) are families and their modes of upbringing, families, and schools.

A-9 also remembered a powerful head department from FBT College. This was either a result of the respondents' inappropriate behaviour, which caused them to run into the Head of the Department more than once, or it was a result of their common interest in a certain topic.

A-5 added that …... "My Head of Department, who specialized in English and was so passionate about it, was the most significant person in my life. And he had a strong belief in every young person's right to... He was simply so amazing, so uplifting and supporting, and that's really what got me started on my road, especially in those like myself who were among

the first in our family to attend FBT College". Finally, A-8 added as he said, "My mother was an inspiration to me when I was a child since she was the head of a primary school, and her life immediately encouraged me to become a leader in education."

4. Significant Experiences (Divestiture)

The respondents' formative experiences "lived were varied" in terms of their major events. A-2 remembered particular instances that involved his childhood and his parents' actions. These were quite extreme and entailed the use of illegal substances and intervention from specialized support organizations, like social care. It was clear that these respondents thought their parents had the best of intentions when they tried to nurture, support, and develop their children, but the experiences that came, as a result, were not pleasant.:

A-3…. "I can recall some genuinely horrible events that happened before I started elementary school. My mother was angry when she drank, and she would go missing for days on end. Similarly, A-5, I had a really miserable home life that year and my father's poor health made it impossible for him to take care of me".

The responses "live" looked to be motivated by their formative experiences, which led them to choose a completely different course of action. A-6 has talked about a personal relationship ending while he was in the sixth form. All of these events were considered significant at the time in his life, but some of them were more crucial than others, such as his divorce.

Nevertheless, A-7 said, "I am certain that all academic leaders have been influenced by significant life experiences, such as good school leaders developing and maintaining reciprocal family and community ties." A-9, likewise, declared, "I joined the education leaders experience (ELE) program, which provides educators with a unique professional development opportunity to engage with community and policy leaders from across the UK in further education.".

Finally, A-12 stated, "As I reflect on my leadership path, I realized the significance of educational experiences in my life, and my reactions to them, have influenced me as a leader, a wife, a mother, and a human being". Likewise, A-10 said "Throughout my leadership career, I have been aware that my words, actions, and emotions build the culture of my school, affect the actions and conduct of the people around me, and have a significant impact on the result of an event. A-4 added, "Continuously reflecting on how I may enhance my words, actions,

and reactions has undoubtedly helped me develop into a better leader, allowing me to grow and evolve along my leadership journey".

Figure 3

Gronn's Model Corresponds to the Academic Leaders' Experiences Who Further their Education
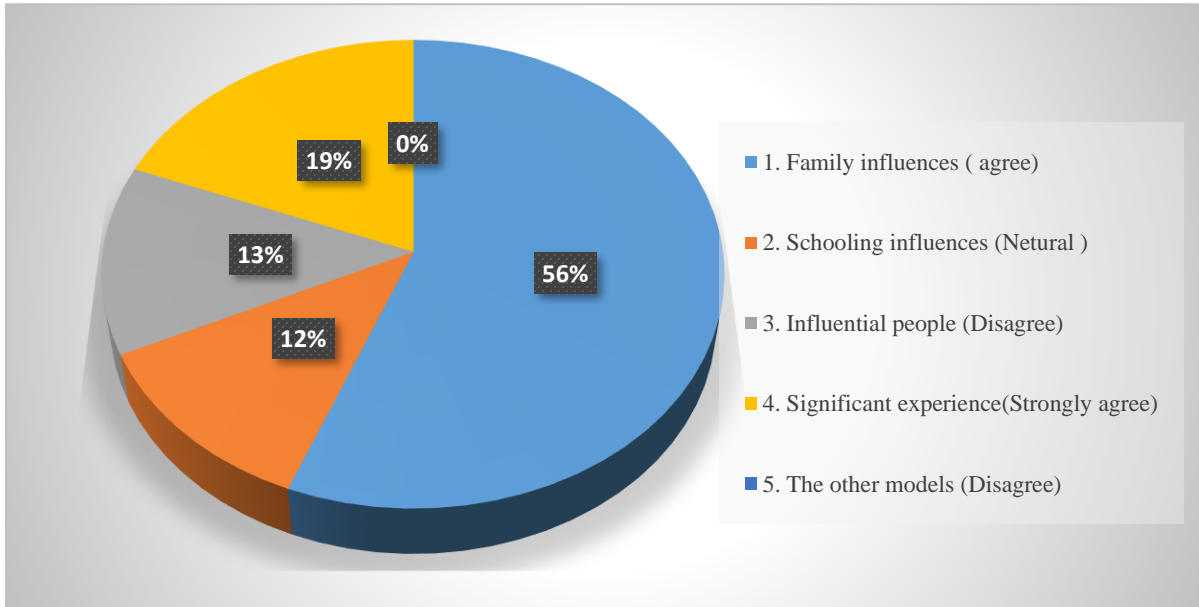
The researcher asked participants to respond to questions based on measurements that were employed to assess personal improvement according to leadership journey. Therefore, the participants judged their level of agreement on how Gronn's model would correspond to the academic leaders' experiences that further their education on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (extremely agree). Participants rated each of Gronn's models that corresponded to their experiences after participating in the leadership journey at their educational institutions. Higher-scoring participants were more optimistic about which model would come first for the development of leadership positions. As a result, the most important aspects of the journey of performance leadership in further education in the United Kingdom are demonstrated. Conversely, 56% of respondents mentioned that they agreed with Gronn's model match to the academic leaders' family influences while 13% only disagree with influential people's counterparts in Gronn's model. 12% of respondents showed a neutral attitude while 19% strongly agreed Gronn's model connected academic leaders with significant experience.

5. Conclusion

This study found that the leadership journey levels of academic leaders are considered average levels within FE in the UK. Meanwhile, academic leaders recognized that excellent

communication skills were crucial among them, whether they were professionals or ordinary individuals. Respondents indicated that they frequently employed their leadership talents at college performance on many platforms and in the community. Furthermore, in the United Kingdom, there is a favourable and significant association between leadership qualities and the leadership journey in colleges and universities. As a result, they were able to effectively utilize their leadership talents in their educational institutions on many platforms, as well as in the community.

This research study examined the life and career trajectories of academic leaders in FE with an emphasis on the leadership journey in further education. According to the findings of this study, any academic leader can improve their communication and leadership skills. It has also been established that effective communication skills in academic leaders are essential requirements for future academic or professional success. Academic leaders at all levels of education must be able to communicate successfully in their educational institutions. Finally, this study implies that academic leaders may need to acknowledge Gronn's (1999) four critical stages for the formation of educational leaders in the UK's further education institutions. Academic leaders may also present programs that aim to enhance leadership journeys among all FE educational leaders.

This study has limitations in the face of important contributions to the body of research on the relationship between the leadership journey and knowledge management for academic leaders. Firstly, despite efforts to increase the number of respondents in the sample, the researcher was unable to obtain informed consent from female leaders to be interviewed. Secondly, according to Gronn (1999), this study is limited in its focus on knowledge management and leadership skills, although the journey of leadership phases of academic leaders is the most significant. Hence, the researcher suggests that future research might investigate the effects of the two types of leadership in order to determine which is the most significant on leadership styles and stages in FE and process development among teaching staff.

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